

## CATHOLIC REACTION TO FUNDAMENTALISM

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CATHOLIC REACTIONS to American Protestant fundamentalism began in the wake of the political and social resurgence of evangelicalism marked publicly by the election of Jimmy Carter in 1976.<sup>1</sup> Between 1976 and 1992, over 80 essays were published in Catholic periodicals, ranging from scholarly analyses in journals aimed at pastors and intellectuals to articles and columns in the national Catholic weekly press.<sup>2</sup> Over 30 of those essays appeared in journal issues dedicated entirely to fundamentalism. In addition, four monographs destined for general readership and one collection of scholarly essays on fundamentalism were published by Catholic theologians.<sup>3</sup> There were at least five public statements by American bishops on fundamentalism, one document issued by the Vatican which touches directly upon Catholic attitudes toward "sects and new religions" but which may have significant implications for Catholic attitudes toward fundamentalism, and another which discusses (and rejects) fundamentalism among the hermeneutical options in New Testament study. While not massive (it would be outweighed considerably by the Catholic literature on abortion and on peace and justice questions), the literature is significant.

Sorting out the literature on the basis of its reactions to fundamental-

<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed report on the literature, including background and hermeneutical discussion, see William Shea, "Fundamentalism: How Catholics Approach It," in *Christianity and the Stranger: Historical Essays*, ed. Francis W. Nichols (Atlanta: Scholars, 1995) 221-86. I am grateful for the research skill and editorial advice of Zaida Maldonado Perez in the preparation of this article.

<sup>2</sup> With a few exceptions diocesan and national Catholic newspapers were not included in the original study. In those exceptions the balance and fairness in reporting and exposition are admirable, and the authors seem to be as well informed as the professional theologians.

<sup>3</sup> Four books received attention in my more detailed report: Richard Chilson, *Full Christianity: A Catholic Response to Fundamental Questions* (New York: Paulist, 1985); Anthony E. Gilles, *Fundamentalism: What Every Catholic Needs to Know* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger, 1984); Karl Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism: The Attack on "Romanism" by "Bible Christians"* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988); Thomas F. O'Meara, O. P., *Fundamentalism: A Catholic Perspective* (New York: Paulist, 1990). The books carry through the different and sometimes contradictory aims of the periodical literature, namely: historical sketch, fair exposition and contrast of doctrine, apologetic response, pastoral remedy, communal soul-searching, and defamation of psychological character. The same turn up in the episcopal literature. The only other volume on the subject produced by American Catholics in the period was that edited by William M. Shea, *The Struggle Over the Past: Fundamentalism in the Modern World*, College Theology Society Annual vol. 35 (Lanham: University Press of America, 1993) 35. For obvious reasons it was not included in either report, but it is the only volume produced by Catholic scholars for an academic audience.

ism poses a problem. A good deal of the literature is commonsense history and description, with predictable doctrinal contrasts which are accurate as far as they go, but which are of very little theological interest and value. The literature gets interesting when particular theological insights flash, when the common is put in a particularly clear fashion, when strategies of response are developed and promoted, when particularly abysmal ignorance is displayed, and when the canons of a methodical theology and even Christian virtue are violated.

The literature, while it is as complex as the Church which spawns it, is not theologically profound yet seems to provide valuable clues to the American Catholic mind in the late-20th century. Here, rather than take on the whole body of the literature, I shall mention a few features of the periodical and trade literature and discuss in more detail seven pieces which serve as the public response of the Roman Catholic hierarchy to fundamentalism. Finally, I shall suggest an alternative approach.

#### THE PERIODICAL LITERATURE IN BRIEF

Discussion of fundamentalist beliefs, practice, and ethos is a new preoccupation for Catholics, though no doubt with genre roots in traditional Catholic responses to Protestantism. In the *Catholic Periodical Index*, which indexes 150 periodicals and journals, the category "fundamentalism" appears in 1977, while its neighboring categories, "fund raising" and "funeral fees," predate and will no doubt outlast it.<sup>4</sup> A summary analysis of the periodical literature may help to situate the episcopal literature.

Of the essays written by Catholics on fundamentalism since 1977, none is to be found in a Catholic scholarly journal, though many of them are written by professional theologians.<sup>5</sup> Fewer than a handful seem to envision scholars among their readers, and most are written for those engaged in ministry, the theologically literate lay audience, and for the readers of the weekly Catholic press. Not one of the essays has fundamentalists among its intended readers.

Many of the essayists are well informed within a narrow range of secondary literature on fundamentalism. Some of the literature aims

<sup>4</sup> In 1967 Avery Dulles wrote that "since the 1920's Fundamentalism has been on the wane" ("Fundamentalism," in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967] 6:223-24.)

<sup>5</sup> For example, the indices of *Theological Studies*, *The Thomist*, and *Horizons: The Journal of the College Theology Society* list none. Only one of the essays to be discussed appeared in *Theological Studies*, a study on the Vatican attitude toward sects and cults and not chiefly on fundamentalism; see John A. Saliba, S.J., "The Christian Church and the New Religious Movements," *TS* 43 (1982) 468-85. The closest one comes to scholarly journals in our list are those which publish materials by scholars for the nonspecialist but theologically interested audience of intellectuals, such as the *Theology Digest*, *Biblical Theology Review*, *Communio*, and *The Bible Today*.

chiefly at historical presentation and doctrinal explanation of fundamentalism.<sup>6</sup> Few reveal any direct acquaintance with the primary literature of fundamentalist history and doctrine. As a whole the literature makes plain the fact that Catholics are not interested in fundamentalism as a phenomenon in its own right, but only insofar as it poses a pastoral problem for Catholics. All of the literature, in other words, has a pastoral as distinct from an academic interest, and so, at best, relies on a close reading of secondary sources, namely evangelical histories such as those of Marsden, Noll, and Hatch, mainline Protestant antifundamentalist theological polemic (James Barr's books), and occasional work of American Studies scholarship.<sup>7</sup>

The most evident distinction in the literature is, on the one hand, between those essays which seek to inform Catholics about fundamentalist belief and practice and to contrast it with Catholic belief and practice, leaving the critique of fundamentalism muted and indirect and, on the other, those essays in which a direct argument against fundamentalism is mounted.<sup>8</sup> Much of the literature regards fundamen-

<sup>6</sup> One of the earliest pieces sets a friendly and nonpolemical tone that is continued over the two decades in some of the literature; see Francis X. Cleary, S.J., "Fundamentalists, Catholics, and the Bible: How Literally Should We Interpret the Scripture?" *Catholic Digest* 43 (November 1978) 47–50, originally published in the Saint Louis University alumni magazine, *Universitas* (October 1977). Essays which display interest in fundamentalist literature include those by Anne Clifford, John McCarthy, and Peter Phan, in Shea *The Struggle Over the Past* 81–122; see also Zachary Hayes, "Fundamentalist Eschatology: Piety and Politics," *New Theology Review* 1 (May 1988) 21–35, a perfect example of genuine interest combined with scholarly detachment.

<sup>7</sup> George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870–1925* (New York: Oxford University, 1980); Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), and *The Princeton Theology 1821–1921*, ed. Mark A. Noll (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983); *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History*, ed. Nathan Hatch and Mark Noll (New York: Oxford University, 1982); James Barr, *Beyond Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984); James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978). The American Studies scholarship in the matter is represented in the groundbreaking study by Ernest Robert Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1970). The literature under review was composed and published before the appearance of the University of Chicago studies in worldwide fundamentalism. Whether this recent literature will have any effect on Catholic attitudes remains to be seen. See Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby, *The Fundamentalism Project*, vol. 1, *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991), and the four subsequent volumes: *Fundamentalisms and the State* (1993); *Fundamentalisms and Society* (1993); *Accounting for Fundamentalisms* (1994); and *Fundamentalisms Comprehended* (1995).

<sup>8</sup> The following are examples of the essays in which sharp comparison without invidious comment is paramount: Vincent Branick, "Bible Truth: A Possible Dialogue between Biblical Fundamentalism and Catholic Scholarship," *Studia Missionalia* 41 (1992) 269–88; Terrence Forestell, "Without Error: Fundamentalism and the Interpretation of the Bible," *Canadian Catholic Review* 5 (1987) 405–12; a series by Peter Kreeft beginning with "Fundamentalists: 'How Do We Get to Heaven,'" *National Catholic Register* 64 (October 1988); and Robert J. Hater, "Fundamentalism and the Parish," *Church* 4 (Winter 1988) 17–25. Among those which launch a direct attack on the inadequacies of fundamentalism are: the U.S. bishops' letters with the exception noted below; Richard Chilson,

talism as a radically incomplete, not to say "false" Christianity (there are some exceptions), as inadequate or distorted.

A few are irenic (and fewer yet ironic!), a good number appeal to Catholics to ponder the lessons for the Catholic Church arising from the conversions of perhaps millions of Catholics to fundamentalist churches, and these sometimes offer critical reflections on the current state of the Catholic Church as a basic condition promoting the defection of Catholics.<sup>9</sup>

Most of the periodical literature and all of the books regard fundamentalism as a threat to be met by simple and direct contrast, aimed at educating and strengthening commitment to the Catholic Church by means of doctrinal and practical invidious comparison, such as, "we interpret the Bible better than they do; we have a living, authoritative organ of interpretation while they do not; we have the full panoply of sacramental life and spiritual practice and they do not; we have the ancient tradition and they do not; we have Mary and the saints and they do not; we are civil and they aren't"—in other words, the historic Roman Catholic response to Protestant polemics and evangelization. The literature answers the question "Why should I remain in the Catholic Church?" The answer is, "We have more and better, they have less and worse." However, while Catholics leaders do agree on the "we have more and better, they have less and worse" argument to persuade their coreligionists to remain loyal Catholics, they do not agree on the causes of defection and on strategies for resisting it.<sup>10</sup> The bishops will display some of the same ambiguity.

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*Full Christianity: A Catholic Response to Fundamental Questions* (New York: Paulist, 1985); O'Meara, *Fundamentalism: A Catholic Response*; Damien Kraus, "Catholic Fundamentalism: A Look at the Problem," *Living Light* 19 (Spring 1982) 8–16; and Jacques Weber, "The Problem of Catholic Fundamentalism," in *Christian Adulthood, 1984–85: A Catechetical Resource* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1984) 81–83. Each of the latter texts is concerned with the growth of Catholic conservative activism as well as with losses to Protestant fundamentalism and tends to identify one with the other.

<sup>9</sup> In the United States, statistics indicate that while the number of Roman Catholics who drop their practice of Catholicism remains steady (15 to 25%), the number of dropouts who join other churches, and especially evangelical and fundamentalist churches, has increased (one estimate puts it at about 5% of Catholics, or two and a half million); see Dean Hoge, *Converts, Dropouts, Returnees: A Study of Religious Change among Catholics* (New York: Pilgrim, 1981). Although no one has a reliable set of figures, the loss is the largest single occasion for the Catholic literature on fundamentalism. Catholics are used to dealing with dropouts, but transfers are another matter. In Latin America the situation for the Catholic Church seems far worse; see Florencio Galindo, "Fundamentalism in Latin America," *Theology Digest* 40 (Spring 1993) 9–14, and his book *El protestantismo fundamentalista: Una experiencia ambigua para America Latina* (Navarre: Verbo Divino, 1992). The history of Protestant anti-Catholicism is begun in R. A. Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800–1860: A Study in the Origins of American Nativism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964; original edition in 1938).

<sup>10</sup> The disagreement over strategy is deep and divides the literature. The three options seem to be: (1) do a fair job in presenting the differences and arguing the Catholic case—the Branick and Hater articles noted above are examples of this; (2) concentrate

While some of the literature is understandably defensive, some is polemical, and this is more difficult to understand. The latter is sometimes marked by psychological reductionism, the methodical practice used upon Catholics by American intellectual elites for the past two centuries—which ought to have precluded its use by Catholics of others.<sup>11</sup> That Catholics had been charged with being servile followers of a foreign potentate has not deterred some Catholics from charging that fundamentalists are infantile followers of local potentates. The worm has turned:

The seeds of fundamentalism may often be discovered in an insecure childhood. By fundamentalism I understand a habit of mind which fears the new and unfamiliar, and invests some outward structure or theory with the unquestioned authority which it sought in vain as a child in an unreliable mother. . . . Fundamentalism is infantilism, and the only adequate response to the fundamentalist is to invite him or her to grow up, painful and even agonizing though this process must always be.<sup>12</sup>

Or, as Jacques Weber remarks about Catholic fundamentalism:

Catholic fundamentalism as described above seriously truncates and blocks ecclesial conversion, intellectual conversion, and wholistic [sic] moral conversion. It creates “serious deformations” in the area of religious conversion (to the holy) and Christian conversion (to Christ), causing a distorted view of the holy and of the humanity of Jesus and his teaching. . . . The Catholic fundamentalist would, I suggest, rate low in all aspects of the conversion process. I further suggest that the fundamentalist mind-set seriously inhibits the passage from infantile or childhood faith to adult faith.<sup>13</sup>

As is evident here, another concern appears in the liberal Catholic

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on educating Catholics and engage in no direct argument with fundamentalists, especially over Scripture—Raymond Brown exemplifies and recommends this in “Catholic Faith and Fundamentalism,” *Priest and People* 5 (April 1991) 134–35 and in his *Responses to 101 Questions about the Bible* (New York: Paulist, 1990) 40–48, 137–42; and (3) engage fundamentalists in debate over Scripture and doctrine, for truth is the crucial issue for defectors—for this point of view, see Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*.

<sup>11</sup> The anti-Catholic literature characteristically argues that Catholicism is not a form of Christianity, that, like Mormonism, it is a non-Christian sect or cult which uses some of the accompaniments of Christianity; see Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishers, 1962); also Jimmy Swaggart (relying on Boettner), *Catholicism and Christianity* (Baton Rouge: Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, 1986). The corresponding Catholic charge is that fundamentalism is not a religion at all but a psychological state; see John O’Donohue, “Fundamentalism: A Psychological Problem,” in *African Ecclesiastical Review* 29 (1987) 344–52; Patrick Arnold, “The Rise of Catholic Fundamentalism,” *America* 156 (April 11, 1987) 297–302; and O’Meara *Fundamentalism*.

<sup>12</sup> O’Donohue, “Fundamentalism: A Psychological Problem” 345, 348.

<sup>13</sup> Weber “The Problem of Catholic Fundamentalism” 82. While not dominated by this appeal to psychology, the literature does not lack for instances of it; see Arnold, “The Rise of Catholic Fundamentalism,” and O’Meara, *Fundamentalism*, *passim*.

responses to fundamentalism and makes them particularly interesting in terms of the inner life of the Catholic Church. Some authors are primarily worried about a phenomenon they have chosen to call Catholic fundamentalism, namely with Catholic traditionalists and activist conservatives whose attacks on Catholic liberals may have accelerated and become more effective in recent years.<sup>14</sup> These (generally academic) liberals use culturally acceptable denigration talk about Protestant fundamentalism to tar their conservative coreligionists. This is a political as distinct from a pastoral concern.

Very little of the literature presents a program for dialogue, common reflection, or common action. One is forced to the conclusion that, were fundamentalists to give up evangelism and stop receiving Catholics into their communities, the Catholic literature on it would cease and perhaps move on to Mormonism. Fundamentalism apparently raises no theologically or religiously significant questions for Catholics. There is even a promising Catholic literature on Santeria, but still Christian fundamentalism is an object chiefly of defense, alarm, and even scorn.<sup>15</sup>

To sum up with regard to periodical literature and books, the literature is meant to inform Catholics about fundamentalism, and then to contrast it with the benefits and graces of Catholicism; it is sometimes characterized by invidious comparisons and even by psychological reduction; it is informed by scholarly literature on fundamentalism but lacks any interest in fundamentalist (or evangelical) thinking; and it asserts or supposes the judgments that Catholicism is normative Christianity and that fundamentalism is inadequate and distorted Christianity. The literature is often concerned with strategies for the Church which will strengthen it against fundamentalist blandishments.

#### EPISCOPAL AND VATICAN STATEMENTS

The episcopal literature is an echo of the theological. To put the statements of American Catholic bishops on fundamentalism in perspective one has only to recall the years of preparation and consultation, and then the waves of subsequent reaction and analysis, to their statements on war and peace and on the American economy. By way of

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of traditionalism and activist conservatism in Catholic circles, see the essays by William Dinges and James Hitchcock, "Roman Catholic Traditionalism and Activist Conservatism," in *Fundamentalisms Observed* 66–141. For a discussion of conservative Catholicism since Vatican II, see Mary Jo Weaver, "Working on Being Right: Conservative Catholics Thirty Years After the Council," Seventh Annual Lecture in Catholic Studies (March 8, 1995), St. Michael's College, Winooski Park, Vermont; also a collection of essays edited by Weaver, *Being Right: Conservative Catholics in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> See Raul Canizares, *Walking with the Night: The Afro-Cuban World of Santeria* (Rochester, Vermont: Destiny, 1993), and Joseph M. Murphy, *Santeria: African Spirits in America* (Boston: Beacon, 1993).

contrast, in 1987 a small committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops including three archbishops and three auxiliary bishops (two of the six are trained Scripture scholars) composed and approved "A Pastoral Statement for Catholics on Biblical Fundamentalism."<sup>16</sup> It received little public and no scholarly attention. In fact, then, though bishops recognize the fundamentalist "challenge," neither they nor the theologians would rank it with economic or peace issues, nor, to judge by the extent of the literature, with abortion.

*The Pastoral Statement of the NCCB*

The Pastoral Statement on Biblical Fundamentalism is addressed to "our Catholic brothers and sisters who may be attracted to Biblical Fundamentalism without realizing its serious weaknesses . . . to remind our faithful of the fullness of Christianity that God has provided in the Catholic Church." The letter offers no attempt to analyze fundamentalism theologically or historically but treats it as a "general approach to life which is typified by unyielding adherence to rigid doctrinal and ideological positions." The letter's criticism of fundamentalism is threefold: fundamentalist biblicism eliminates the Church from Christianity; it ignores the historicity of the Bible itself, distorts the meaning of the Catholic doctrine of inerrancy, and ends in a hermeneutical leap from the Bible to contemporary life; and it offers simple and confident answers to complex questions. As the bishops write:

The appeal is evident for the Catholic young adult or teenager—one whose family background may be troubled; who is struggling with life, morality and religion; whose Catholic education may have been seriously inadequate in the fundamentals of doctrine, the Bible, prayer life and sacramental living; whose catechetical formation may have been inadequate in presenting the full Catholic traditions and teaching authority. For such a person, the appeal of finding the answer in a devout, studious, prayerful, warm, Bible-quoting class is easy to understand. But the ultimate problem with such Fundamentalism is that it can only give a limited number of answers and cannot present those answers on balance, because it does not have Christ's teaching church, nor even an understanding of how the Bible originally came to be written and collected in the sacred canon or official list of inspired books.<sup>17</sup>

The opening attack on fundamentalism as a general psychological attitude of rigidity and as primarily a problem for immature and uncer-

<sup>16</sup> *Origins* 17 (November 5, 1987) 376–77. The signatories are Archbishops John F. Whealon (Hartford), Theodore E. McCarrick (Newark), and J. Francis Stafford (Denver); and auxiliary bishops Alvara Corrada del Rio (District of Columbia), Richard J. Skiba (Milwaukee), and Donald W. Trautman (Buffalo). The statement is reprinted in Shea, *The Struggle over the Past* 327–32.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 328–29.

tain youth undermines the letter's profession of "ecumenical respect" and its brief contrast between fundamentalist and Catholic doctrines, leaving the reader with the impression (once again) that the bishops' responsibility is exhausted by a warning, and that fundamentalism deserves no more than simple contrast. The saving grace of the letter is its understated admission that "the Catholic Church in the past did not encourage Bible studies as much as she could have" and that there is currently need for better homilies, warmer liturgical atmosphere, and greater familiarity with the Bible through parish study and faith-sharing groups. The chief objection to fundamentalism is its ecclesiology and its lack of ecclesial structure and practice:

The basic characteristic of Biblical Fundamentalism is that it eliminates from Christianity the Church as the Lord Jesus founded it. That Church is a community of faith, worldwide, with pastoral and teaching authority. . . . The difference is often not what is said—but in what is not said. There is not mention of the historic, authoritative Church in continuity with Peter and the other apostles. There is no vision of the church as our mother. . . .<sup>18</sup>

In other words, the bishops are pointing out that fundamentalists are not Catholics, and that they are not even Episcopalians, Lutherans, or Presbyterians.

#### *A Statement of Some Southern Bishops*

On June 29, 1989, the bishops of Alabama and Mississippi issued their own letter, "Toward Your Happiness: Catholicism and Fundamentalism, A Contrast."<sup>19</sup> It opens with a review of the economic, political, and cultural grounds for the uncertainty and confusion current in American life, a confusion to which even the Church seems liable. The bishops make out the present as a season of opportunity and promise. "After all, the same age that produced Khomeini produced Mother Teresa of Calcutta." But the bishops see that fundamentalism offers Catholics "a false security." From an essay by Bill J. Leonard, a Baptist historian, they take a sketch of the origins of the fundamentalist movement, and reach the conclusion that "the fundamentalists were looking for simple solutions to the increasingly complex problems of life."<sup>20</sup>

Positions deemed common among fundamentalists are scored by the bishops. The fundamentalists have an unreasonable certainty about the meaning of Scripture texts regardless of context; a simplistic cer-

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 330.

<sup>19</sup> Oscar H. Lipscomb of Mobile, Joseph Howze of Biloxi, William Houck of Jackson, and Raymond Boland of Birmingham, "Toward Your Happiness: Catholicism and Fundamentalism, A Contrast," in *The Struggle Over the Past* 333–41.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 330. The letter cites Bill J. Leonard, "The Origins and Character of Fundamentalism," *Review and Expositor: A Baptist Theological Journal* 79 (1982) 5–17, and Eric Gritch, *Born Againism: Perspectives on a Movement* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982).



tainty of salvation instantaneously achieved; a sense of personal security which identifies God's way with "the American way," namely, with rugged individualism and self-sufficiency; an intimacy with God which excludes others (i.e. the Church). At the end, the bishops add a fifth doctrine, dualism of the world and the kingdom, which they apparently draw from fundamentalist apocalypticism, and contrast it with Catholic cultural incarnationalism.<sup>21</sup>

The correct teaching on these matters is put forth: one cannot understand even the existence of the Scriptures much less interpret them apart from the Church which determined the canon to begin with. Again, while many American values are to be cherished by Christians, others must be rejected as "exaggerated and selfish." Finally, the Incarnation implies commitment to this world, to its peace and well-being, as well as to the world to come. The function of Christian faith—and of the Bible within the Church—is to provide hope and direction as the Christian community makes its way through history. Catholics do not despair of the world and flee to God, *solus cum solo*. They celebrate the gifts of creation and redemption "with unparalleled joy. That is why the eucharist, the greatest sign of our unity in sharing God's life, is the sun and center of our lives."<sup>22</sup>

The Southern bishops end with a set of recommendations meant to help Catholics avoid "the temptations and dangers of fundamentalism and at the same time discover that confidence and hope to which the Lord calls all true disciples": Bible reading and study; improved preaching; transformation of parishes into "communities of God's love" through Cursillo, charismatic prayer groups, retreat movements, and social ministry. Beware, they say, for "we will not find peace and joy in a simplistic manipulation of biblical texts or in some instantaneous and emotional religious experience." Rather, find the yoke of discipleship in the world. Once again, as in the case of the NCCB letter, these bishops locate the problem in the age and in false teaching that has a superficial attraction, and once again they call for changes in Catholic practice to counter that attraction. Once again they offer a contrast of true doctrine to false.

### *Writings of Archbishop Whealon*

Among the American bishops Archbishop John Whealon of Hartford (d. 1991) showed the most concern with fundamentalism. He chaired the NCCB committee which wrote the 1987 letter and he himself published two essays on the subject. Their titles, "Fighting Fundamentalism" and "Challenging Fundamentalism,"<sup>23</sup> express well the serious-

<sup>21</sup> *The Struggle Over the Past* 337, 339.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 339-40.

<sup>23</sup> John F. Whealon, "Fighting Fundamentalism," *America* 153 (October 12, 1985) 212; and "Challenging Fundamentalism," *America* 155 (September 27, 1986) 136-38.

ness with which he viewed the situation: biblical fundamentalism poses "a massive challenge" to the clergy and catechists.

In the first essay, which was little more than a summary of the analysis and characterization of fundamentalism found in the NCCB letter to be released two years later, Whealon urges that the means are at hand to meet the challenge in the form of the lectionary, a new translation of the Scriptures, the *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (published in 1990), and numerous commentaries, books, tapes, etc. The answer to the fundamentalist challenge is "to get this knowledge into the minds and hearts of all our Catholic teachers and students, and also to get it into our textbooks in a way that shows a knowledge and love of the Bible."<sup>24</sup>

The second essay describes one of Archbishop Whealon's addresses attended by a large crowd equally divided between Catholics and fundamentalists, the latter apparently including a good number of former Catholics. In the address he summed up reasons to admire fundamentalist churches: "Their love of the Bible. . . . Their spirit of warmth and friendliness. Their care for other members of the congregation. Their dedication to Jesus Christ. Their moral standards. Their missionary outreach."<sup>25</sup> But he noted their deficiencies as well: their defective ecclesiology, their truncated doctrinal sense, their lack of devotion to Mary and the saints, the absence of a sacramental life, their mistaken notion of inerrancy, and the absence of interest in ecumenism and social justice. He noted in the vigorous question period that, while anti-Catholicism is present in some forms of fundamentalism, "most Fundamentalists or Evangelical churches in the United States . . . are not anti-Catholic. They are interested only in living according to Jesus Christ and the Bible,"<sup>26</sup> a statement which would seem to undercut much at least of the concern and worry which he and his fellow bishops display in the two general letters.

Archbishop Whealon admits that statistics are hard to come by, but has no doubts that "hundreds of thousands of baptized Catholics have for one reason or another abandoned their Catholic faith for a 'Bible church.'" What is the Catholic responsibility in this matter? An evangelical minister of a growing church in Waterbury told him that 80 percent of his congregation are former Catholics and that the Catholic Church is doing a poor job of holding on to its own people. Whealon lists the reasons: catechetical efforts are failing to produce educated Catholics; Catholic sense of identity is weak; evangelization efforts must be increased in parishes; in spite of the resources available, Catholics are not "Bible-reading, Bible-loving, Bible-quoting, Bible-living" people, a state of religious living of which he apparently approves.

In the end he quotes Pope John Paul II on the need for prayer and

<sup>24</sup> Whealon, "Fighting Fundamentalism" 212.

<sup>25</sup> Whealon "Challenging Fundamentalism" 136.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 137.

immersion in Scripture interpreted in the light of tradition so that one can "resist the temptation to place one's personal interpretation above or even in opposition to the authentic interpretation of God's word that belongs exclusively to the bishops of the church in union with the Pope."<sup>27</sup> It seems that in order to "challenge" and to "fight" fundamentalism it is necessary that Catholics become a biblical people subject to the magisterium. The challenge amounts to little other than a strategy for retention, however, and so the archbishop is in fact challenging Catholic leaders to resist the challenge posed to Catholicism by fundamentalism.

*Bishop Leibrecht's Letter*

In November 1988, Bishop John Leibrecht of Springfield-Cape Girardeau (Missouri-Illinois) wrote a letter to his flock entitled "Sharing God's Life Together: Being Catholic in the Bible Belt."<sup>28</sup> It is the longest and most interesting of the episcopal documents. It is animated, I think, by a quite different spirit and adopts a markedly different strategy from those of his brother bishops. He opens by expressing his admiration for the faith of his non-Catholic neighbors and writes to explain Catholic belief to his own people who may sometimes find their neighbors' religious language "confusing. . . frightening or irritating," and does so by offering a reflection on "the kinds of questions and issues we encounter among our neighbors." He then writes successive sections on the topics of salvation, the Church, worship and prayer, mission and hierarchical authority, the Holy Spirit, the Bible and tradition, and Mary. Let us take the first topic, salvation, as an example of the strategy pursued in the other sections.

When a Catholic is asked, "Are you saved?" he or she is often shaken, for Catholics are not used to talking easily about their religious life. Moreover, the question is aimed at a very specific sort of religious experience, "being born again," in which we are "confronted" by God and have "surrendered to him." The bishop hopes that every Catholic has had such experiences of Christ and of the presence of God in life. He himself has had several, and they are blessings. But the Catholic doctrine of salvation is broader. It is not the work of a moment but of a lifetime, of our gradual entry into God's life and not only of God's entry into ours. "Catholics have peak religious experiences in life, but 'being saved' is not such a singular peak experience. It is a life-long process of growing in the gifts God gives us."<sup>29</sup>

This section of the letter and those which follow amount to a mystical catechesis, an introduction to a fuller meaning of the Christian

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, citing John Paul II's address in April 1986 to the World Catholic Federation of the Biblical Apostolate.

<sup>28</sup> John J. Leibrecht, "Sharing God's Life Together: On Being Catholic in the Bible Belt, A Pastoral Letter to the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau" (November 11, 1988).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 2.

faith rather than an attack on the weaknesses of others. Unquestionably there are contrasts made and implied, for the topics for reflection are chosen from the chief criticisms of the Church by fundamentalists, but there is no offense mounted and there is a pedagogically effective strategy of unfolding Roman Catholic self-understanding on issues of mutual concern. Bishop Leibrecht has adopted the standard procedure of dialogue, namely, spelling out one's own position without attacking the position of the dialogue partner. The bishop's doctrine is one that fundamentalists will in all likelihood reject, but they will, along with the Catholics to whom it is addressed, find themselves better instructed. There is no anger or annoyance, no accusation, no attempt to explain fundamentalist belief away, and no invidious comparison. The entire focus of the letter is on an explanation of Catholic faith, rather than a refutation of the faith of others. This bishop, and the theologians who take the same tack, write in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, refusing to return to the days of confessional polemic.

### *A Vatican Report*

Several Vatican secretariats cooperated in collecting data from national episcopal conferences and other sources and in producing the "Vatican Report on Sects, Cults and New Religious Movements."<sup>30</sup> The document is concerned with a more general and geographically widespread phenomenon than the impact of Christian fundamentalism on American Catholicism. But the concern surely includes the American problem and sets it in the broader context of an international church struggling with its identity and defining its reactions to religious pluralism as well as to the ebb and flow of the religious interests and inclinations of a billion souls in hundreds of cultures.

The document has its shortcomings, both in terms of the conceptualities drawn from the human sciences (e.g. a derogatory definition of sects and cults) and its theological rationale (there is no theological understanding of defection in evidence), but it both reflects current attitudes of Catholic leaders toward the challenges and will help shape the future reactions and strategies.<sup>31</sup> It is the first serious official attempt to face what appears to be a huge threat in several parts of the vineyard.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> "Vatican Report on Sects, Cults and New Religious Movements," *Origins* 16 (May 22, 1986) 1-11.

<sup>31</sup> For a Catholic theological discussion of the problem before the Vatican document was composed, see John A. Saliba, S.J., "The Christian Church and the New Religious Movements" (see n. 5 above). For a careful criticism of the document itself by a specialist in American religious movements, see William D. Dinges, "The Vatican Report on Sects, Cults and New Religious Movements," *America* 155 (September 27, 1986) 145-47.

<sup>32</sup> In his comments on the document, Dinges estimates that Brazil will have nearly 37 million Pentecostals by the end of the century, that perhaps 30 percent of Puerto Ricans have joined Pentecostal communities, and that Latin America's Mormon population has tripled to one million. Several other sources indicate that the U.S. Catholic churches

What is the situation that the Vatican tries to explain? The concern with new religions and their growth is directed primarily at the phenomenon of massive loss of Catholics to these "sects and cults," precisely the same motive evident in the American bishops' response to fundamentalism. How does the Vatican explain the situation? In three ways. First, there are unmet needs and aspirations that the new religions meet. These are universal and Catholicism itself seeks to meet them: the desire for community, for clear and decisive answers to questions of meaning, the desire for wholeness, for cultural identity, for personal recognition and importance, for a conviction of transcendence, for specific spiritual guidance, for hope, for participation and involvement. Not only do they offer to meet the needs and aspirations in word, but "the sects seem to live by what they believe, with powerful (often magnetic) conviction, devotion, and commitment."<sup>33</sup> Momentarily, at least, the document appears to have at hand a basic point of contrast with the situation of Catholic practice, namely, the "sects" practice what they preach.

Secondly, the new religions use recruitment and conversion techniques that are underhanded and directed toward unworthy goals. They aim at achieving mind control by adopting abusive behavior-modification techniques. They may meet legitimate needs, but they do so inhumanely. They rob people of freedom.<sup>34</sup> In agreement with some of the American Catholic critics of fundamentalism, the Vatican psychologizes conversion to other religious bodies:

The sects appear to offer: simple and ready-made answers to complicated questions and situations; simplified and partial versions of traditional truths and values; a pragmatic theology, a theology of success, a syncretistic theology proposed as "new revelation"; "new truth" to people who often have little of the "old" truth; clearcut directives; a claim to moral superiority; proofs from "supernatural" elements: glossolalia, trance, mediumship, prophecies, possession, etc.

Some recruitment, training techniques and indoctrination procedures, practiced by a number of sects and cults, which often are highly sophisticated, partly account for their success. Those most often attracted by such measures are those who, first, do not know that the approach is often staged and, second, who are unaware of the nature of the contrived conversion and training methods (the social and psychological manipulation) to which they are subjected. The sects often impose their own norms of thinking, feelings and behaving. This is in contrast to the church's approach, which implies full capacity and informed consent.

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lose between sixty and one hundred thousand Hispanic adults to evangelical churches every year.

<sup>33</sup> "Vatican Report" 2.1.9.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* 1.5, 2.2. Dinges remarks that "Nevertheless, there is little substantive evidence that the vast majority of participants in new religious groups are recruited through brainwashing or coercive tactics, or that they are kept in these movements by Orwellian-like mind-control techniques" ("The Vatican Report on Sects" 147).

Young and elderly alike who are at loose ends are easy prey to those techniques and methods, which are often a combination of affection and deception (cf. the "love-bombing," the "personality test" or the "surrender"). These techniques proceed from a positive approach, but gradually achieve a type of mind control through abusive behavior-modification techniques.<sup>35</sup>

There are significant problems with this "explanation," not the least of which is the fact that it might explain Catholicism itself. As William Dinges comments:

Ironically, by framing the problem of religious pluralism partially, but not entirely, in the rhetoric of coercion, the Vatican report lends credibility to a perspective laden with secular and behavioral science assumptions. The brainwashing/mind-control metaphor implicitly medicalizes many realities of religious life and commitment, denies free will and conversion and legitimates a Freudian psychoanalytic bias in which virtually all religious experience is viewed as regressive. It is also a perspective that, when emphasized, obviates the need for critical examination and structural change within the church itself.<sup>36</sup>

The last point, the avoidance of self-criticism, is a rule of Catholic "corporate culture," a ready example of which is found in the outcry of leading churchmen against the Holy Father himself when he recently called for public confession of the Church's sins. In these documents criticism is carefully subsumed under constructive recommendations. The content of the criticism can be deduced from those recommendations and from the compliments paid to the spiritual vigor of the sects, cults, and fundamentalist groups. The criticism, if stated directly and bluntly, would have to be laid at the feet of the Church's leaders.

The medical metaphor can be found in both the periodical literature and monographs; it is the rhetorical technique in the Catholic response to fundamentalism that is most open to methodological and theological objection. Its use also reveals how deeply the sects' gain among the (nominally) Catholic population has disturbed the otherwise urbane ecumenical rhetoric of theologians and church leaders. No group in the leadership seems entirely "immune" to the use of medical metaphors to explain the success of these recruiters of "weak" and "vulnerable" Catholics! Paragraph 4 admits that the loss of Catholics to such groups is the document's major concern.

The Vatican's solution to the problem calls for a more holistic pastoral care by Catholic ministers, an increased inculturation of Catholic religious practice, especially prayer and worship "with due respect for the nature of the liturgy and for the demands of universality,"<sup>37</sup> and increased lay leadership and participation. It is clear that the Vatican

<sup>35</sup> "Vatican Report" 2.1.2, 2.2, and 3.

<sup>36</sup> Dinges "The Vatican Report on Sects" 147.

<sup>37</sup> "Vatican Report" 3.5.

wants the local churches to better meet the "needs and aspirations" it listed. It warns against naïve irenicism which overlooks the "ideological" and "economic forces" sometimes at work in the sects (perhaps an expression of worry that socially and politically conservative American groups are supporting evangelical missions in Latin America), it calls on church leaders to exercise special care for the young, and it admits that its standard Vatican II response to "other churches and religions" (dialogue) will fail in the case of the new religions.

Nonetheless, lest its concern be taken as a reversal of its positive and constructive attitude toward other religions, the Vatican does not want any diminishment of "true ecumenism." In fact, and in the end, the document is not satisfied with a negative response to the problem: "The challenge of the new religious movements is to stimulate your own renewal for a greater pastoral efficacy."<sup>38</sup>

The document on the whole presents a balance of tensions evident in the other literature, voicing at the same time concern for a threat perceived to be huge and recommendations for "more of the same" solutions, with little or no sense that other possibilities of explanation and response exist. For example, the question is never raised whether Catholicism, under certain circumstances and perhaps even constitutionally, is unable to meet those "legitimate needs and aspirations," nor is the possibility faced that a radical change in Catholic practice may be called for, or that its current understanding of the "demands of universality" may be seriously askew.

Finally, most suspect of all is its explanatory appeal to cultural breakdown:

A breakdown of traditional social structures, cultural patterns and traditional sets of values caused by industrialization, urbanization, migration, rapid development of communications systems, all-rational technological systems, etc. leave many individuals confused, uprooted, insecure and therefore vulnerable. In these situations there is naturally a search for a solution, and the simpler the better. There is also the temptation to accept the solution as the only and final answer.<sup>39</sup>

But these are the very conditions under which religions, including Catholicism and Protestant Christianity took root and prospered (if the last term is not disagreeable). If this is so, then is it not also possible that the ones which so succeed have spoken most effectively and truthfully to the human situation? This is not to deny that breakdowns do occur, nor that they present grave difficulties, nor that religion is quite properly strongly linked to social and personal breakdowns. It is only to say that the appeal shows a startling lack of historical self-understanding, one that can be understood religiously as another example of "the mote and the beam" (Matthew 7:3).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 3.

*A Statement from the Biblical Commission*

The paragraphs on fundamentalism in the recent statement of the Pontifical Biblical Commission (approved by the Pope), "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," repeat most of the charges made against fundamentalism by theologians and by previous magisterial documents. Most of the reservations and questions expressed in the present article with regard to them apply as well to this Vatican Statement. The final paragraph is particularly unfortunate: it is stated or suggested that fundamentalism is "dangerous," "deceptive," "illusory," an invitation to "intellectual suicide," and "injects into life a false certitude." The document displays a measured and balanced response to other "methods," including liberation theology and feminism, but explodes with revulsion toward fundamentalism.<sup>40</sup>

*General Observations*

The official literature we have surveyed has its aims, the most evident of which is to warn Catholics. The bishops clearly think that the Church faces a significant pastoral threat: Catholics are vulnerable to appeals from fundamentalists and other "sectarians." The officials must offer an explanation, and they do so in terms of the characteristics of the age and culture. They must propose a remedy, and so they do in terms of pastoral renewal and reform.

But this is not enough. Thus, they not only explain the appeal of fundamentalism, but they point out the doctrinal inadequacies and mistaken practices of fundamentalists. As fundamentalists turn to the Bible to "prove" that Catholicism is not Christian, so the bishops turn to Catholic doctrine and practice to indicate the inadequacies of the fundamentalist understanding and practice of Christianity. As fundamentalists might "explain" Catholicism as a diabolical distortion of the Christian faith, so the bishops' reach into widely accepted views

<sup>40</sup> See "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," *Origins* 23 (January 6, 1994) 499–524. The comments on fundamentalism are in section F, 509–10. The document was written by the Commission itself, that is, by highly skilled exegetes whose reactions to the commonsensical, nontechnical, ahistorical fundamentalist exegesis is understandable, if not excusable. The document is introduced by Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and was approved by Pope John Paul II in April, 1993. For several assessments of the document and its importance, see *First Things* (August–September 1994) 40–46. One factor which enters into Catholic antifundamentalist bias yet is not related to the problem of conversion to fundamentalist churches is the theologians' and the exegetes' class status. They may inherit the century-long attitude of disdain held by the American academic class toward popular religion of all sorts and toward fundamentalists in particular; on the relations between early fundamentalism and the American academic, see Ferenc Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America: 1880–1930* (University of Alabama, 1982). The irony here, of course, is that the academic disdain was directed toward Catholics as well.



of the peculiarities of the age and into popular psychological notions to explain the success and attraction of fundamentalism.

One of the stark differences between the approaches of the two is that the fundamentalist evangelization of Catholics is not matched in the Catholic literature, official and otherwise. The bishops show not the slightest sign of targeting fundamentalists for evangelization; their writings are defensive, not evangelistic. In this they continue the centuries-long habit of American Catholics of minding their own religious business. For all their official talk of "evangelization," American Catholics are not convert hunters.

In the end, there is an irony in bishops' warning Catholics about biblical fundamentalism. The leaders of that Western religious community which most vociferously and dogmatically opposed the Enlightenment, and which was opposed by it, now warn their flock about simplistic and dogmatic answers to the complex problems and stresses of the modern world. They deal reasonably with the possibility of nuclear war and with a systematically unjust economy, and bring spiritual and intellectual light to those topics, but they can only deal with a competitor Christianity as a threat. In these official documents one finds that deep-seated repulsion and worry that characterize the discourse of the antimodernist popes and of the current Holy Father and Cardinal Ratzinger when, in their most recent statements, they speak of our post-modernist period.<sup>41</sup>

#### ANOTHER VIEW

Catholics and fundamentalists need to drop the polemics even though there are good reasons for them. As Gabriel Daly noted, ecumenical charity ought to rule even when it remains unilateral.<sup>42</sup> Rather, the two Christianities need to explore the religious life and traditions of the other, and especially to analyze together the promise and perils of modernization and even of postmodernism. There is surely enough vigor and decency in each community to overcome the legacy of fear and hatred that has infected their historical relations and to support a respectful conversation. They have much to tell one another about

<sup>41</sup> "Veritatis splendor," *Origins* 23 (October 14, 1993) 297–336; and Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, "Christ, Faith, and the Challenge of Cultures," *Origins* 24 (March 30, 1995) 679–86.

<sup>42</sup> His recommendation is to the point: "The existence of a fundamentalist movement in all historical faiths is a phenomenon which should neither surprise nor disturb the reflective believer. It is, in part at least, a protest against the intimations of lost innocence. Instead of dwelling on the theological defects of fundamentalism, I should like to sound a more subversive note. The ecumenical instinct to entertain and where possible to respond positively to the truth in the position of others should extend also (if unilaterally) to fundamentalism. An attitude of academic contempt achieves nothing, if only because intellectual sophistication in matters of faith is precisely what many fundamentalists most despise and condemn" (Gabriel Daly, "Catholicism and Modernity," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53 [1985] 795).

their respective struggles with modernity, and plenty of struggle yet to come in which they may need one another's support. If fundamentalists refuse to engage in a transformation of the relationship, Catholics ought to change their own attitudes and interests nonetheless.

First, on the theological level, a mutually critical dialogue on matters of ecclesiology and biblical faith is needed to sharpen differences as well as to uncover commonalities. Second, a broad discussion of the relation between faith, religious practice, politics, and culture over the next decade might uncover and underscore their complaints about the corrosive effects of modern intellectual and popular culture on religious life. They might even in common make a decisive difference in the impact modernization is having on the Southern hemisphere. Neither Catholics nor evangelicals easily enter into ecumenical explorations of this sort (and "hard-bitten" fundamentalists never do). I am not optimistic about the chance for a quick end to mutual distrust and dislike, for tribalism is a permanent feature of human life, and its ambiguities will remain. Nor am I sanguine that any of the large doctrinal differences can be resolved, but pessimism is no reason to stand still. Surely there is hope to be derived from the startling history of the past 25 years, years in which new conversations have begun on several hillocks of our ideologically frozen terrain.

The looming problem that impedes the relationship between the two is that neither will recognize the other as fully Christian, and the ground for that refusal is the tribal self-definition of each as the norm of Christianity. By each community's criteria of authenticity the other is not a Christian community, the other is a stranger.<sup>43</sup> To comment on the Roman Catholic side of this impasse, I would say that, if there is such a thing as an empirically grounded ecclesiological judgment, it is this: Catholicism, James Joyce to the contrary notwithstanding, is not for all Christians. St. Paul may have intended to be all things to all persons (1 Corinthians 9:22) and perhaps Christianity must by its nature claim to be decisive for all persons. Catholicism no longer proclaims as part of its public doctrine that it is the only church to which one may belong (the "may" needs exegesis, it must be said), but it is far from admitting that the Catholic Church does not and even cannot accommodate the spiritual needs, the theological insights, and the forms of life of every Christian; it ought no longer to pretend, even if it must intend, to be the only church for all Christians. The "hundreds of thousands" and perhaps millions of former Catholics who are now fundamentalists provide a massive clue toward dismantling this residual Catholic classicism.

To my knowledge the Catholic Church has never publicly admitted that mainline Protestant churches represent a legitimate organization of the Christian community which may be justified *ad finem saeculi-*

<sup>43</sup> On the use of the terms "tribe" and "stranger," see Shea, "Fundamentalism: How Catholics Approach It," in *Christianity and the Stranger* (see n. 1 above).

*lorum*; nor does it admit that fundamentalism represents a valid witness to Jesus (though a certain grudging admiration may be given to its legendary zeal and devotion, neither one of which bears a necessary connection with the truth of its doctrine). The literature assumes that there is only one form of fully legitimate Christianity and, since the Catholic Church is that one, all Christians are morally bound to remain in communion with that one legitimate Church and that the Church is bound to do what must be done to keep them there.

However, the fundamentalists are another Christianity, there, real, living, active, preaching, teaching, baptizing, with a distinctive spirituality which is not compatible with Roman Catholicism but which is Christian nonetheless. The ecclesial and ecclesiological virtues and vices of each must be a subject of critical dialogue, but the differences should no longer propel each side to the judgment that the other is not a Christianity, or perhaps no religion at all.

The literature supports a claim that bishops and theologians have as much to learn as their flocks do. For example, if stopping the leakage is a primary concern, then another strategy is needed than polemic. I would start, as some Catholic theologians do, by taking it for granted that fundamentalism is a viable form of Christian life. That is, I would treat it as another church rather than as a swarm of blue bottle flies, according it at least the respect a Catholic would give a Hindu and, as a consequence, assume that Catholics become fundamentalists for good reason, as many Catholics today would understand why a Catholic might become a Lutheran or some other variety of Protestant. Hundreds of Catholic priests, married and with families, have left the Catholic Church and have had their orders accepted by the Episcopal and Anglican churches, and there has been only the quietest and most ecumenically sensitive response to that phenomenon on the Catholic side. The decisions of Catholics to join evangelical and fundamentalist churches may be at least as respectable and serious as those of the priests, and be an occasion of self-criticism rather than for psychological assault on the converts and the converters.<sup>44</sup>

Second, Catholics should, by rules of ecumenical dialogue, pay very close attention to fundamentalist criticisms of Catholic belief and practice, on the possibility that they are worth as much attention as are Catholic criticisms of fundamentalist ecclesiology. As bishops and the theologians agree (even though they would not agree with my statement of the case), Catholics are not biblical people, or people of the Bible. They are not, they have not been, and, in my view, it is extremely unlikely and not particularly desirable that they ever will be. Every one

<sup>44</sup> A recently published collection of statements of former Catholic priests who have been converted to Evangelical belief and practice makes the point of the inadequacy of Catholic spirituality plain (*Far from Rome, Near to God: The Testimonies of Fifty Converted Catholic Priests*, compiled by R. Bennett and M. Buckingham [Lafayette, Ind.: Associated Publishers, 1995]).

of the authors discussed would agree that Catholics are a sacramental people, but the question remains whether sacramentalism is any more or less Christian than are biblicism and prophetism. To make it clearer, Catholics ought to consider in the new post-Reformation, postmodern context whether sacramentalism is one way of Christianity, while biblicism is another. The twain surely condition and overlap one another, but they may be irreducibly different forms or modes of Christianity, and perhaps, it may be said, different Christianities. It is time that Catholic leaders wake to the legitimate and complementary varieties of irreducibly different Christianities.

Moreover, as fundamentalists charge, the Church is in fact owned and controlled by a hierarchy and is in no way democratic or congregational. Is this fact theologically beyond criticism and question? Again, Catholics are no longer much concerned with the parousia. Should they be? Furthermore, though their theologians constantly remind themselves and the laity of their "rich heritage in spirituality," perhaps they are spiritually an impoverished people. This literature, and the event of loss, is powerful *prima facie* evidence of this. Finally, Catholics are a people with many shepherds in some of whose voices it is often difficult to discern the voice of the True Shepherd—many an ex-Catholic convert to a fundamentalist church would tell us that he or she never "heard the gospel" in a Catholic Church.<sup>45</sup> These are the common charges laid at our door, charges which sting and which need more than the mildly reformist homiletic address by theologians in the closing paragraphs of their essays and episcopal urgings to deepen our communities' life.

One crucial step in the direction of a more balanced assessment of fundamentalism's virtue and Catholic vulnerability would be for Catholic bishops and theologians to drop the psychological maneuver. Psychological reduction, whose roots are ancient indeed in religious polemic, is part of the contemporary disposal of the stranger. By taking the discussion off the field of theology and forcing it onto the field of psychology, by setting the psychological discussion in such way that Catholics speak of "them," Catholics have insured their alienation from "them," have guaranteed that the outcome of the discussion is an end to discussion, and, worst of all, have paid no attention to themselves and the state of their own psyche. If Catholic theologians and bishops are to have resort to psychology, it should be universal in application, not to one side of the dispute but to both. It should be a genuine

<sup>45</sup> A reaction to the NCCB statement by a former Catholic and now a conservative Protestant who has himself done what has prompted this 20-year flurry of Catholic literature, is, I venture, reflective of a widespread opinion of fundamentalists and evangelicals; see Mark Christensen, "Coming to Grips with Loses: The Migration of Catholics into Conservative Protestantism," *America* 164 (January 26, 1992) 58–59. Christensen's explanation is simple: one does not hear in Catholic churches the saving news of Jesus' death for our sins and the call to personal conversion to Jesus. This charge would, in criteriological terms, disallow considering the Catholic Church Christian.

psychology of religion. They should call in the experts and drop the amateur practice. They should recognize that the practice of psychology is not the practice of theology, and the expert practice of one does not provide expertise in the practice of the other.

Third, the literature makes it plain that Catholic theologians and bishops do precious little homework on fundamentalist history, theology, and life. They ought to stop talking and writing about it until they have. But the way forward between the two communities is not silence any more than it is polemics; it requires mutually respectful theological and religious criticism based on each taking the other fully seriously as a Christian community of faith seeking understanding. The way forward is respectful scholarship and pastoral concern dictated by love for the one who may not yet love us.

Fourth, when Catholicism faces contemporary Christian fundamentalism it finds more than an echo of its own reaction to features of modern world.<sup>46</sup> Both Catholics and fundamentalists have in common what George Kennan recently admitted about himself: that he has remained a "guest of his time and not a member of its household." The Roman Catholic Church has passed through the same struggle with modern culture as has fundamentalism. The Catholic negative phase of that struggle peaked for the first time in the decades when fundamentalism originated; its struggle has been reformed and renewed, and has become far more complicated and sophisticated over the past quarter of a century, since the opening days of the Second Vatican Council and under the leadership of the present pope.

In the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries, popes denounced political democracy, freedom of religion, and the separation of church and state, as well as economic exploitation of workers by capitalists and the destruction of the family, not to mention the results of biblical criticism. They regarded with grave suspicion Catholics who showed any interest in a constructive engagement with modern culture and liberal politics, and theologians who attempted to adopt and adapt modern methods of historical study were excommunicated or cowed into silence. The name for the theology behind this Roman Catholic reaction to modernity is integralism, and it is the dominant form of the Roman Catholic reaction from the First to the Second Vatican Council.<sup>47</sup> It is the Catholic counterpart of American Protestant fundamentalism.

<sup>46</sup> It does so also when it faces New Age, as David Toolan has recently shown in *Facing West from California's Shores: A Jesuit's Journey into New Age Consciousness* (New York: Crossroad, 1987).

<sup>47</sup> See Joseph A. Komonchak, "Modernity and the Construction of Roman Catholicism," in *Modernism as a Social Construct*, ed. George Gilmore, et al. (Spring Hill, Alabama: Spring Hill College, 1991) 11–41; and Gabriel Daly, *Transcendence and Immanence: A Study in Catholic Modernism and Integralism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980). Integralism is still favored in its pure form by Archbishop Lefebvre's Traditionalist movement, whose 19th-century orthodoxy is now found to be heterodox—a fate frequently shared

The Roman Catholic constructive engagement with modern culture and politics begun at Vatican II has not removed the Catholic suspicion of Western secularism and its systematized appetites for natural wealth and markets, nor Catholic recognition of the terrible and terrifying costs of economic and social change in the West. Surely this vigorous critical response to the modern organization of life delivers a platform for conversation and common action with fundamentalists. If negative characterizing of one another (often justified on both sides) can be replaced by exploration of common interest in mitigating the effects of "progress," then surely we will learn and our world will change.

#### CONCLUSION

Ponderous obstacles to mutual understanding emerge from any serious review of the current status of relations between Catholicism and fundamentalism, among them the inherited anti-Catholicism of fundamentalists, well matched by the liveliness of inherited anti-Protestantism of Catholics, and the lack of intellectual interest in fundamentalism on the part of Catholic theologians and bishops. The words concluding John A. Saliba's fine essay on new religious movements well express the need for a redirection of attention on the part of Catholic theologians and the hierarchy:

Rather than being a fearful threat to Christianity or a challenge to religious warfare, the new religious and spiritual movements provide an excellent opportunity for the Christian Church to further understand her mission, to adapt and react more meaningfully to the changing needs of our age, and to reform herself in the spirit of the gospel.<sup>48</sup>

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by conservatives who learn too slowly; see Hitchcock and Dinges, "Roman Catholic Traditionalism," in *Fundamentalisms Observed* 66-101.

<sup>48</sup> Saliba, "The Christian Church and the New Religious Movements" 485; see his more recent and equally fine essay, "Dialogue with the New Religious Movements," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 30 (1993) 51-80.