—to discover in one's own ordinary circumstances the pregnant moments of eternal significance hidden within, the presence of God and his Christ.

Wherever this occurs, one can say about these ordinary circumstances: "We have seen his glory [even here], the glory of the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14).—*Translated by D. C. Schindler.* □

GISBERT GRESHAKE is professor of dogmatic theology at the University of Freiburg, and visiting professor at the Gregorian University in Rome.

HERE COME THE EVANGELICAL CATHOLICS[1]

• **William L. Portier** •

"The dissolution of the subculture is the context in which the Second Vatican Council, and its understanding of the church-world relation in modernity, was received in the United States."

Part I

1. Who are the evangelical Catholics? An anecdotal sketch

The counterintuitive phrase "evangelical Catholic" entered American Catholic historiography in 1983 when David O'Brien applied it to Isaac Hecker, the nineteenth-century founder of the Paulist Fathers. Hecker's desire to engage with culture and to "make America Catholic" was, O'Brien argued, a creative response, neither "denominational" nor "sectarian," to the "evangelical imperative" created by the modern political conditions of religious liberty and pluralism. With historian Timothy L. Smith, O'Brien emphasized

[1]Space limitations prevent my thanking by name all who have helped with this article. To those unnamed, when you see the books and articles you've recommended or my not always successful attempts to respond to your comments and criticisms, please know that I am grateful. I am especially grateful to David O'Brien and James Davidson, who provided extensive written comments on an earlier draft.

Communio 31 (Spring 2004).

the "evangelical stress on a changed life" as "perhaps the major source of reform energy in nineteenth-century America."[2]

In 1989 O'Brien made "evangelical Catholicism" one of three "styles" of "contemporary public Catholicism." Hecker and Catholic Worker founder Dorothy Day served as O'Brien's chief examples of the "evangelical Catholic" style. He contrasted it with the civil "republican" style, embodied by the colonial Carrolls and John Courtney Murray, and with the more pugnacious "immigrant" style of Archbishop "Dagger John" Hughes, builder of New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral. Crossing liberal-conservative boundaries, O'Brien paired charismatic Catholics with Catholic Workers as evangelical Catholics.

O'Brien's approach to evangelical Catholicism was not uncritical. Evangelicals, he thought, tended to marginalize themselves in public debate while their "sectarian zeal" undervalued the workaday world. A contemporary public Catholicism, he argued, needed all three styles. But, he concluded in 1989, "The force of evangelical Catholicism will undoubtedly grow as the realities of voluntarism assert themselves more fully among Catholics."[3] Fifteen years later, O'Brien's words sound remarkably prescient.

I first encountered evangelical Catholics according to O'Brien's unorthodox pairing of charismatics and Catholic Workers. The early 1980s brought an influx of Catholic charismatics to Emmitsburg, Maryland, where I had begun to teach at Mount Saint Mary's College in 1979. Bright and clean cut, they were some of the best theology students I've ever taught. I hadn't expected them to be. At conferences during the same decade I began to run into Stanley Hauerwas' Catholic graduate students. Like the charismatics they had a nose for real theological questions. But they combined it with an unabashed devotion to Dorothy Day and Oscar Romero.

[2]David J. O'Brien, "An Evangelical Imperative: Isaac Hecker, Catholicism, and Modern Society" in *Hecker Studies*, ed. John Farina (New York and Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1983), 87–132, at 94, 90–91. Smith, a Nazarene pastor with a Harvard Ph.D., published *Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (New York/Nashville: Abingdon Press) in 1957.

[3]David J. O'Brien, *Public Catholicism* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1989), 242–252, at 251. O'Brien's authoritative biography, *Isaac Hecker, An American Catholic* (Paulist) appeared in 1992.

Also during the 1980s, David Schindler, longtime editor of *Communio*'s English-language edition, introduced me to a host of young people who impressed me with their theologically sophisticated refusal to separate "orthodoxy" from social justice. For nearly two decades, Schindler has struggled to save the social thought of Pope John Paul II from a Wall Street takeover.[4]

By the 1990s, a new breed of student started turning up in my theology classes. Far from a majority, their small number often includes the most intellectually gifted. These students are interested in Catholic-specific issues. They want meat. They love the Pope. They are pro-life. They do service trips during breaks and gravitate toward "service" upon graduation. All during this time as well, I observed the 150 or so seminarians at Mount Saint Mary's Seminary on our campus. Often dismissed as "conservative" throwbacks to the 1950s, they strike me as undeniably contemporary.[5]

According to the binary common sense of contemporary American Catholicism, especially in the academy, these people that I mention are not supposed to exist. Neither liberal nor conservative, they confound the categories of my fifty-something friends. The evangelical Catholics O'Brien had foreseen back in 1989 have arrived in force. This essay offers a preliminary account of them.

2. An evangelical-Catholic confluence

The future of the church in the United States is both evangelical and Catholic! This is the thesis for which I offer a preliminary defense. Rather than a sociological projection, this essay is an historical theologian's attempt to read the signs of the times. More than a description, it is also an exhortation. By "church" I mean to refer primarily to my own communion, the Roman

[4]Michael Sean Winters, "Balthasar's Feast," *The New Republic* 4,415 (30 August 1999): 39–44. See also the "Editor's Response" in *Wealth, Poverty and Human Destiny*, edited by Doug Bandow and David L. Schindler (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2003), 347–413.

[5]William L. Portier, "In Defense of Mount Saint Mary's," *Commonweal*, 11 February 2000, 31–33 and the correspondence that followed, e.g., 10 March 2000, 4.

Catholic Church as we find it in this country.[6] But the young Catholics who are the subject of this essay are part of a larger Christian reconfiguration, a striking evangelical-Catholic confluence of national import. As significant numbers of younger Catholics catch evangelical fire, "younger evangelicals" are returning, in a corresponding movement, to history, liturgy, and a sense of the church as a visible witness.[7] We can speak in a broader sense, then, of the future of the "church" as both evangelical and catholic. Two recent commentators take these trends as signaling a certain return to "orthodoxy."[8] This evangelical-Catholic confluence as a new and significant development in American religion is a topic for a different article. But it deserves mention here as part of the context for the emergence of an evangelical impulse among younger Catholics. Most important, it suggests that evangelical Catholics have more to do with the future than with the past.

The argument proceeds in three parts. The first, to sketch an anecdotal portrait of evangelical Catholics and situate them within a larger reconfiguration of American Christians, has been done above. The second part explains evangelical Catholics in terms of the ambivalent dynamics of American pluralism. From a sociological perspective, pluralism makes possible the emergence of voluntary or evangelical forms of Christianity. Until early in the second half of

[6]On the relationship between the church of Christ and the Catholic Church, I would sign on to Avery Dulles' recent clarification in "Vatican II: Substantive Teaching, a reply to John W. O'Malley and others," *America*, 31 March 2003, 14–17, at 16–17.

[7]"While Catholics may be rediscovering the word 'evangelical,' Protestants are beginning to feel much more at home with the word 'catholic.' This is not because they are becoming Roman Catholic, but because they are becoming catholic (lowercase) in the early church sense of the word: *universal Christian*" (Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Re-thinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999], 25–26). See also Webber's portrait of evangelical leaders born after 1975 in *The Younger Evangelicals, Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002). Webber is an *emeritus* historian at Wheaton College. On the possibilities for convergence, see the essays in *Catholics and Evangelicals, Do They Share A Common Future?*, ed. Thomas P. Rausch (New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2000).

[8]See Thomas C. Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy: Signs of New Life in Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins Publishing, 2002) and Colleen Carroll, *The New Faithful, Why Young Adults Are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002).

the twentieth century, an extensive immigrant subculture tended to buffer American Catholics from the full effects of religious voluntarism. A predictable result of the subculture's dissolution would be the emergence of more evangelical forms of Catholicism. But because of pluralism's inherent contradictions, these new forms challenge Catholicism's sacramental and ecclesial form and militate against its cultural incarnation. Part III addresses the question of why the coming of evangelical Catholics so often surprises and even troubles older Catholics who tend to see them as a return to the past which they either welcome or reject. Part III urges that evangelical Catholics will look more like the future than the past if we place them in an American Catholic story that emphasizes the dissolution of the subculture more than the tired contrast between pre- and post-Vatican II. The dissolution of the subculture is the context in which the Second Vatican Council, and its understanding of the church-world relation in modernity, was received in the United States.

3. Locating "evangelical Catholics"

Evangelical and *Catholic* are not usually found together. In fact, many evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics would see *evangelical Catholic* as a contradiction in terms.[9] Joining these terms, I hope, will help readers see the landscape of contemporary church life in new ways. Before moving on to the second part, it will be useful to distinguish the "evangelical Catholics" who are the subject of this article from other groups the term has been used to describe.

Evangelical Catholics are not necessarily Catholic Charismatics. Already in 1990, Keith Fournier's experience with the Charismatic Renewal at the Franciscan University of Steubenville inspired him to write *Evangelical Catholics*. After David O'Brien, Fournier was the first Catholic I found who used the term. With a Foreword by Charles Colson, Fournier's book advocates a form of evangelical-Catholic convergence. Just as Robert Webber wants to reclaim the common tradition of lower case catholicism for evangelicals, so Fournier wants to reclaim for Catholics "our common evangelical

[9]The first chapter of Keith Fournier's *Evangelical Catholics* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990) is entitled "Evangelical Catholic: A Contradiction in Terms?"

heritage."[10] Historically, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal represents the first stirring in this direction from the Catholic side. But the movement I want to describe is broader, an evangelical impulse among younger Catholics that includes but is not necessarily connected to the Charismatic Renewal.

Evangelical Catholics are not necessarily ERCs. At either end of a spectrum defining evangelical-Catholic confluence, we find Roman Catholics who become evangelical Protestants and evangelical Protestants who become Roman Catholics. Prominent among the latter (ERCs) is a group of former ministers and seminary students. Returning to the "common tradition" along the path Robert Webber describes, people such as Steubenville theologian Scott Hahn and Marcus Grodi of Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) were surprised to wind up as Roman Catholics. Like the Oxford converts, they studied their way into the Church, often via Scripture, the Fathers, and such works as Newman's *An Essay on the Development of Doctrine* and Karl Adam's *The Spirit of Catholicism.*[11] To some extent, they find themselves marginalized in their new religious home.[12] Surely ERCs influence the young people who are this essay's primary subject, and are themselves literally "evangelical Catholics." But I am most interested here in those who come to the evangelical-Catholic confluence from the Catholic side of the spectrum.

If this evangelical impulse that has arisen in the Church over the past fifteen years is not the work of the Holy Spirit, I should stop

[10]Fournier, *Evangelical Catholics*, 64. See the first chapter's discussion of the term *evangelical*, especially at 21–22.

[11]Written with his wife, Kimberly, Hahn's *Rome Sweet Home: Our Journey to Catholicism,* Foreword by Peter Kreeft (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993) is paradigmatic. Hahn wrote the Foreword to Patrick Madrid, ed., *Surprised by Truth: Eleven Converts Give the Biblical and Historical Reasons for Becoming Catholic* (San Diego: Basilica Press, 1994). With special attention to Hahn and musician John Michael Talbot, theologian Scot McKnight gives these conversion narratives a sympathetic but critical look from the evangelical Protestant end of the spectrum. See "From Wheaton to Rome: Why Evangelicals Become Roman Catholic," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45, no. 3 (September 2002): 451–472. I borrowed "ERC" from McKnight.

[12]Peter Huff, "New Apologists in America's Conservative Catholic Subculture," *Horizons* 23, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 242–260. Richard R. Gaillardetz, "Do We Need a New(er) Apologetics?" *(America*, 2 February 2004, 26–33).

writing now. But attributing today's evangelical impulse in the Church to God's grace leads to concern for the historical and social conditions that will smooth its way. This impulse needs to be encouraged and integrated into the life of the Church, especially into theology. I follow O'Brien in situating evangelical Catholics in the broad context of modern politics. But I place more emphasis on pluralism's inner contradictions, its power, of which Hecker was insufficiently aware, to deform Christianity.

It is pluralism, fragmentary and unstable, that makes evangelical forms of Christianity sociologically possible and, at the same time, poses particular difficulties for their integration into a truly theological sense of the church's "evangelical" mission. The argument here is that, if we have no subculture to buffer so many Catholics from pluralism's ordinary dynamics, we can expect to see more "evangelical Catholics" as pluralism's Catholic children. They will not only embrace Catholic identity voluntarily, but will also have to struggle to differentiate the freedom of faith from the culture of choice encouraged by contemporary pluralism.[13]

Part II

1. Pluralism and its contradictions

Religious "voluntarism" is here used in the ordinary sense given to it by historians of American Christianity.[14] It means that people are legally free, rather than coerced, in the matter of ecclesial membership. This situation of religious liberty tends to make ecclesial membership "voluntary" in the sociological sense emphasized by Ernst Troeltsch when he contrasted *voluntary* with *inherited*

[13]Paul J. Griffiths concludes a discussion of "privatization" with this observation: "It is one of the ironies of the American experiment with religious liberty that it has become implicated . . . causally if not intentionally, with the destruction of properly religious forms of life" (*Problems of Religious Diversity* [London: Blackwell Publishers, 2001], 88).

[14]In the dynamics of pluralism, voluntarism in this sense tends to elide with a Lockean view of the church as a voluntary association and with a metaphysics in which human will has ontological priority over the created order. It is precisely this elision that "evangelical Catholics," if they are truly Catholic, must avoid.

or *institutional* churches.[15] In the United States, frontier Baptists and Methodists were the first to discover what historian Joel A. Carpenter has called in another setting the "blessings of secularity."[16] Religious pluralism offers evangelical Christians a massive, and seemingly providential, opportunity to carry out the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19.

But these "blessings of secularity" come at a price. This price is pluralism's chief contradiction. While it presupposes religious liberty, pluralism also fosters "reservation" churches that are not really free to engage fully with the world. In short, pluralism encourages voluntary churches but puts them in the incongruous position of having to develop theories to explain how they can be "public." The correlative of *public* is, of course, *private*. This means that the seemingly unprecedented field for evangelization pluralism offers is always simultaneously undermined by its corresponding notion that voluntary churches occupy "private" space.

Even as modern political conditions encourage evangelical forms, they tend to deform Christianity insofar as it is ecclesial and

[15]Before H. Richard Niebuhr wrote Ernst Troeltsch's much abused church-sect typology into his "Christ against Culture" type, this distinction between voluntary and institutional or inherited religion was central to Troelstch's original conception of the church-sect typology. In this sense, *evangelical* and *catholic* correspond, but very roughly, to *sect* and *church*. For Troeltsch, "sect" meant "voluntary." "If objections are raised to the terms 'Church' and 'Sect,' and if all sociological groups which are based on and inspired by monotheistic, universalized religious motives are described . . . as 'Churches,' we would then have to make the distinction between institutional churches and voluntary churches. It does not really matter which expression is used. The all-important point is this: that both types are a logical result of the Gospel, and only conjointly do they exhaust the whole range of its sociological influence, and thus also indirectly of its social results, which are always connected with the religious organization" (*The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, vol. 1, trans. Olive Wyon with a foreword by James Luther Adams [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992], 340–341). H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1951), chapter 2. While Niebuhr, rather than Troeltsch, is largely responsible for the opprobrium contemporary theologians reserve for *sectarians*, it is also clear that a *voluntary* church in Troeltsch's sense is incompatible with the church's universality as Catholics understand it.

[16]Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again, The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 238–239. On the frontier, see Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989).

incarnate in a culture.[17] Modern notions of tolerance tend to domesticate both the gospel that is being preached and the form of life it entails by treating them as simply one among many possible private "religions." Soon religious pluralism transforms from a providential fact into a theoretical good, a natural state of things best left undisturbed. If pluralism is a natural state, missionaries are imperialists. Evangelists who take Matthew 28:19 seriously impose their private beliefs on others. St. Paul's "Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Cor 9:16) turns him into an oppressor.

Pluralism's inner contradictions pose a dual threat to evangelical Christians. On the one hand, they encourage evangelicals themselves to be individualistic and anti-institutional.[18] On the other, they encourage Christians who are not evangelicals to internalize the implications of pluralism as a natural state and to distrust evangelical forms. For Catholics pluralism holds a further contradiction. They are in theory free to believe in Catholic ecclesiology, but the practices of pluralism form them in a Lockean ecclesiology in which the Church can only be a denomination, one among a nation's many "voluntary associations of men," rather than transnational or catholic. In this context, evangelical-Catholic confluence is especially noteworthy. In any case, evangelical Christians of any stripe would be wise to think more carefully about pluralism.

This doesn't mean that in God's providence Christians do not learn about Christ from those they evangelize or from Muslims and Buddhists with whom they dialogue. This claim is compatible with Logos theology from St. John's Prologue to Justin Martyr to *Nostra Aetate*. It is the basis of sound inculturation theory. But in the end, it is to Mount Zion that the prophets saw the nations stream and it is the Wisdom of the trinitarian God that we seek. While we

[17]For critiques of modern notions of tolerance, see Scott H. Moore, "Hospitality as an Alternative to Tolerance," *Communio* 27 (Fall 2000): 600–608 and Griffiths, *Problems of Religious Diversity*, chapter 4, especially 104–111. I wish it were unnecessary to add that the point of such critique is not to advocate doing away with legal tolerance but to show its limits and to exhort Christians to transcend it.

[18]A recent survey by Barna Research indicates the erosion of traditional Christian beliefs even among self-identified "born-again" Christians. See Dave Shiflett, "Uncertain Crusaders," *The Wall Street Journal*, 14 November 2003. "Christians no longer worry much about converting 'heathens'," says the headline.

live in this world, the pluralistic religious situation in which we find ourselves bursts with eschatological tension.

2. Conversion and witness shape the evangelical form

Conversion and witness define the evangelical form in American Christianity. Over the past few decades, the number of Americans claiming to have had a "born again" experience of personal conversion to Jesus Christ has remained consistently around twenty-five percent. Such people self-identify as "evangelical" Christians. Apart from self-identification, the term *evangelical* blends theology and sociology. Theologically it has to do with personal conversion to Jesus Christ, the centrality of the Bible in Christian faith and life, and public witness to the new life of Christ within the individual Christian. Sociologically, *evangelical* is synonymous with *voluntary* in Troeltsch's sense. A voluntary religious identity is opposed to one that is ethnically or culturally maintained. In the United States, evangelical Christianity has generated its own subculture but is not known for a strong theology of the church.[19]

An evangelical ethos demands public witness that goes beyond what a Catholic of my generation understands by "good example." It presumes a willingness to share the faith that immigrant Catholics of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries simply could not have. Evangelicals share the faith not only through preaching in church or faith-sharing groups in one's congregation but also through active forms of witness in "public" spaces.[20] On the personal level this can range from wearing a Christian T-shirt to the mall, to praying before meals in a restaurant, to working the dorm halls Campus Crusade-style in your public university. Organizationally it can mean marshaling all the resources of glossy advertising and

[19]For a discussion of the definition of "evangelical," see Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, Mich. and Leicester, England: William B. Eerdmans and Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 6–12 and the works cited at 8–9, note 7. See James C. Turner's comments in "Something to Be Reckoned With, The Evangelical Mind Awakens," *Commonweal*, 15 January 1999, 11–13.

[20]For community-based accounts of conversion and evangelization by an evangelical Christian teaching at a Catholic university, see Brad J. Kallenberg, *Live to Tell, Evangelism for a Postmodern Age* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2002).

mass media communications in the service of the Gospel. As these examples suggest, the dynamics of religious voluntarism tend to entangle evangelical Christians in the practices of late capitalism. In a consumer society, the evangelical style can't avoid the risk of "selling God."[21] The challenge for evangelical Catholics is not only to recover Catholic identity in the midst of pluralism but also to avoid the perils of religious voluntarism.

3. The dissolution of the American Catholic subculture

Between World War I and the time of the Second Vatican Council, immigrant Catholics voluntarily built an elaborate subculture centered in the urban Northeast but extending to the cities of the Midwest with outposts as far-flung as Butte, Montana and Shawnee, Oklahoma. A network of parishes, schools at every level, hospitals and other agencies served as a buffer between most Catholics and American religious pluralism. Though geographically diverse, the subculture had a distinctive spiritual and intellectual topography. Not all Catholics went to Catholic schools. But whether they lived in New Jersey or Oklahoma, they participated in varying degrees in a shared religious culture. They learned similar practices of praying and thinking that added to their demographic distinctiveness. This Catholic world was surely not airtight. But it helped to protect generations of immigrants from Nativism and anti-Catholicism even as it schooled them in how to be Americans. As a result, most American Catholics never felt the full effects of their country's voluntary religious culture.[22]

[21]"The ever-increasing influence of late-capitalist economic forms . . . encourages those who live . . . under the sway of these . . . to understand every aspect of their lives in terms of the fundamentally economic model: as matters of choice and preference . . ." (Griffiths, *Problems of Religious Diversity*, 84). See also R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God, American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) and Vincent J. Miller, *Consuming Religion, Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture* (New York and London: Continuum, 2004).

[22]The subculture itself was in some ways a classic expression of religious voluntarism. For a historical study of the subculture, see William M. Halsey, *The Survival of American Innocence: Catholicism in an Era of Disillusionment, 1920–1940* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980). For a recent sociological

As the twentieth century advanced, American Catholics continued to move up the sociological escalator. But as they did, many experienced the subculture as more of a confine than a haven.[23] By mid-century, Catholic elites could refer to their cultural habitat as a "ghetto."[24] Many suffered a loss of confidence. Life seemed more real beyond the "ghetto's" borders. By the 1960s, significant numbers of Catholics had moved to the suburbs. At the end of that decade, demographic differences between Catholics and other Americans became statistically negligible. This dissolution of the subculture is the single most important fact in U.S. Catholic history in the second half of the twentieth century. American voluntarism could now hit Catholics in the U.S. with its full impact.

Part III

1. The conventional Vatican II story: submerging identity questions

Rather than the dissolution of the subculture, however, the Second Vatican Council usually serves as the great divide in standard histories of American Catholicism. Too numerous to mention are the commentaries that describe the polarization between liberals and conservatives in the contemporary American church. This familiar storyline invokes a sharp break between "pre-Vatican II" and "post-Vatican II" to account for our present conflicted situation.[25] But one

account, see William V. D'Antonio, James D. Davidson, Dean R. Hoge and Katherine Meyer, *American Catholics, Gender, Generation, Commitment* (Walnut Creek, Ca.: AltaMira Press, 2001), chapter 1.

[23]The phrase "sociological escalator" is from Mark S. Massa, *Catholics and American Culture: Fulton Sheen, Dorothy Day, and the Notre Dame Football Team* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1999).

[24]Lamenting their "spirit of separatism from fellow citizens of other religious faiths," John Tracy Ellis described Catholics as having "suffered from the timidity that characterizes minority groups, from the effects of a ghetto they have themselves fostered . . ."("American Catholics and the Intellectual Life," *Thought* 30, no. 116 [Spring 1955]: 388).

[25]Anthony J. Pogorelc and James D. Davidson, "American Catholics: One Church, Two Cultures," *Review of Religious Research* 42, no. 2 (2000): 146–158. Though it might appear to be so to one who spends a lot of time with church professionals, the authors conclude that American Catholics are not polarized around issues of religious authority.

need only contrast the reception of Vatican II in the United States with its reception in other countries to see that Vatican II did not necessarily leave radical polarization in its wake.[26] This means we need more variables to help explain the present. My chief candidate is the dissolution of the subculture as the context for the reception of Vatican II.

With Peter Steinfels I want to emphasize the corrective importance of "external" factors such as demographic shifts in narrating recent U.S. Catholic history.[27] I don't deny that the council's significance is contested among American Catholics. Nor do I wish to deny the central importance of faithfully interpreting the council. The point is rather that in the standard "pre-Vatican II" to "post-Vatican II" story, the dissolution of the subculture has been invisible.

The dissolution of the subculture left American Catholics with a residual network of materially separate Catholic institutions such as universities and hospitals. Though highly visible, their clarity as religious boundary markers had been obscured. The council's relatively tame attempt at post-World War II theological boundary adjustment happened to coincide with a demographic weakening of the borders that distinguished Catholics in the U.S. from other Americans. The council's qualified theological affirmation of pluralism in the decrees on religious liberty, ecumenism, and non-Christian religions came at the same time as American Catholics were entering a pluralist mainstream undergoing a period of singular social upheaval. These simultaneous shifts have left post-subculture Catholics in a kind of church without walls where they finally feel the full weight of religious voluntarism.

[26]The Netherlands is one of the few countries where Vatican II's reception closely resembles its reception in the U.S. I found most instructive for understanding American Catholicism John A. Coleman's account of how Vatican II's reception in the Netherlands accelerated pressures to break through "columnization," the state-supported Dutch version of "ghetto" Catholicism. See *The Evolution of Dutch Catholicism, 1958–1974* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978).

[27]"The existing narratives stress developments internal to the church and tend to underestimate the independent impact of outside events" (Peter Steinfels, *A People Adrift, The Crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in America* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003], 32–37, at 37).

Former subculture-dwellers have tended to give the most conventionally American reading to what Vatican II says about pluralism. An undifferentiated embrace of pluralism within the boundaries of the modern nation state diffuses Catholic identity as universal. It blinds those who make it to the christocentric reading of the council highlighted by Pope John Paul II in such texts as *Gaudium et Spes* 22. Such a christocentric emphasis is precisely what attracts younger, evangelical Catholics who have never known a subculture they want to be freed from.

2. Two recent studies of under-forty Catholics[28]

Pluralism and religious voluntarism raise the key issue of identity formation and maintenance. Why be a Catholic rather than a Protestant, a Christian rather than a Buddhist, a religious person rather than a spiritual one? In a voluntary religious culture, such questions arise naturally. Sociologists have wondered how approaches to religious pluralism now prevalent in American Catholic life can form and maintain Catholic identity among young adults.[29]

---

[28]As a theologian, I bring no new empirical data to the discussion of these studies. Nor do I wish to pit two colleagues against each other. As in the study cited in note 21, Davidson and Hoge work together and are well aware of the internal (changes in the Church) and the external (changing status of American Catholics) variables that help to explain younger Catholics. I focus on these two earlier studies because they deal with younger Catholics and because their rhetorical or narrative strategies, the tropes, if you will, that give form to their data, are part of what I want to study. I do not claim to offer a comprehensive account either of young Catholics or of the work of Davidson and Hoge.

[29]"In the wake of Vatican II, Church leaders have tried to get beyond the ghetto mentality of the 1930s and 40s and have made a self-conscious effort to emphasize commonalities among Christians. Most of these efforts to establish better relations with other faith groups are to be applauded, because they tear down some unnecessary barriers between Catholics and other faith groups. However, it is a mistake to stress common Christian heritage without also calling attention to what gives Catholics their distinctive identity . . . . We believe it is quite possible to stress both the commonalities among Christian faiths and a specifically Catholic identity" (James D. Davidson et al., *The Search for Common Ground: What Unites and Divides Catholic Americans* [Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 1997], 221–222).

The most recent study of twenty- to thirty-something Catholics found that the boundaries of Catholicism in the U.S. had indeed eroded. In *Young Adult Catholics: Religion in the Culture of Choice,* Dean Hoge and his colleagues describe the sort of young Catholics we might expect to find without a subculture to shield them from the full effects of pluralism. Catholics under forty generally like being Catholic. They tend to agree with the core beliefs stated in the Nicene Creed. But they have "little experience of Catholicism as a tight-knit culture system." Cultural and ethnic factors that contributed to a strong Catholic identity in the past have not been replaced. Loss of minority and outsider status leaves them with a sense of Catholic boundaries that is "diffused and ambiguous." They view their Catholicism as accidental and incidental to their relationship with Christ. Their commitment to the Church as a visible organization is weak. Their sense of being Catholic has a minimal ecclesial dimension. They have been taught that God loves them but in many cases have no language for talking to God. Hoge et al. call them "spiritual and contingent Catholics."

> For many young adults, Catholicism is not so much a binding community of discipleship as a cultural tool kit of symbolic religion/spiritual wares from which it is possible to construct a personal religious identity.[30]

These conclusions are consistent with the findings of an earlier and wider-ranging study by James Davidson and his colleagues. Davidson et al. divided the Catholic population into three generations with the Second Vatican Council as the key Catholic-specific event defining the separate cohorts. Born before 1940, "pre-Vatican II Catholics" came of age in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. "Vatican II Catholics" were born between 1941 and 1960 and were formed in the 1950s and 1960s. The Davidson study called Hoge's "young adult Catholics" "post-Vatican II Catholics." Born after 1960, they grew up in the 1970s and 80s.

Davidson and his colleagues inserted the information they gathered about Catholics born after 1960 into a narrative structure that makes Vatican II the defining event of twentieth-century

---

[30]Dean R. Hoge et al., *Young Adult Catholics*, 226. The phrases in quotation marks are taken from the Conclusion of this study, 222–223.

American Catholic history. This decision is in keeping with the conception and purpose of the study, namely, fostering unity or common ground in the Church and with the emphasis on the importance of birth cohorts.[31] But it can obscure the role of the voluntary dynamics of religious pluralism in shaping young Catholics. The authors are well aware of these dynamics. But their thematic emphasis in presenting the cohorts can draw attention away from voluntarism toward pre-and-post-Vatican II.

Completed four years later, Hoge's study also begins with a narrative of American Catholic history in which Vatican II is the key dividing line. While the Hoge study relies heavily on the earlier Davidson study and occasionally uses the generational nomenclature of pre- and post-Vatican II, it tends to give more thematic emphasis to contemporary American pluralism than to Vatican II. Its brief Conclusion makes no reference to the Council and situates the available information about young adult Catholics in the context of a voluntary religious culture.

In other words, what I have called the "dissolution of the subculture" plays a stronger role in the narrative structure of the later study than it does in that of the earlier study. The young adult Catholics of the Hoge study are closer to "post-subculture Catholics" than to Davidson's "post-Vatican II Catholics." They are more clearly defined by the dynamics of religious voluntarism than by an older generation's experience of Vatican II. Nevertheless the Hoge study doesn't cleanly break with the conventional narrative structure that makes Vatican II the turning point of the story. To say it in still another way, Hoge's is not yet clearly a story in which the crucial plot development subjects Catholics to the same forces as everyone else in a voluntary religious culture. Perhaps this comes down to whether you look at American Catholics from within the Church in terms of Vatican II or from outside in terms of American religious voluntarism. In studying younger Catholics, the relative emphasis one places on internal variables (changes in the Church) and external variables (changes in the status of Catholics) is not solely a function of data but also depends on the narrative strategies one chooses.

[31]See Davidson et al., *The Search For Common Ground*, chapter 7 for discussion of the generational cohorts. Chapter 1 offers an overview of American Catholicism from the 1930s to the 1990s in which Vatican II is the pivotal event.

3. *Changing the story: the dissolution of the subculture and the reception of Vatican II*

What if we put what we know about under-forty Catholics into a narrative whose defining event was the dissolution of the American Catholic subculture as the context for the reception of Vatican II in the United States? Imagine two stories. The first, told by many older Catholics, centers on Vatican II as liberating a whole generation from an immigrant Catholic world that was sufficiently narrow and authoritarian that by mid-century it could be plausibly referred to as a ghetto.

In the second story, post-Vatican II politics of liberals and conservatives takes a back seat. The main issue is now Catholic identity. This is a story of Catholics learning how to be truly Catholic in American pluralism without a subculture. Both stories are true. The first looks at American Catholicism from the inside, the second from the outside. The first explains my peers, the second my students. And it may be that the second story will lead to a more balanced account of what the Council taught about the Church's missionary identity in the modern world.

Let us continue the experiment of imagining a different story. Roughly twenty-five percent of Americans respond to the conditions of religious voluntarism in an evangelical style. Since the dissolution of the subculture, Catholics are now subject to the same pluralistic conditions in which evangelical Christianity flourishes. If we change from the first story to the second, we can ask if a comparable number of Catholics are adopting an evangelical style. Looking at Catholics as full participants in American pluralism would lead us to expect that they would. Addressing in its Conclusion "the lack of commitment among young adult Catholics," the Hoge study compares them unfavorably with the "religious vitality" of evangelical Protestants. But it never occurs to Hoge and his colleagues to ask if the young Catholics who have a "strong and vital religious tradition in our cultural context" are the ones who most resemble evangelical Protestants.[32]

In a story that highlighted Catholicism's post-subculture entry into the arena of American religious pluralism, we might pay less attention to the loosely affiliated majority of young adult

[32]Hoge et al., *Young Adult Catholics*, 227–228.

Catholics and more to the minority of Davidson's post-Vatican II generation. Thirty percent of them agree that the Catholic Church is the one true Church. Twenty percent of them think that premarital sex is always wrong. Fourteen percent strongly disagree that one can be a good Catholic without going to Mass. Thirty-seven percent score high on Davidson's traditional beliefs and practices index.[33]

Though such overstated questions as, "Is the Catholic Church the one true Church?" are theologically misleading, I must admit their value in such surveys. In this case, the result is fascinating. In a church whose most frequently quoted theologian has been Notre Dame's Richard McBrien, how did thirty percent of under-forty Catholics come to think that the Catholic Church is the one true Church? Who are these people? Where did they come from? Are they leftovers or prophets?

In response to such queries from diocesan and parish leaders, Davidson considered the possibility of a "rebound effect" among "some younger Catholics who are yearning for a return to the pre-Vatican II Church." Davidson concluded that the data showed more of a downward trend than a rebound.[34] But he put the question to the data in terms of a "return" to the past. What if post-subculture conditions are giving rise to new kinds of Catholics? Wouldn't more generations be necessary to see if there is indeed a downward trend in Catholic beliefs and practices? Even if a slight downward trend continues, we need to know more about this relatively large group of young Catholics who scored high on traditional beliefs and practices. Do they represent the past, as Davidson's language suggests, or do they represent the future? I cannot answer these questions but I hope sociologists devote more study to this large minority group and also to the narrative strategies such studies presuppose.[35]

---

[33]Davidson et al., *The Search For Common Ground*, 124–132.

[34]On the question of a "rebound effect," see ibid., 132–137.

[35]"What distinguishes the twenty-one percent of post-Vatican II Catholics stressing compliance with Church teachings from the majority of young Catholics who place more emphasis on following one's personal conscience? By what processes have they come to hold such an atypical stance? How do they sustain such a view given that the majority of their peers go in quite a different direction?" These are among the questions for future research at the Conclusion of Pogorelc and Davidson, "American Catholics: One Church, Two Cultures?," 155. See Richard Featherstone, "Compliance as Dissidence: Young Catholics and Sexual Ethics," *Sociological Focus* 34, no. 2 (May 2001): 139–152. The author asks how a small group (about 10 percent) of young Catholics can hold the atypical or dissident position of accepting the official teaching of the Church on sexual issues. He interprets them as "a continuation of traditional Catholicism" rather than as "a new breed of dissident" (140). He concludes that "maintaining a dissonant position is partly a matter of defining oneself as a 'good' Catholic, possessing a religiously active mother during childhood, and associating with traditionally minded others" (152).

My guess is that this minority includes the evangelical Catholics O'Brien predicted back in 1989. Colleen Carroll, a Roman Catholic, calls them the "new faithful." Thomas Oden, a Methodist and the "leading theologian of the back-to-the-early-church movement,"[36] sees them as signs of the "rebirth of orthodoxy." Surely they are not the majority. But if we change from the first to the second story, they look more like the future than the past. In my experience, admittedly anecdotal, it is from among this thirty-seven percent that undergraduate theology majors, parish youth ministers, and graduate students in theology and ministry are more likely to come. If true, this is most significant for the future of the Catholic Church in the United States.

Both studies include recommendations to church leaders. In the Davidson study, they focus on how to create conditions for unity or common ground in the church and emphasize the importance of generational differences. The Davidson study's "action implications" are especially wise. But both sets of recommendations would be enriched if they considered the possibility that the voluntary dynamics of American religious pluralism are likely to produce significant numbers of young Catholics with evangelical sensibilities. Such people would not necessarily be interested in "return" or restoration as they would have to be if we were in the first story. In the great polarizing year of 1968, they were either very young or unborn. Rather they are interested in identity.

In a section on how to build Catholic identity "in a positive way," the authors of the Hoge study recommend the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) approach characterized by "mentoring, deliberation, community, and discipleship" as a model. The Davidson study recommends that parish leaders get beyond

---

[36]This is Robert Webber's designation in *Ancient-Future Faith*, 26.

parish-based ministries and into the places where Catholics actually spend most of their time. After decades of emphasis by the pope on the "new evangelization," no mention is made of evangelization. Nor is there any reference to new religious movements such as Communion and Liberation or Focolare. They have had impressive success doing the kinds of things with young adults that both studies recommend. An inordinate fear of "sectarianism" seems to inhibit the authors of the Hoge study from looking at such obvious sources of religious vitality.[37]

4. Identity: "Proud 2B Catholic"

The dissolution of the subculture is the defining event for twentieth-century American Catholicism. But it is more of a demographic fact than an event young people experience directly. The subculture's dissolution is perhaps more evident to those who once lived in it than to those who live without it. Let's take the example of marriage. Subculture boundaries were always porous. "Mixed marriages" occurred, but they were noteworthy. Not all Catholics went to Catholic schools, but many did. In a post-subculture situation, suburbs replace neighborhoods with their ethnic and generational continuity. Catholic school enrollments decline, making it less likely that young Catholics will marry Catholic partners. This makes Catholic identity voluntary in a way that it was not when Catholic school enrollment peaked just after mid-century.

To say that the subculture has dissolved does not mean that there are no more Catholic schools. American Catholics have inherited an array of some two hundred institutions of higher learning. But now they must decide what to do with them. As debates of the past few decades indicate, Catholic universities and colleges have become intentional in a way that those who staffed them in the 1940s and 50s could hardly have imagined. Whether they remain Catholic is no longer automatic. Without a network of feeder schools to supply Catholic faculty, hiring decisions are the

[37]Hoge, *Young Adult Catholics*, 227; Davidson, *Common Ground*, 220. On "sectarianism," see Hoge 229, 233, 238.

key to Catholic identity. In a post-subculture situation, Catholic identity is the central issue.[38]

If religious identity is voluntary and Catholics fully subject to the dynamics of a pluralist religious mix, we might expect the ecclesial sense of many Catholics to continue to weaken. We might even expect the Catholic Church increasingly to resemble a large liberal Protestant denomination. But we might also expect a significant minority of post-subculture Catholics to be Catholic in a more evangelical form. Like the other members of their generational cohort, they will be drawn to Catholic-specific identity markers such as the Eucharist, the pope, and Marian devotion. But in style or form, they will be more like evangelical Protestants than either their Catholic contemporaries or subculture predecessors.

All over the country, Catholic students are discovering Eucharistic adoration and inviting their friends. Many find it a deeply satisfying form of prayer. In their dorm rooms they might switch from MTV to Mother Angelica's EWTN. They might wear John Paul II T-shirts to class or the mall. At places like the University of Wisconsin at Madison, they might be part of a vibrant Catholic campus ministry that creatively joins Catholic sacramentalism with evangelizing strategies from Campus Crusade or InterVarsity Fellowship.[39] They might be attracted to one of the "new religious movements." They might travel to World Youth Day or one of its many replicas that have sprung up around the country. Such events look a lot like revivals with Eucharistic devotion, Marian piety, and sacramental confession.

Sociologists are understandably more interested in the behavior of the majority of young Catholics and so evangelical Catholics go under-researched. Aging theologians are generally blind to the significance of these people because in 1968 terms, their behavior is "conservative." But evangelical Catholics have never been to where their elders think they want to return. What appear to their elders as signs of "restorationist" Catholicism have come to

[38]"People talk about 'Catholic identity' vaguely, often without understanding the nature of identity in general" (D'Antonio et al., *American Catholics, Gender, Generation, and Commitment*, 32–49 on "identity," citation is at 32).

[39]See www.evangelicalcatholic.org, the website of St. Paul's Institute of Evangelical Catholic Ministry at Madison.

them willy-nilly out of the pluralist American religious mix. Evangelical Catholics are postmodern consumers of Catholicism.

5. The perils of evangelical Catholicism

Implicated with the inner contradictions of pluralism, evangelical Christianity is an individualist religious style with a history of anti-Catholicism and a natural affinity for consumer glitz. Evangelical Christians tend to be soft on ecclesiology. Surveys show that young Catholics have a typically underdeveloped sense of the religious importance of the Church. So, while it promises religious revitalization, an evangelical Catholic future simultaneously threatens church unity with consumerist individualism.

Such temptations are different from the religious perils of living in the subculture. While immigrant Catholics might have had reason to fear for their individuality, a self-absorbed spirituality, individualism, and consequent division are the occupational hazards of an evangelical style. Witnessing evangelicals necessarily draw attention to themselves. Immigrants knew how unwise that could be. John F. Kennedy's notion that one did not have to pray in school because one could pray at home may indeed have been an expression of his deep-seated secularism. But it might also have been an expression of common sense from the author of *A Nation of Immigrants*.

From a Catholic point of view, then, American religious voluntarism jeopardizes the strong Catholic sense that salvation in Christ is ecclesial and that the Church is one and universal. Further, it may also risk marginalizing the church's witness in the world by what the Hoge study calls "hyper-sectarianism," presumably more malign than just plain "sectarianism." We shall deal first with the issue of individualism and community in the Church. Sectarianism, of course, requires a separate discussion.

6. Individualism, community, and authority

Though obviously not an American, Pope John Paul II embodies an evangelical Catholic ethos. His unprecedented travel has made him the premier Christian evangelist of our time. Vatican

II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) inspires his Christ-centered humanism. He embodies a post-Constantinian Catholicism, solemnly committed to religious liberty, and engaged with the world through the "evangelization of culture." Much to the confusion of many fifty-something Catholics, evangelical Catholics admire him greatly.

Catholic inhabitants of a well-defined subculture may indeed have experienced church authority as stifling. But church authority looks different in a more open culture where its lack of coercive power is patent. Embodied in a religiously compelling figure such as Pope John Paul II, church authority may appear to some younger Catholics as an antidote to the religious consumerism fostered by American voluntarism. Witnessing to a Catholic ethos that contrasts sharply with a voluntaristic one, the pope reminds young Catholics that they belong to a larger global body that stretches far back into history. His example illustrates that church authority can help young adults center their lives and find a common identity in the present. This is no more pathological than the authority problems of earlier generations.

The Davidson study includes a telling anecdote that dramatizes this point. The authors recall observing a situation in which a "pre-Vatican II teacher" (a "subculture Catholic" in this essay's terms) tries to convince a classroom full of "post-Vatican II Catholics" ("post-subculture Catholics") that they could "dissent" from Church teaching and still be good Catholics. The students were not interested, even when the teacher invoked "probablilism." The authors explain that, rather than addressing the students' needs, the teacher had "addressed his birth cohort's struggle with authority."

> The students said they needed a deeper sense of what the Church stood for. Instead of permission to dissent from the Church, this particular group of young Catholics wanted to learn about the Catholic tradition and its significance in their lives. The class was a classic example of a teacher addressing his own needs and failing to address the needs of his students.[40]

Church authority, then, can potentially lead evangelical Catholics away from the perils of individualism and consumerism.

---

[40]Davidson et al., *Common Ground*, 212–213.

It may help teach them that authentic Christian conversion and witness are part of the universal Church's witness in the world. They can also learn this from older Catholics whose ecclesial common sense has not been eroded by years of reflex opposition to the Vatican. They can learn it from the new religious movements. They can also learn it from converts. From Orestes Brownson and Isaac Hecker to Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton and beyond, American Catholic life has ever been enriched by converts from Protestant Christianity. Contemporary converts from evangelical Christianity witness to the ecclesial dimension of personal faith. Often at the cost of friends and family, they have made heroic efforts to embrace what they had come to see as the fullness of Christian ecclesial life. Their lives challenge much of what passes for a theology of religious pluralism in contemporary Catholicism. They embody a Catholic ecclesiology in which the Church is the body of Christ to which we are called by God rather than a voluntary association that religious consumers choose to join.

7. *Interrogating the church-sect typology*

The objection that evangelical Catholics will turn Catholicism in the United States into a sect is of crucial importance. It raises issues about how American Catholics will position themselves toward the consumer culture in which they live and toward the nation whose citizens they are. Colleen Carroll conjures a neoconservative political aura around the "new faithful." But evangelical Christianity need not be "conservative." What interested Ernst Troeltsch about sects or voluntary churches was precisely their role in social change. As Timothy Smith has shown, evangelical Protestants inspired social reform in nineteenth-century America. Their children founded American sociology to make society better. Of David O'Brien's two examples of evangelical Catholics, Isaac Hecker dreamed of transforming American society and Dorothy Day spent her life living with and serving the poor. Both experienced life-changing conversions and practiced recognizably traditional forms of Catholicism. Both founded religious movements they hoped would lead to more conversions.

From quite a different address than Carroll's on the cultural landscape, Stanley Hauerwas urges that what Christians believe and

want to tell about God and the world can only be known through witnesses. Christian argument, he claims, rests on witness. Carroll's "new faithful" would doubtless agree. But, as examples of such witness, Hauerwas pairs Pope John Paul II with Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder. To show that the church to which they both witness is an "undeniable reality," he invokes the life of Dorothy Day.[41] Whatever the politics of Hauerwas' three witnesses, it could hardly be described as neo-conservative. And yet the pope is a hero to the "new faithful."

Perhaps this unnatural mix signals the coming of what a Baptist philosopher calls "extraordinary politics" in which the categories of liberal and conservative, borrowed by theologians from modern politics, are revealed as bankrupt.[42] Urging those who want a Catholic common ground to abandon these categories, a Catholic theologian offers the following example:

> If I follow the Holy Father in maintaining that war is always a "defeat for humanity" and that this applies also to the intervention in Iraq, am I to be labeled as a conservative for my fidelity to Rome or a liberal for questioning the actions of a conservative political regime?[43]

Other American Catholic theologians might label him a "sectarian." This word has achieved near canonical status as a theological term. The mere suggestion of *sectarianism* trumps just about any theological argument. Labeling other theologians "sectarian" avoids the hard work of arguing with them. When sociologists use the church-sect typology as an analytical tool, they're just doing their jobs. Theologians have a different job and they ought to be more careful. It is good for theologians to understand how social theorists talk about the Church as a social group with identifiable borders. They can even use this language to do

---

[41]Stanley Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2001), chapter 8, entitled "The Necessity of Witness."

[42]Scott H. Moore, "The End of Convenient Stereotypes: How the *First Things* and Baxter Controversies Inaugurate Extraordinary Politics," *Pro Ecclesia* 7, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 17–47.

[43]Peter Casarella, "Not a Fusion of Liberal and Conservative," *Initiative Report, Catholic Common Ground Initiative* 7, no. 2 (June 2003): 3–6, at 3.

theological work but only if it does not prevent them from asking this question: What if there are times when God calls the Church to distance itself from political common sense in witness to Jesus Christ? What if this is one of those times?

Any Catholic theologian who has ever labeled another a "sectarian" ought to read Philip Kenneson's *Beyond Sectarianism*. It is a painstaking critique of contemporary abuses of the church-sect typology. After reviewing the various contexts in which we use the word, Kenneson lays out the presuppositions behind contemporary charges of *sectarianism*. Central to his exposition of these unexamined assumptions is a distinction between politics and culture that recalls John Paul II's. Those who charge Christian culture critics with "sectarianism" reduce culture to a certain kind of political participation akin to policy making. But such critics of "sectarianism" have already tacitly banished the church to a domesticated "private" sphere. From this reservation site, the church is permitted to reach into the "public" sphere only through specific policy interventions, as if policy were the only form of politics.[44] Instead, Kenneson urges Christians to go beyond sectarianism by re-imagining church and world in narrative rather than geographical terms. In a phrase borrowed from Catholic exegete Gerhard Lohfink, he calls the church a "contrast society." This language recalls Karl Rahner's reflections in the early 1960s on the church as "diaspora" and later as "little flock."[45] Precisely in its sharp contrast with the surrounding

[44]Kenneson offers the following example: "If Christians lobby Congress to restrict the amount of violence on television, this is considered 'real political action.' If Christians put their television sets in the closet, however, this is considered a private matter, a personal lifestyle choice, a simple apolitical preference. But certainly if all people who consider themselves Christians did the latter, this action would have a sizable impact on the social order we call the United States of America. Isn't such ordering of the social the traditional concern of politics?" (*Beyond Sectarianism, Re-Imagining Church and World* [Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1999], 51). On what it means to call the Church "public," see also William T. Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination* (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2002), 84–95.

[45]Kenneson, *Beyond Sectarianism*, 91. Reflecting in 1961 on the situation of German Catholics in an increasingly secular post-war pluralism, Rahner characterized the "present state of Christians . . . as that of diaspora." He went on to invoke the church-sect typology in Troeltsch's original sense. "*Sociologically* speaking, the Church of the diaspora has the character of a sect, in contrast to that of a Church of the vast mass of people, a Church *in possession,* and hence, sociologically, confronting the individual not as something constituted and sustained by himself but as independent of him and over against him; the diaspora Church has all the advantages that her 'sect' character gives her, and the duty constantly to overcome the dangers inherent in it" (*The Christian Commitment, Essays in Pastoral Theology*, trans. Cecily Hastings [New York: Sheed & Ward, 1963], 14, 24 italics in original). After the council, Rahner continued to speak in this vein of the "Church of the little flock." Seemingly more aware of the Niebuhrian sense of *sectarian*, he now warned against an inward-looking "petty sectarian mentality" inappropriate to Christ's little flock. In the context of the dynamics of pluralism, he spoke in evangelical tones of a "missionary offensive" characterized by "bold faith, living proclamation, and the example of genuine Christian life." To those who feared that the little flock might die out, he wrote: "The possibility therefore of winning new Christians from a milieu that has become unchristian is the sole living and convincing evidence that even today Christianity still has a real chance for the future . . . It means more to win one new Christian from what we may call neopaganism than to keep ten 'old Christians'" (*The Shape of the Church to Come*, translated and introduction by Edward Quinn [New York: The Seabury Press, 1972], 30, 32).

voluntarist culture, such a local church could "evangelize culture" by sacramentally embodying in a particular place and time the universal or "catholic" church.

8. The end of Americanism

The sect-phobia of many American Catholic theologians recalls a time during the 1890s when many highly-placed Catholics of immigrant origins tended to over-identify with their nation and its political institutions. They tried to export their ideas to Europe and drew a rebuke from Pope Leo XIII. In *Testem Benevolentiae,* an 1899 letter to Cardinal James Gibbons, the pope censured a set of errors he called "Americanism." By the end of World War II, the Catholic subculture began to appear to some of its elite inhabitants as a ghetto. They turned to the Americanists of the 1890s as the kind of American Catholics post-war good feeling required.

When Paul Blanshard questioned Catholic loyalty to the United States, John Tracy Ellis responded with his magisterial two-volume portrait of Cardinal Gibbons. Catholic Americanism has always been about whether immigrant Catholics could be good enough Americans. Central to the thought of the 1890s Americanists was the idea of a providential fit between Catholicism, particularly

its natural law tradition, and American political institutions. As Muslim Americanists might begin to argue in a few decades, Catholic Americanists tried to convince the likes of the Know Nothings, the American Protective Association, and Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State not only that Catholics could be good Americans but that, as Hecker claimed, good Catholics make the best Americans.[46]

During the Americanist controversies, Bishop Bernard McQuaid of Rochester, New York, challenged the characteristic Americanist confidence in the providential fit between Catholicism and the United States. In the 1890s that made him a "conservative." But this feisty veteran of the minority at Vatican I was not so easy to pigeonhole. In 1893 McQuaid wrote to Pope Leo XIII commenting unfavorably on a Vatican proposal to resolve the school controversy.

> In a country like ours, whose form of government depends on the people, the less interference with our natural rights we concede to what is called the State, the better. Later on when our people become less Christian and more infidel, greater concessions will be demanded. All concessions, in time, acquire the force of rights.[47]

It is hard to read McQuaid's words without thinking of Roe vs. Wade, the Gulf War of 1990, and the recent U.S. invasion of Iraq. Here are three examples, part of a larger pattern, in which Catholic natural law thought, either in its modern arguably dualist form or in the more clearly evangelical form of Pope John Paul II, has been largely ignored.[48] To these we could add the ongoing debate about

[46]I am indebted here to the work of Michael J. Baxter, C. S. C. See "Writing History in a World Without Ends: An Evangelical Catholic Critique of United States Catholic History," *Pro Ecclesia* 5, no. 4 (Fall 1996): 440–469. For discussion and bibliography on Americanism, see William L. Portier, "Americanism and Inculturation: 1899–1999," *Communio* 27 (Spring 2000): 139–160 followed by Baxter's "The Unsettling of Americanism: A Response to William Portier," 161–170.

[47]Cited in Frederick J. Zwierlein, *The Life and Letters of Bishop McQuaid*, vol. 3 (Rochester, N.Y.: Art Print Shop, 1927), 196.

[48]On the evangelical edge to the pope's approach to war, see William L. Portier, "Are We Really Serious When We Ask God to Deliver Us From War? The Catechism and the Challenge of Pope John Paul II," *Communio* 23 (Spring 1996): 47–63. See also Drew Christiansen, "An Exchange of Gifts: Mennonites and Catholics Work Together for Peace," *America*, 3 March 2003, 19–22, at 21–22.

the death penalty and more recent constitutional arguments about marriage. In the half century since the confident, post-war embrace of the Americanists by significant Catholic thinkers, at least two things have changed. The first is American religious pluralism itself. The second is the location from which U.S. Catholics affirm a providential fit between Catholicism and America.

In contrast to postwar religious pluralism, in which consensus was the ideal, we now have a "culture of religious pluralism in which diversity, rather than consensus, is perceived as the normal and desirable state of things."[49] The kind of natural law consensus upon which the Americanists wanted to base their own notion of a providential fit between Catholicism and America is simply inaccessible to the procedural logic of contemporary pluralism.

Changed as well is the social location from which Catholics in the U.S. now proclaim a providential fit between Catholicism and American political institutions. Orestes Brownson, Isaac Hecker, John Ireland in the nineteenth century, and even John Courtney Murray in the twentieth, affirmed the providential fit as cultural outsiders. They lacked the political clout to do much about their claim. We might read their Americanism benignly as a utopian protest against their own exclusion. But after the dissolution of the subculture, the central claim of the Americanist tradition is even less tenable than when Hecker, Ireland, and even Murray made it. The claim of a providential fit, based on natural law, between Catholicism and American political institutions now sounds less like a "utopian" protest against the way things are and more like an "ideological" affirmation of the present order with little room left for critical distance from the United States of America.[50] With a

[49]David W. Machacek, "The Problem of Pluralism," *Sociology of Religion* 64, no. 2 (2003): 145–161, at 157–158.

[50]These ideas are developed at greater length in William L. Portier, "In Search of A Public Theology: From the Americanist Tradition to Evangelical Catholicism," an unpublished paper presented at the June 2000 meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America in San Jose, California. On the ideology-utopia typology, see Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia, An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (New York: Harvest Books, 1936), chapter 2.

National Security Policy based on preemptive war and U.S. soldiers entrenched for the long haul in the Middle East, disgruntled leftists are not the only ones talking about American Empire.[51] It is precisely here that the catholic nature of the Church as little flock comes into play. Catholics in the United States need help from the universal Church. Voices from a world Church can challenge nationalism and culture capitulation. With a global perspective citizens of individual nations do not have, Pope John Paul II has been relentless in his criticisms of consumerism and militarism.

9. Re-theologizing Catholic theology in the United States

It is time for theologians in the United States to let go of the Americanist tradition. Post-subculture students of theology are looking for a re-theologized theology, one whose evangelical form, if it flows from a truly ecclesial sense of mission, is better suited to dealing with the new pluralism. Without assimilation or consensus, ours is a fractured and unstable pluralism. But it also embodies the providential irony by which, beginning with the dynamics of a culture of choice, people can come to know Christ and to know the church as more than a Lockean voluntary association. In a voluntarist culture, where the Church needs to be more clearly the Church, Catholic theology must begin from the Church's holiness.

One can see some movement in this direction. In the context of the debate about the implementation of *Ex corde ecclesiae,* younger theologians are beginning to sense the lack of spiritual formation in their academic training.[52] Older theologians are feeling the need to reconnect with the spiritual hunger that set them to studying theology in the first place. In a fascinating intergenerational exchange, two University of Chicago divinity students interviewed David Tracy in 1994. As the interview drew to a close, they asked

[51]Robert N. Bellah, "The New American Empire," *Commonweal*, 25 October 2002, 12–14. On his 2003 Christmas card, Vice President Cheney included this quote from Benjamin Franklin at the Constitutional Convention: "And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid?" (*Washington Post*, 30 December 2003, A19).

[52]Christopher Ruddy, "Young Theologians," *Commonweal*, 21 April 2000, 17–19 and the responses in 2 June 2000, 11–14, and 4, 29–30.

Tracy if he had any advice for younger theologians. He told them that modern emancipative movements had freed them to "recover the tradition, facing its ambiguity and plurality, and especially recover the spiritual traditions and their relationship to the theological tradition." He emphasized the importance of incorporating spiritual traditions into theological reflection, a task at which most modern theology had failed. The ensuing discussion emphasized the voluntary nature of younger theologians' commitments which one of them described, much to Tracy's delight, as a "new mendicant impulse."[53]

In the struggle to re-theologize Catholic theology in the United States, one of the most contested sites will be natural law. As inherited from modern scholasticism, natural law has been the hallmark of Catholic approaches to God and to areas of moral theology such as just war theory, bio-medical ethics, and Catholic social thought. Appeals to natural law lie at the heart of the Americanist tradition. From a theological perspective, the manifest weakness of modern natural law approaches is the very theological indeterminacy that is supposed to make them "public."

The way forward is not to jettison natural law but to re-theologize it. To this end the pope's work on war and on the relation between faith and reason is path-breaking and paradigmatic. To take another example, most forms of Catholic social teaching in the U.S. today are designed to be detachable from Catholic theology as a whole so they can be put to "nonsectarian" use in public policy debate. The claim here is that this body of thought will remain impotent to inspire people to evangelize culture in the name of Jesus until it receives an infusion of theological energy similar to the one Pope John Paul II has given to Catholic thinking about war.

Part IV: Conclusion

This essay began with David O'Brien's notion of evangelical Catholics and with his prediction that their tribe would increase.

[53]Todd Breyfogle and Thomas Levergood, "Conversation with David Tracy," *Cross Currents* 44 (Fall 1994): 293–316, at 315–316. See also Scott Holland, "This Side of God: A Conversation with David Tracy," *Cross Currents* 52 (Spring 2002): 54–59.

Trying to read the signs of the times, I have argued that his prediction has come true. The evangelical Catholics have arrived in our midst. They will never be the majority of Catholics in the United States. But the images of contrast society, diaspora, and little flock suggest ways their presence might help overcome the pernicious effects on the Church of the modern distinction between public and private. May their joy at being Catholic help revitalize the churches and the world! And help to re-theologize Catholic theology as well!

History is pushing American Catholics in an evangelical direction sociologically. Theologically that can be a good thing both for American Catholics and for other Christians in the United States. Let us pray that it will be so. □

WILLIAM L. PORTIER holds the Mary Ann Spearin Chair of Catholic Theology at the University of Dayton.

CONFESSIONS OF AN EVANGELICAL CATHOLIC: FIVE THESES RELATED TO THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

• **Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt** •

"Theological anthropology is transformed by Christology, such that it is the humanity of Christ that is the concrete norm for all discussions of human nature."

In the final session of the Second Vatican Council, the bishops assembled issued the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, which, in the spirit of *aggiornamento,* sought to bring about a *rapprochement* between the Church and the modern world. During the debate on the Constitution—at that point called Schema 13—Gregory Baum wrote in *Commonweal* that it had found "a new method of speaking to Christians and non-Christians alike. . . . The authors of the schema, therefore, are convinced that if they announce the mystery of man and his solidarity here on earth as it is revealed in the Christian Gospel, the people of the world, called as they are by the Spirit, may well understand such language."[1] Not the authority of

[1]Gregory Baum, "On the Modern World," *Commonweal* 81, no. 4 (29 October 1965): 118.

Communio 31 (Spring 2004).