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CENTRAL THEMES IN THE HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES*

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This essay suggests and analyzes six themes that the author concludes are crucial both in understanding the past course of events in the Catholic Church of the United States and that may well shape its future. These themes involve 1) the nature and effectiveness of the Catholic sub-culture over time, 2) the issue as to which source of authority the Catholic people have historically deferred; 3) how the Catholic Church and people have related to the central American value of individualism, itself under constant revision; 4) the institutionalized dissent which overtook much of the Catholic organizational infra-structure from the mid-1960s onwards; 5) the revitalizing possibilities for the Catholic Church regarding the recent massive Hispanic immigration and 6) the reasons for the historic failure of the Catholic Church to effectively evangelize among the black African American population and some suggestions to reverse the situation.

Introduction

The purpose of this essay is to present and discuss central themes in the historical existence of the Catholic Church in America. These themes are central because they are indispensable in explaining the nature of the development of the institution in this country and provide possible scenarios regarding its future paths.

This essay focuses on six key themes, overlapping to various degrees. The first focuses on whether the Catholic Church has had a functioning and intact subculture that mediates the non-Catholic nature of the American civilization in which it is embedded. The second involves the issue of the ultimate locus of authority for the Catholic

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Church in America, i.e., whether it looks to Roman/Magisterial definitions or to national/non-Catholic ones. The third concerns how the American Catholic population has internalized and actualized the foundational American value of "individualism" itself constantly under revision and continually moving further away from a concern for institutionalizing the "common good." Conversely put, the issue is the degree to which the Catholic institution has been able to articulate and maintain its communal character and belief in the natural and divine law. A fourth theme takes into account the significant growth, since the mid-1960s, both of a nominal Catholicism and, more destructively, of an institutionalized dissent within the internals of the institution. A fifth theme analyzes the implications and possibilities both of the historical presence of a significant Hispanic Catholic influence in the New World since the discovery of Christopher Columbus and, more importantly, the tremendous contemporary influx of various Hispanic Catholic groups into the United States and the Catholic Church. A sixth and final theme acknowledges the failure and reasons why the Catholic Church in the United States has not succeeded in its evangelizing activity among the black population in the country and speculates if this failure can be reversed and to what effect on the state of the religious institution.

Assumptions

Before proceeding onward with a discussion of these six themes, it is useful to identify some assumptions that impact on how a Catholic social theorist goes about doing historical research. The first would be the positing that there *is* an objective reality in the physical, social, and cosmic universe, a reflection of the existence and paramount role played by the Triune God in the world of nature and mankind. Derivatively, there is an objective reality in history knowable, in principle, to human reason. Conversely put, Catholic social theory rejects a radically subjectivist understanding of history and society, one that would relegate truth claims to residing solely in the subjective consciousness of human beings and in their relative social constructions of reality.

It is important to point out, however, that Catholic social theory does acknowledge a real but limited and secondary role to subjectivity and relativity in historical research. This limited and secondary role is the result of original sin, a less than fully omniscient human nature, and the intrinsic dependency of human beings on a socialization process that brings with it a certain ethnocentrism, provincialism, and groundedness in the biographical exigencies of time and place. Put another way, no

human being—scholars included—can ever expect to be able to fully comprehend and successfully throw an intellectual rope around an exceeding complex and, in part, mysterious reality. Gnostic-like objections to the contrary, that ability belongs to God alone.

But the larger point is that Catholic social theory, however, does *not* deprecate the role of reason in human affairs and, derivatively, in historical and social scientific research. Original sin may have marred but has not destroyed the ability of human beings to discern truth, however approximately it does so. The implication for this essay is the claim that the following six themes *do* reflect fundamental reality, even if they might not ultimately prove to be the only key themes or even the most important themes in understanding the Catholic experience in America. Simply put, the Catholic scholar should apply reason to the case at hand, try to be as intellectually honest as one can, receive legitimate criticism openly, and then offer up, in humility, the fruits of one's intellectual inquiry to God and to his creation in the form of society and the academy.

Theme One: The nature and effectiveness of a Catholic sub-culture has varied throughout U.S. history.

Generally accepted sociological theory posits that all human beings are socialized, at least to some significant degree, by culture. The philosophical and anthropological roots of the idea that human beings are constitutively "cultural creatures" is to found in the claim of Arnold Gehlen (1999) that the human baby is born into the world "instinctually deprived." For Gehlen, culture replaces instincts as a guide for human behavior, hence the requirement that all human beings, if they are to become members of society, must internalize symbolic culture and become "socialized." As Peter L. Berger has put it in his *Invitation to Sociology* (1963), society is not merely "outside" of the human being but also "inside" human consciousness.

In a generally well integrated (note: not necessarily "good") society, most members are socialized by some combination of cultural influences that emanate from the societal mainstream or sub-cultural levels. By mainstream culture is meant a cultural vision that is overarching, standard, and dominant among most individuals in the sense of Emile Durkheim's discussion of a "collective conscience" (1965). A sub-cultural vision is one that is tied, in some positive way, to the mainstream culture while yet representing a significant variation or specific interpretation of the latter. Functioning societies can tolerate, within limits, the existence of counter-cultures (note: again, not

necessarily "bad") that oppose the mainstream vision and represent a far more radical repudiation of the mainstream culture than do various sub-cultures.

As I've argued in many publications, most prominently in my books, *The Catholic Experience in America* (2006) and *Bright Promise, Failed Community: Catholics and the American Public Order* (2001), the state of its sub-cultural existence is of vital importance to the health of the Catholic religion and community in the United States. This is so because the mainstream, dominant, or standard culture of America has never been Catholic, influenced variously by a generic Protestantism and now more so by liberal secularism and by capitalism and now more so by a moderated socialism represented by the significant growth in the role of the State. The implications of this reality for the Catholic religion are exacerbated when it lacks a sufficiently integrated and functional sub-culture that can serve as an alternative form of socialization that is capable of providing a sense of realness, what William James (1994) called the necessary "accent on reality," for the adherents of the Catholic religion. More concretely, an effective Catholic sub-culture consists of a set of social institutions (e.g. parishes, primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, seminaries, mass media outlets, health care facilities, social service agencies, museums and art galleries, professional and academic associations, etc.) that can socialize individuals into a willing acceptance of the basic tenets of the Catholic faith and worldview. It is important to point out that the purpose of a subculture is *not* primarily the rejection, *tout court*, of the broader mainstream cultural vision as is the case of a counter-cultural Amish religion which views the American mainstream as devoid of authentic Christian presence. Rather a successful sub-culture provides a mode of mediation by which the mainstream culture can be critically judged in terms of which of its various aspects are to be rejected, accepted, or transformed.

The nature and effectiveness of a Catholic sub-culture has varied throughout American history. Catholicism's lack of a sufficiently developed sub-culture in the early part of American history didn't allow it to compete successfully in an overwhelmingly Protestant America.

Conversely, the contemporary Catholic sub-culture has been severely weakened in the present post-Vatican II period, the result of a widespread institutionalized dissent from official Catholic understandings on the part of many secularized Catholics who control, run, and administer the majority of Catholic affiliated institutions. It was only during the middle period of American Catholic history—the fruits of the organizational blueprint laid down by the bishops through

the provincial and plenary councils of Baltimore from 1829 to 1884—that the Catholic Church possessed a comprehensive set of authentically Catholic social institutions that effectively transmitted the Catholic faith to the majority of the Catholic population. Sociological and historical research does, for instance, clearly document the severe decline in, first, knowledge of the Catholic faith and, second, assent to Catholic teaching that has occurred between the generations of Catholics socialized during the immediate pre-Vatican II, Vatican II, and post-Vatican II eras.

Theme Two: The relationship between Roman or "Magisterial" and American or modern visions of authority has fluctuated over the course of American Catholic history.

Sociologists, following the tradition of Max Weber (1946), make a fundamental distinction between social control based on "power," i.e., coercion, versus "authority," i.e., a willing deference to some individual, group, or set of ideas. The contemporary Catholic Church has neither the ability or desire to wield societal power. However, its success as an institution depends on its ability to convince its adherents to defer to its authority in religious and temporal affairs.

The Catholic Church teaches that the ultimate locus of decision making regarding both internal Church affairs and the projected stance of Catholics to the larger civilization in which it is embedded lies ultimately with what it calls "Magisterial authority." This is the authority it believes was handed down from Christ to Peter and the apostles and their apostolic successors in the form of Papal authority and those Bishops who stand in loyal communion with the Pope. At the same time, however, contemporary Catholic social theory does not posit that authority in the Church is simply a "top-down" hierarchical one; it claims that the Church hierarchy should attend to the reality that the Holy Spirit does, in some cases, directly connect to individuals and their cultural creations. It is the duty, then, of hierarchical authority to "sift the chaff from the grain" in its evaluation of the claims of individuals, organizations, and social movements that they have been inspired "from above" and to judge whether their creations stand in an organic and developmental relationship with the divine deposit of absolute truth handed down by God through Christ to mankind.

Another way of putting this is to state that the Catholic religion believes in the idea of "evangelization through inculturation," i.e., that one best spreads the Gospel throughout time and space by building on whatever is true, holy, beautiful, and useful in the civilizations of world history. This principle bears directly on how Catholic Americans are

expected to embrace the ideas and practices of American civilization. Catholicism asserts that, while Magisterial authority has identified and codified certain absolute and eternal principles of the Faith, faithful Catholic Americans should be critically examining the culture in which they are embedded. Their task is to try to determine which aspects of American living can be viewed as authentic applications of Christian thinking and living and which fall outside of the parameters of the Catholic Christian tradition while at the same time deferring ultimately to the religious judgments of the Church's Magisterium.

Historically, this issue has been addressed by the work of the important German scholar, Michael Zoller, who points out in his book *Washington and Rome: Catholicism in American Culture* (1999) that Catholicism in this country has struggled to tread a balance between cultural loyalty to America and the imperatives of the Catholic religion as set down by Magisterial authority. Sometimes this balance tilted toward full assimilation to Protestant norms and at other times to secular norms. At other times, assimilation was consciously geared to creating and maintaining an authentic "American Catholic" multicultural variation, that of simultaneously being *both* American and Catholic, as Charles Morris (1997) argued was the case from World War I through to the early 1960s. Yet, in other manifestations, as in the vision of some late 19th century "Catholic anti-Americanizers"—to refer to the phrase of Father Andrew M. Greeley (1967)—rigorously Roman understandings of the imperatives of the Faith were promoted at a time when the Catholic Church was being attacked by various modern secular forces especially in nineteenth century Europe (e.g. socialism, anarchism, liberalism, etc.).

To be more concrete, there are good historical reasons, for instance, why the religious stance of most early Maryland Catholics was cautious, accommodationist, and Anglicanized in an overwhelmingly Protestant country during the colonial and early Republican eras of the American nation. As James T. Fisher (2000) has noted, the religious style of many Catholics at the time in both worship ("experiential") and organizational preference ("congregational") was clearly colored by a generic Protestant sensibility and implicit nod to Protestant-like religious authority. It is also not too hard to grasp that as Catholics were establishing themselves in America, there were rigorous and at times rancorous debates over the relationship between the authority of American civilization vs. European traditions which took the form of the "Americanizer vs. anti-Americanizer" battles that led up to Pope Leo XIII's 1899 intervention in *Testem benevolentiae* and in the so-called "heresy of Americanism." Likewise, it is not too hard to explain the

sense of confidence and, at times, militancy held by many Catholics raised in an internally cohesive and expanding subculture gaining in political and cultural strength in the 1940s and 1950s, in which Catholics were proud to be American but in a decidedly "Catholic way." The nod here is clearly in the direction of Magisterial or Roman Catholic authority as filtered through a decidedly American experience. Neither should it be too difficult to understand both the significant ignorance and rejection of the basic essentials of the Catholic faith by the contemporary generation of young and quite secularized Catholics given the decomposition of that very same Catholic subculture—or "ghetto" as its detractors like to characterize it. As David R. Carlin has persuasively noted in his *The Decline and Fall of the Catholic Church in America* (2003), three key historical factors were involved in this decomposition and, conversely, move to secularism as the ultimate authority for most contemporary Catholics. They were: a) the prevailing progressive interpretation of the Second Vatican Council (1962-5), b) the anti-traditional authority social protest movements of the contemporary era starting in the mid-1960s and c), the post-World War II move of Catholics from their inner city enclaves to the, relatively speaking, more pluralized suburban social contexts of America. The decomposition of the self-contained Catholic social universe of the 1940s and 1950s brought modern secular American culture into the internals of the Catholic Church and into the psyches of millions of Catholic Americans. This explains *both* the greater receptivity of many Catholics to the ideas of an unfettered individualism and freedom as well as the sexual permissiveness that is at least once cause of the recent priests' scandals that were exposed at the turn of the twenty-first century in the United States.

Theme Three: The Catholic Church in the United States has varied enormously in its ability to critically and faithfully respond to the changing manifestations of the central American value of "individualism" or, as others call it, "freedom."

It is a generally recognized truth that the value of "individualism" –or what John T. McGreevy similarly has referred to as "freedom" in his *Catholicism and American Freedom* (2003)—represents the core or central value of the American experience. Individualism was brought to American shores by way of both Protestantism and the Enlightenment. Regarding the former, note should be made of the central religious role played by a "conscience" only bounded by an individual interpretation of Holy Scripture in the

thought of the Protestant reformer, Martin Luther. (Later liberal Protestant thought would downplay or eliminate the Scriptural boundedness of conscience through such concepts as "the Protestant Principle" and "ultimate concern" as coined by a thinker like Paul Tillich in his 1951 volume, *Dynamics of Faith.*) Enlightenment thinking, for its part, envisioned a humanity emancipated from the constraints of traditional supernaturalistic thinking. Enlightenment thinkers oriented the creative powers of the individual to such functional religious equivalents as the scientific enterprise as interpreted by the philosophical orientation of positivism as first enunciated by Auguste Comte (Lenzer, 1983) and a nationalism/civil religion shaped by secular humanism as discussed by both Emile Durkheim (1965) and Will Herberg (1960).

In an important book, *Habits of the Heart* (1985), sociologist Robert N. Bellah and his associates have termed the two types of foundational individualism vis-à-vis the American nation as "biblical individualism" and "republican individualism." The former ties individualism to the imperatives of a Protestant Christian worldview while the latter ties individualism to a basically humanistic (in the form of a vague "deism") commitment to the nation, civil life, and the duties of citizenship tinged, at the edges, with a scientistic or Comtean understanding of life. Concomitant with the general secularization of American life, Bellah and company document a transformation, at least in proportional representation, of these two public oriented manifestations of individualism to two contemporary forms more inward and private in nature, that of an "instrumental individualism" and that of an "expressive individualism" in which the creative energies of embracing individualism are, respectively, channeled to a concern for success in one's career and work sphere and in the inter and intra personal spheres of human relationships (e.g. romance, friendship, sexual intimacy) and psychic fulfillment and experimentation (e.g. "searching for the authentic self," "the quest for ecstasy"). It is worth noting, in passing, another important work that deals centrally with the role of individualism in American life, *The Lonely Crowd* (1961). In this book, David Riesman and co-authors maintain that there is a form of individualism that is rejecting even more of any public orientation and which represents the end of the road for a self-centered individualism, what they refer to as an "autonomous individualism."

Catholic social theory objects, in various degrees, to all five of these forms of individualism. "Biblical individualism" would easily be the least objectionable and, indeed in many respects, would be held in respect by many Catholics who would approvingly note the Christian

motivated behavior and laudatory consequences of the endeavors of their Protestant brethren. The primary Catholic objection here would be two-fold. One would be the implications of this value orientation vis-a-vis the constitutive concern for the mediating role of the Catholic Church (e.g. the role of Magisterial authority, the sacramental system administered by Church authority including the idea of a priesthood distinct from the laity, the role of the saints as intercessors, etc.). The second would be the implications of this value orientation for the society at large. More specifically, the consequences, for a Catholic thinker like Mary Ann Glendon in her book, *Rights Talk: The Impoverishment of Political Discourse* (2004), has been a society significantly blinded to the communal nature of life and to the rights of parents (e.g. abortion and underage daughters), families (e.g. school choice), churches (e.g. public funding for religiously administered day care centers and other "faith based initiatives"), neighborhoods (e.g. control over local pornography enterprises) and other voluntary associations to play an important role and have an effective voice in American public policy decisions.

Catholic social theory objects to "republican individualism" when it leads to the idolatry of the nation and of that nation's value system. From an authentically Christian perspective, all human "social constructions of reality" stand under the judgment of God or, more precisely, under the absolute judgments of right and wrong that God has handed down to mankind through both the divine and natural law. The proper relationship, for the Christian, between God, society, and man is what Charles Reichley in his *Religion in American Public Life* (1985) refers to as a "theistic humanism." Whether, for instance, the general acceptance by the American people of what Will Herberg in his *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (1960) termed the "American Way of Life" is acceptable from a Catholic frame simply depends on whether its content is derived from or consistent with an authentic Judaic-Christian worldview; the orthodox Jewish thinker, Herberg for his part, did not see the central value system of the U.S. at the time as an authentically religious one. Similarly, there are both legitimate and illegitimate forms of patriotism from a Catholic perspective.

The Catholic critique of what Bellah and company refer to as "instrumental individualism" centers around the purpose and nature of work. From a Catholic Christian perspective, one works for God directly (in some social apostolate or church ministry) or more indirectly (for one's family as a means to make possible its future service to the Lord). One does not compartmentalize one's labor or work from God (as in "working for work's sake") or for worldly power, prestige, and wealth

that are viewed as ends in themselves. Regarding the nature of work, Catholicism reminds one that acceptable work is one that is not intrinsically demeaning to the human dignity of the individual laborer (as in a "sweat shop" or engaging in prostitution) or has deleterious consequences for society (the unregulated selling of drugs/guns or, again, engaging in prostitution).

It is easiest to pinpoint the Catholic objections to the ideas of "expressive individualism" and, even more so, "autonomous individualism." Regarding the former, Catholic social theory acknowledges a positive but limited role to what may be termed the "therapeutic mentality," one that concerns itself with the happiness and contentment of the individual, as long as the means for that happiness are not illicit and immoral. Also—perhaps more so in practice than in theory—Catholicism has a "higher ceiling" in tolerating certain pleasure seeking activities than does conservative Protestantism (e.g. alcohol and food consumption, gambling, dancing, involvement with sports) as long as a certain lid and restrictions are placed on these activities. Having said this, however, it is clear that the Catholic Church does not view the purpose of life in this "vale of tears" to be self-centered enjoyment. Rather it is devotion to God and through this devotion to God, duty to family, neighbors, and society.

The clearest juxtaposition of contrasting ideas lies, however, in the Catholic rejection of the idea of an "autonomous individualism" or an "unfettered freedom" now promoted by a secular humanism. The latter views individualism/freedom as basically unconstrained while in Catholic social theory, individualism/freedom is inextricably linked to truth and objective morality. The Catholic historian of the nineteenth century, Lord Acton, made the Catholic case when he stated that freedom is not the freedom to do what we want but do as we ought. This is an idea most recently reinforced by the late John Paul II in one of his encyclicals, *Veritatis Splendor* (1993). As Catholic historian John T. McGreevy makes clear in his impressive volume, *Catholicism and American Freedom* (2003), a Catholic understanding of the human being involves a mandatory striving for the "common good" and an intrinsic social dependency and connectedness with social institutions that clashed, and has continued to clash, in the American context with both the religious individualism of a liberalized "Protestant principle" or with the secular liberal emphasis of an "autonomous individualism."

In this history of United States, this debate, as John T. McGreevy (2003) has noted, has manifested itself both overtly and subtly in controversies between liberal Protestants/secularists and Catholic thinkers over a myriad number of issues (e.g. democracy,

formal education, religious dissent, birth control, abortion, homosexuality, the role of motherhood, laissez faire economics, social welfare policy, etc.). Early in American history, with the Catholic Church lacking a sufficiently effective Catholic subculture, many Catholics—actually nominal Catholics and at whatever level of self-conscious awareness—embraced generic conservative Protestant positions on many issues. With the crystallizing of the Catholic sub-culture and the subsequent articulation of a coherent Catholic worldview, important societal-wide debates and controversies between Catholics and non-Catholics ensued over the proper application and meaning of individualism and freedom. With the decomposition of the Catholic subculture in the immediate post-Vatican II period, an enormously large percentage of Catholic Americans—again, actually nominal Catholics and at whatever level of self-conscious awareness—have accepted the ideas of an autonomous individualism and unfettered individualism. Only recently has a small revitalization movement emerged within the Catholic Church back toward orthodoxy. This orthodox Catholic movement has aligned itself with a resuscitated conservative and evangelical Protestantism in the contemporary "culture war" so brilliantly discussed by sociologist James D. Hunter in his instantaneous classic, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (1991).

Theme Four: While the early period of the history of the Catholic Church in the United States was characterized by a significant amount of religious indifferentism, the post-Vatican II period is characterized by a significant growth of not only a nominal Catholicism but, even more destructively, of an "institutionalized dissent" within the Church bureaucracy and its affiliated groups.

Sociologists refer to the imperative for all social organizations to develop compliance among its members as "social control." The most effective mechanism of social control is when an institution has the ability to generate among its members a willing internalization and acceptance of that group's central vision and values. In the case of religious organizations this is called the issue of "religious socialization." Successful religious socialization is a particularly difficult task to accomplish in contemporary American society, with its secularized public sphere institutions and pervasive pluralism in all other aspects of American life (Berger, 1967).

As a sociologist might put it, the Catholic Church as a socializing agent must compete for the hearts and minds of its members

as well as those of many non-Catholic citizens against a plethora of other socializing agents (e.g. mass media, government, corporations, political groups, educational institutions, neighborhoods, families, voluntary associations, other religious organizations, etc. all with their competing philosophies and ideologies). This difficult task of successful Catholic religious socialization has become, at present, almost impossible to accomplish. This is because Catholic religious organizations that are part of its subculture are staffed by many individuals who do not accept centrally the Catholic vision but, instead, serve the vision and interests of non-Catholic worldviews. "Personnel," it is commonly asserted, "equals social policy." The point here is that official, Magisterial Church doctrine has a tendency to be tailored to suit the understandings of those who implement it in the Church organizations that they administer. When a voluntary and successful religious socialization into Catholic orthodoxy is not characteristic of the normal life within the internal institutions of the Catholic Church, the only chance of organizational survival lies with the willingness and ability of its leadership to utilize the punitive aspects of social control, i.e., to correct, chastise, transfer, demote, and fire those who misrepresent the Catholic vision and mission.

It is important to point out that is it never possible to mandate complete compliance to the worldview of any organization. For one thing, as Catholic social theory would posit, all human beings are free to chart their own course in life, whether or not that exercise of free will is in line with God's plan and leads to eternal salvation. For another thing, the democratic context in America encourages individuals to align their own consciences with organizations that have compatible visions. And it is also true, thankfully, that in the United States, religious participation is completely voluntary. But it is also true that our democracy and Constitution allows religious organizations to have a free exercise of their beliefs and practices, with the only exception being made in reference to practices that violate what are considered fundamental constitutional guarantees. Put another way, the leadership of the Catholic Church has the right to define just what or who is or isn't Catholic while American citizens—whether Catholic or not—have the right to decide whether or not they want to voluntarily join and participate in the Catholic religion as defined by the latter's tradition, heritage, doctrine, and leaders.

Historically, there has never been anything close to complete adherence to Catholic doctrine and practice. However, different stages of American Catholic history have witnessed varying degrees of religious compliance and non-compliance. Again, early in Catholic

history, the Church did not have a well established, integrated, and functioning sub-culture. There were few priests—and many of them were of the rouge variety escaping from religious authorities because of their failed ministries in Europe. Also there were few parishes, schools and other Catholic institutions and no standardization of doctrine and religious practice. Catholics were only in the most intermittent relationship with centralized Roman authority. Put another way, the early Catholic Church in America lacked the institutions necessary for effective religious socialization. Additionally, immigrant Catholics were few in number and most were not high on the sociological trilogy of power, prestige, and wealth. Add the fact that the surrounding culture and society was generically Protestant and generally hostile to the Catholic religion, it is little wonder that Bishop Gerald Shaughnessy would answer his own question, "has the immigrant kept the faith?" with a resounding "no!"

With the eventual organizational restructuring of the Catholic Church in this country effected by the various Baltimore provincial and plenary councils from 1828 to 1884, a Catholic sub-culture started to gel, with the result that religious socialization was much more effective. Even though this "middle" period of Catholic history was characterized by much intra-Catholic conflict brought on by the engagement of different Catholic philosophies, ethnic groups, religious orders, and distinctive personalities, these disagreements occurred, for the most part, within a broad understanding of what the Catholic faith represented.

As the Catholic Church reached the mid-twentieth century, Catholics were rising socially and deepening their Catholic faith (Lenski, 1961). The Church was growing in size, her population was ever more formally educated, ever more middle-class, and ever more orthodox in belief and practice. Religious orders, seminaries and parishes were filled to the brim with priests, sisters, and brothers. Mass attendance was perhaps the highest in the recorded history of the Church Universal. The number of Catholic schools—from grammar through higher educational levels—increased. Catholics were a respected, albeit secondary, part of the F.D.R. coalition and, paraphrasing Glazer and Moynihan (1970), Fordham University graduates were replacing Harvard University graduates in important government jobs. The Church was admired in popular films and feared by defenders of a Protestant hegemony such as Paul Blanshard (1949). Orthodox conservative Catholic authors were published by secular presses and their books were published in the many thousands. Bishop Fulton J. Sheen's homilies and speeches were received enthusiastically by many non-Catholics and conversions to the Catholic faith were high. No less

a respected Catholic intellectual than Monsignor George A. Kelly would term this period in time and space as one of "gold status" for the Catholic Church from the frame of reference of not only the Catholic experience in America but that of the Church Universal (Kelly, 1979, 1995).

However, things were to change suddenly. As David Carlin has argued in his important book, *The Decline and Fall of the Catholic Church in America* (2003), a "perfect storm" engulfed the American Catholic subculture in the mid-1960s entailing a very progressive theological interpretation of the relationship of Catholicism vis-à-vis the modern secular world, an acceptance of the antinomian themes of the counter-cultural protest movements then prevalent, and the move of now an upwardly mobile Catholic population to the suburbs with its greater embrace of pluralism in all its aspects and a materialistic and secular this-worldly lifestyle. Within the course of a decade, the modal stance of the Catholic Church had moved from one with the intent to evangelize American society (or at least to "make it" in society on authentically Catholic terms) to one desiring acceptance into the cultural center of American life, even at the expense of jettisoning the core of the Catholic religion. This transformation of ultimate authority from one Catholic to one essentially secular involved the acquiescence of a critical mass of Bishops, priests, religious, and the American Catholic rank and file using as false legitimacy an extraordinarily progressive (and false) interpretation of the Second Vatican Council which promoted an unconstrained individualism; a disingenuous democratic attitude masking Gnostic attitudes; failed socialist-like social policies; and, under the guise of ecumenism, a religious/cultural/moral relativism opaque to issues of ultimate truth (Varacalli, 2001). And this transformation in vision quickly filtered down to the issue of the personnel who would run the key scholarly, bureaucratic, and organizational infrastructure of the Church. The Catholic sub-culture was overwhelmed with a new generation of progressive Catholics characterized by a missionary zeal to "update" the Church and apologize for its suddenly unacceptable past. Utilizing the phrase of the liberal Baptist theologian, Harvey Cox (1990), one can state that the basic orientation that overwhelmed the post-1965 Catholic Church was one that claimed that the world "was in front of" the Church and the job of the Church was now to catch up to the world. Put into the classificatory scheme of H. R. Niebuhr (1951), the Catholic Church has quickly abandoned the models of the "the Church above culture" and "the Church as transforming culture" to one that saw the Church as one merely "of culture." Monsignor George A. Kelly discussed this

transformation in excruciating detail in books ranging from *The Battle for the Church* (1979) to *The Battle for the Church Revisited* (1995).

John Paul II, who ascended to what Catholics call the throne of Peter in 1978, started to arrest, at the abstract level of doctrine and ideas, the heterodox theology of the reigning progressive Catholic elite. John Paul II did little, however, to deal concretely with dissenting groups (or what I've previously referred to in my *Toward the Establishment of Liberal Catholicism in America* (1983) as the "new Catholic knowledge class") of Church personnel which colored and shaped the social policies of the Catholic Church in the U.S. in the post-Vatican II period and still has much influence today. John Paul II was far more successful at enunciating and developing Catholic social thought and ideas than he was as a disciplinarian. Whether his successor, Pope Benedict XVI (formerly Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith), is more interested than was John Paul II in making sure that the carriers of Catholic social doctrine are faithful to its content is an important question that will decide in large measure whether or not the Catholic Church in the United States and elsewhere can rebuild an orthodox and functioning Catholic subculture to maintain, strengthen, and evangelize the faith.

Theme Five: There are both important implications and possibilities for the Catholic Church in this country regarding the increasing Hispanic presence in the United States.

Minus the major exceptions of the African slaves brought over in chains and the increasingly subjugated native American Indian population, the core thirteen colonies during the early period of American history were overwhelmingly populated by the various religious branches of the Protestant Reformation. There was, otherwise, a meager presence in colonial America of some Sephardic Jews and British, French, and Irish Catholics, the latter found primarily in Maryland and to a lesser degree in some of the other middle colonies like New York and Pennsylvania. However, there was a Catholic presence around the geographical edges of the American colonies, in Canada by French Catholics and in Florida, the Southwest, and California by Spanish Catholics (Fisher, 2000). As the American nation eventually developed into what some called its manifest destiny (a destiny that did not, as it turned out, include Canada), Hispanic Catholic culture became incorporated into American civilization. But as Spanish influence waned in what became the United States in the eighteenth century (Liaugminas, 2001; Fisher, 2000), a certain limit was placed on

the impact of Hispanic Catholic culture in the U.S. that would last until the mid-1960s immigration policies of President Lyndon B. Johnson, which opened up the floodgates to massive immigration from the "less developed" or "Third World" nations of the world. A significant portion of the so-called "new immigration" involved a massive immigration from Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. There was also a significant immigration from the only Catholic Asian civilization, the Philippines, also with its strong Spanish heritage (Fisher, 2000). While all these various Hispanic groups may not have politically or culturally identified with each other—to the dismay of left-wing Hispanic activists—they all did come to American shores to escape either economic deprivation or political tyranny. Of the 19 different nations that Hispanics have emigrated from, the three that have sent the most people to America have been, respectively, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, representing, respectively, 60%, 17%, and 8% of the total Hispanic immigration (Liaugminas, 2001). Latinos are now a major political, economic, and social force in the United States (Macias, 2006) surpassing in 2001 the Black population (Ohlemacher, 2006).

In December of 2003, the Office of Communications of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops commissioned a study, "The Catholic Church in America," that was part of a larger project titled *The Catholic Information Project*. Regarding Hispanic presence in the United States, the study reported that there were 25 million Hispanic Catholics in the U.S. representing 39% of the overall Catholic population. Regarding the issue of Hispanic clergy, the study indicated that there were 25 active Hispanic bishops representing 9 percent of the national hierarchy and that 6.5% of the priesthood was Hispanic. The study projected that by the second decade of the twenty-first century, Hispanic Catholics will represent over 50% of all Catholic Americans.

Given the general secularization and weakening of the Catholic community in the United States from the mid-1960s onwards, the key question is what impact the Catholic Hispanic immigration will have on the state of this country's Catholic community. Perhaps counter-intuitively, given the extremely large size of the immigration figures, the answer to date is "not necessarily as much as one would expect."

For one thing, the majority of the Hispanic immigrants—while overwhelmingly a deeply religious people and mostly characterized by traditional and conservative sentiments—are, to a significant degree, unchurched and innocent of the Church's doctrinal, moral, and intellectual heritage. On the other hand and more positively, they are strong in what sociologists call a "devotional" and "experiential" religiosity, a function, in part, both of their lower socio-economic and

formal educational background characteristics. This emotional form of religiosity is also, in many cases, inextricably infused with pagan (and in some cases, neo-pagan) cultural elements.

On a more positive note from a Catholic frame, Hispanic Catholics have a strong attachment to Mary and to the saints and furthermore, their religious orientation to the world is not "compartmentalized," i.e., it is holistic and not separated from the major spheres and activities of human existence. In sum, Hispanic Catholic immigrant sensibilities evince great potential and possibility for an eventual development into an authentic version of the Catholic faith but they are not there yet. Most Hispanic immigrants need a sophisticated, integrated, and orthodox Catholic community to bring Catholic potential to Catholic actuality and, as Catholics say, as grace builds upon nature. Unfortunately and as discussed previously, the Catholic subculture in the United States presently does not have its act together and is, in its present state, incapable of significant authentic evangelization possibilities.

A second and related factor must be mentioned. There is a palpable tendency on the part of the contemporary Hispanic Catholic American population to reject and be "turned off" by the current dominance of a progressive Anglo-Catholic version of the faith favored by the majority of the contemporary upper-middle class, secularized, bourgeois, Catholic population that tends to dominate and define the contemporary Catholic scene in the United States (Sobrino, 2006b). This upper-middle class Catholic religiosity is one which tends to practice a therapeutic and social work oriented version of the faith whose devotional style is sedate and what the sociologist of religion, Father Andrew Greeley in his *The Denominational Society* (1972), calls "Apollonian" (as compared to "Dionysian") in nature. Many present day Hispanic Catholics see the dominant American Catholic mode of religiosity as too distant, cold, and abstract and have left the Catholic faith and converted to the more emotional and devotionally demanding forms of conservative, evangelical, and Pentecostal Protestantism.

The Pentecostal and evangelical churches, for their part, have worked hard and with considerable success to attract many Hispanic Catholics to convert (O'Connell, 2006). Moreover, as Bruce Murray (2006) notes, a not inconsiderable number of Hispanics came into the United States as Protestants since they were converted from Catholicism first in their Latin American homelands. Overall, he estimates that approximately 25% of all Hispanics in the U.S. belong to some Protestant denomination with 85% of U.S. Latino Protestants identifying themselves as Pentecostals or evangelicals. Murray also pointed out that

across generations in America, one discerns a significant increase in the Latino Protestant community, from 15% in the first generation of American Latinos, to 20% in the second, to 29% in the third. Instead of simply criticizing Pentecostal like religiosity, Cardinal Walter Kaspar has recently suggested that the Catholic Church should honestly confront the issue as to why contemporary Catholic parish life is so emotionally empty for so many Catholics (Kaspar, 2006). Relatedly, a recent June 2006 program convened at the University of Notre Dame—the first national Hispanic youth conference—under the leadership of Archbishop Jose Gomez of San Antonio is a signal that the Catholic Church is finally trying to address the issue of ex-Catholics among the Hispanic population who have moved to the Pentecostal and evangelical churches (Zenit, 2006).

The contemporary discontent of many Hispanic Catholics toward the mainstream version of Catholicism in the United States is all too reminiscent of the complaints of a southern Italian peasant and immigrant Catholic population at the turn into the twentieth century vis-à-vis the dominant Irish style Catholicism of the era (Varacalli, 2006, 2004, 1999). In the Italian American case, the combined and interactive effects of an authentic and integrated Catholic subculture and enlightened policy of allowing national or de facto Italian parishes to exist provided a context in which the pagan elements of a pre-modern southern Italian religiosity were subdued in favor of a more authentic and fully articulated Catholic sensibility, until at least the period when the Catholic Church started to decompose in earnest in the mid 1960s onwards. Likewise, whether the present influx of Hispanic Catholics into the United States will help revitalize the Catholic community in this country depends on whether or not the Catholic Church can rebuild an effective subculture. It also depends on whether or not the Catholic Church can develop an authentic and realistic Catholic multiculturalism. The latter development would encourage Hispanics to maintain a live sense of their traditional, conservative, devotional, experiential, and rich Hispanic Catholic culture while both sufficiently Americanizing for purposes of societal integration and unity (Chavez, 2006) and yet subordinating and organically incorporating the Hispanic heritage within the broader, more universal, and inclusive Catholic worldview and historical tradition as defined by Magisterial authority. The revitalization of the Catholicism in the U.S. requires a cooperative and mutually influencing division of labor between many different sectors of the Church (e.g. from the numbers, commitment, and fervor provided by many Catholic immigrants with "pre-modern" like sentiments; from a resuscitated "high culture" Catholic European heritage; and from the

wealth and organizational abilities of many middle class and professional American Catholics).

A final cautionary note should be introduced. On the one hand, Catholic social theory tends to favor the right of impoverished and politically exploited people to emigrate to countries like the United States where opportunities to live a fundamentally decent life are greater. Practically speaking, many Catholic leaders acknowledge, in many cases, *sotto voce*, that it is in the self-interest of the Catholic Church in this country to encourage a large Hispanic Catholic population—albeit in many cases, significantly nominal—to move to American shores. (This self-interested stance coincides unintentionally with two more powerful pro-immigration forces in the United States, i.e., the leadership wings of both the Republican and Democratic Parties. Republican corporate capitalists are looking for cheap labor to undercut unions while Democratic promoters of expanded government activity look for an increased base of Democratic voters who feel wedded, at least for the moment, to progressive social welfare policies.) But it should be stated that Catholic social theory also acknowledges the sovereign right of nations to maintain their integrity, i.e., secure their borders—especially an imperative given the present war on terrorism—and also to calculate and fairly control the cultural and economic consequences of immigration. It is important for the Catholic Church in the U.S. to support immigration policies that are fair to needy immigrants yet do not harm the situation of other Americans and the future prospects of the American nation (Sobrino, 2006). Put simply, the Catholic Church should attempt to seek out the "common good" on this quite important and contested issue.

Theme Six: While, historically, the evangelization efforts of the Catholic Church toward the Black American community have been mostly a failure, this failure should not discourage a reassessment of future prospects and efforts for bringing African Americans into the Catholic fold.

While most Hispanic Catholics in the U.S. were introduced to the Catholic faith via their Spanish heritage, most contemporary African Americans have lacked a similar Catholic cultural carrier. Almost all of the early black population in the U.S. were slaves who were uprooted in the New World—to some significant degree—from their tribal African religions (e.g. animism, polytheism) or Islam. Brought in chains to the colonies/southern half of the American Republic and essentially untouched by Christian influence, the slaves were converted, mostly in a

coercive manner, to some form of Protestantism. (Michael Scott, in a 1991 article, points out that there was some historically incalculable Catholic influence in West Africa compliments of the Portuguese missionaries around the time of the Christopher Columbus exploration of the New World, an influence that was extinguished, he argued, by the slave trade. On a related matter, I have uncovered no evidence that documents any significant impact of the religious tradition of the vibrant North African Church of early antiquity on the state of sub-Saharan African religiosity at the time of the slave trade to America. The very real appropriation by African Catholics of the glorious Christian tradition in North Africa as discussed by, among others, Cyprian Davis (2000), M. Shawn Copeland (2000), and Michael Scott (1999) that included such figures as Saints Augustine, Monica, Perpetua, and Felicitas occurred overwhelmingly in the New World and not in pre-mid-19th century Africa.) The early prominent exception to the American equation of "black slave and Protestant" were those blacks—slaves owned and in some cases, free, located around, among other areas, Baltimore, Maryland; Mobile, Alabama; New Orleans, Louisiana; and St. Augustine, Florida (Scott, 1999; Davis, 2000). Somewhat less than 9% of the Black African American population is Catholic in religious affiliation (Corbett, 2001).

Regarding what sociologists refer to as "official religions," i.e., religions given legitimacy by the prevailing cultural gatekeepers, American Blacks have historically had a strong presence with Baptist and Methodist denominations. Many African American Protestants, especially from the lower-socio-economic brackets, are members of various "unofficial," smaller and storefront Churches. There is also a small percentage of Blacks in the U.S. who are Muslim, whether part of the religiously heterodox, counter-cultural brand founded by Elijah Muhammad and now associated with Louis Farrakhan and the more orthodox, sub-cultural version associated with the later Malcolm X (Corbett, 2001). The significant influx of Muslims into the U.S. from around the world might conceivably translate into an increase in the latter, more orthodox, version. The attractiveness of a strict and demanding religious and moral life for many socially disenfranchised blacks, including blacks incarcerated in American prisons, possibly indicates growth in the former category. There is also a small percentage of blacks who are completely or mostly secularized, finding their "ultimate concern" in such this-worldly attachments as politics,—whether revolutionary in nature (e.g. the early Black Panther Party) or mainstream (e.g. Democratic Party, N.A.A.C.P.) or in the field of education, especially higher education, with its higher concentration of

atheists and agnostics. Mention should also be made of such distinctly modern and secular hybrid reformulations of the African heritage as "Kwanzaa," based on the harvest rituals of Africa and created in 1966 by California professor Ron Karenga.

Before proceeding on to analyze the relative failure of Catholic evangelization efforts toward black Americans, it is important to note some bright spots. Some Catholic religious orders did give attention to a black apostolate; prominent examples would be the Josephites, the Society for African Missions, and the Society of the Divine Word (Davis, 1990). There is the inspiring stories of the first Black priests in America, Fathers Augustus Tolton and Charles R. Uncles (Copeland, 2000). In 1829, the first black religious congregation of women in the United States was founded, the Oblate Sisters of Providence. Between 1889 and 1894, a series of five black Catholic lay congresses were convened. There was the establishment of the *American Catholic Tribune*, the only national Catholic newspaper published by and for Black Catholics by the same figure, Daniel Rudd, who was so influential in the Black lay congress movement. There was also the founding, in 1900, of the Knights of Peter Claver, a fraternal and benevolent organization analogous to the Knights of Columbus. Also of importance was the establishment of the first and only Black Catholic college in the United States, Xavier University of Louisiana, first founded in 1915 as a high school by St. Katherine Drexel and her Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament who were devoted to the Catholic apostolate to African Americans and Native Americans. Mention should also be made of a crucial turning point in the history of both American Catholicism and the pre-civil rights movement when, in 1947, Archbishop Joseph Ritter ended racial segregation in the Catholic school system of St. Louis, Missouri. As early as the year 1875, the nation's first Black bishop was appointed, James Augustine Healy, although it would take until 1988 for the first Black American archbishop, Eugene Marino, to be appointed to the Archdiocese of Atlanta. Of more recent vintage was the election of the first Black Catholic bishop to the presidency of the national episcopal conference, Archbishop Wilton Gregory, now also seated in the Archdiocese of Atlanta. Another event of symbolic importance was the dedication on August 30, 1997 in the Washington, D.C. based Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception of a chapel dedicated to Our Mother of Africa (Copeland, 2000).

A most recent development of note whose impact on the Church in this country is not yet fully clear is the transfer of Black African priests and seminarians from Africa to the United States as some American Bishops look to address the clergy shortage brought on by the

decomposition of the Church in America during the second half of the twentieth century. This movement is fascinating in that it marks a partial reversal in what areas are to be considered "missionary" territory for Church evangelization, i.e., from Africa to America. As a matter of fact, just recently the African American Catholic Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago, Joseph N. Perry, has made the case that Americans, American Catholics, and American Catholic Blacks all have much to learn from recent African Catholic immigrants to this country given the latter's communitarian philosophy and cohesive Catholic faith traditions (Pattison, 2006). One key issue well worth watching here is the relationship that develops—or doesn't develop—between the newly arrived, and, in many cases, highly orthodox, African priests, religious, and seminarians and a very Americanized Black and Black Catholic population with its New World roots back to the colonial period. Another related migration whose impact is well worth watching is the recent influx into America of Afro-Caribbeans, with their highly syncretic Catholic-cultural combinations.

Despite these bright spots—and potential bright spots—there are many reasons why the Catholic Church has been mostly unsuccessful in its ability to attract Black Americans. Some of these reasons have been out of the control of Church leaders while others reflect conscious and debatable decision-making, while yet others are indicative of personal failures and sinful thoughts and behavior.

Among the former explanations that assign little culpability to the Catholic community, two are prominent. Regarding the issue of unsuccessful evangelization efforts, the first is the simple fact that, until the post-World War II period, America has been a nation that has been defined—religiously, politically, culturally, and economically—by a generic Protestantism, thus putting the early Catholic Church at a competitive disadvantage in religious recruitment. In this regard, it is interesting to note a brief period between post-World War II America and the decomposition of the Catholic Church and the black consciousness and pride movement commencing in the mid-1960s, in which there *were* notable conversions of African American Protestants to Catholicism, a sign of the growing strength, organization, and presence of the institution at the time. David Gibson (2006) reports, regrettably from a Catholic perspective, that there are fewer Black Catholics in the U.S. than there were fifty years ago. The second factor is that, until relatively recently, most Black Americans have been located in the South while Catholics have historically been concentrated in the North. (There is, by the way, a small but real recent movement of Catholics, following economic and population growth patterns, into the South with the

development of colleges like Belmont Abbey and Southern Catholic representing reflections of this reality.)

Regarding decisions affecting evangelization that are debatable, three stand out for attention. The first was the Church's refusal to simply flat out condemn slavery (thus refusing to differentiate herself from the position of many other Americans and many other civilizations at the time). David Gibson (2006) and Jim Taylor (2006) report that the Church Universal did not officially condemn the concept of slavery per se until 1888.

As John T. McGreevy (2003) points out, until the enactment of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, many Catholics in the U.S. generally saw the institution of slavery as an imperfect and unfortunate institution but one that, practically speaking, could not be abolished in quick order. McGreevy (2003) notes that not a few pre-civil war Catholics calculated that the social disorder that was thought to be the inevitable result from the abolition of slavery would be greater than the benefits of any immediate emancipation. On the other hand, the Church Universal did condemn the slave trade (In *Supremo Apostolatus Fastigo* published in 1839) and did historically and consistently argue for the humanization of slavery (e.g. that slaves receive the sacraments, be permitted to marry, and be afforded an education) given that the slave was viewed, as with all other human beings, as a child of God (McGreevey, 2003). It would be fair to conclude that the Church's position as implemented (and, in many cases, not implemented) on the American scene, while advocating certain fundamental rights for slaves, was neither a revolutionary one in favor of the African American nor adequate. It was inadequate because it is hard to imagine a persuasive "natural law" analysis that could defend the idea that human beings could be viewed, in any sense, as the "property" of others. Put another way, the Church took too long is recognizing that its constant defense of the fundamental dignity of the human being was incompatible with the basic idea of slavery.

A second debatable call unfavorable to the black American population was the decision of Church leaders to concentrate their social welfare efforts for the benefit of their own internal population, mostly poor and themselves discriminated against. The famous Archbishop of New York, John "Dagger" Hughes, was quite clear on the point; for all practical purposes, he argued, the Irish Catholic and other impoverished white Catholic ethnic groups were slaves themselves and there should be a Catholic preference for their own people. Thus Archbishop Hughes and other Catholic thinkers, again, refused to make any clear distinction between the suffering brought about by slavery and from other miseries

associated with the human condition (McGreevy, 2003). In a related situation, many Catholic commentators have noted the failure of the Second Plenary Council to attempt to address systematically the massive needs of the just emancipated four million slaves in the immediate post Civil War period (Davis, 1990; Scott, 1999). The Catholic Church in America, thus again, refused to take a prophetic stance.

A third arguable issue is the inaction/lack of desire and ability of Catholic leadership to encourage a liturgical option that would be attractive to African American religious sensibilities. David Gibson (2006), for one, has argued that most Blacks have opted to express their Christian sensibilities in Black Pentecostal churches that provided both ministerial opportunities and alternative liturgical options vis-à-vis the highly structured pre-Vatican II era Latin Mass. In general, the liturgy or worship style of the Catholic Church has been what sociologist Father Andrew M. Greeley (1972) has referred to as "Apollonian" or one on the sedate, non-emotional, non-experiential side. Combined with the historic Catholic emphasis on doctrine and abstract intellectual thought, a case can be made that the worship style of the Catholic Church in the United States is out of line with the more, to refer to Greeley once again, "Dionysian" style, historically linked with Black Americans—one noted for an emphasis on emotion and fervor. Liturgical change in the Catholic Church in America since Vatican II has moved the worship style, at least generally, ever further away for the traditional black American sensibility as many Catholic parishes have moved away from the devotional richness of the Latin mass to a "thinner," American interpretation stressing individualism, choice, a guilt-free therapeutic mentality, social consciousness, and an optimistic and cheery worldview downplaying the reality and effect of original sin in individual lives and worldly affairs. The only slightly counter movement in the black direction since Vatican II is the acceptance of the, relatively speaking, more emotional nature of the Catholic charismatic mass as well as the continued allowance of certain vibrant and colorful ethnic masses celebrating the Hispanic, Italian, Haitian, etc. religious and cultural heritages legitimated under the contemporary concept of a religious multiculturalism. As with all multicultural Catholic expressions, great care must be taken by legitimate Catholic authorities to guarantee that the faith builds on whatever is true, holy, beautiful, and of utility in the African cultural tradition without having the universal principles of the faith being submerged in either pagan or neo-pagan formulations that contradict the Catholic logic. The Catholic Church, if it wants to be successful in its evangelization efforts, must address the experiential nature of the current world-wide revolution in charismatic and

Pentecostal like religiosity (Jenkins, 2006, 2002)—so attractive, especially to Blacks and Hispanics—by neither ignoring it or capitulating to it but, rather, by incorporating, co-opting, and transforming it.

The single greatest example of a reality that clearly assigns culpability to the Church regarding the situation of Black Americans is the fact that racist attitudes and behavior for the most part, have been no better than most other American groups (Davis, 1990). Many early Catholic leaders, including Bishops and priests, owned slaves. Many in the Catholic community held the same society wide derogatory attitude toward the African American.

One particularly ambiguous period of American Catholic history involving the Black American community deserves special mention and involves simultaneously elements of Catholic innocence and culpability. This is the issue of the conflict that occurred in the urban North in the mid-twentieth century between white ethnic Catholics and blacks who had migrated from the South since the 1920s onwards into cities in search of work, welfare assistance, and a better life as discussed, for instance, by John T. McGreevy in his book, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* (1996). Many working class white Catholics who resided in the cities at the time saw the influx of poor blacks as a vehicle by which white neighborhoods experienced rapidly declining property values, the introduction of public housing bringing with it an "undesirable" clientele, deteriorating school systems, violence in the form of riots and street crime, and an exodus, for some at least eventually, to the suburbs. As McGreevy (1996) points out, the ethnic working class defense of their neighborhoods was not just economic and material in nature. Rather many Catholic ethnics saw their neighborhoods in essentially religious, moral, and communal terms with the focal point of life, for many, being the parish and the parish school. While other groups and individuals, less spatially and morally tied to their city neighborhood, fled to the suburbs, many neighborhood centered Catholic ethnics attempted to defend their home turf, thereby dramatically increasing the chances of conflict, including a significant manifestation of racist attitudes and behavior and, at best, ill-will, toward the black population.

There was a significant internal Catholic debate at the time over the issue of just how culpable or, conversely, justifiable was the stance of inner-city Catholic ethnics toward the new black migrants (Varacalli, 2006). On the one hand, many Catholic progressives saw the Catholic ethnic versus African American conflict as a simple and clear

battle between, on the one hand, parochialism and racism and, on the other, universalism and justice. These Catholic progressives were spurred on by their active participation in the Civil Rights movement and their liberal interpretation of the Second Vatican Council which equated the mission of the Church in terms of this-worldly justice issues implemented along quasi-socialist policies enforced with coercion by the federal government. Others—including many ethnic working-class Catholics who lived in the neighborhoods in contention—saw the conflict as a more complex matter of competing rights and wondered out loud why it should be expected that relatively disadvantaged Catholics give up their neighborhoods and meager economic resources to sacrifice for the perceived needs of another group, albeit in more objective need, when, for instance, more middle-class and privileged suburbanites of all religions and philosophies were not being asked to make comparable sacrifices for the admittedly and undeniably laudable goal of African American advance. Many of these once conservative Catholic members of the Democratic Party moved to supporting, on a case by case basis, Republican Party candidates who were viewed as respecting populist, average man-in-the-street interests. These defecting Catholic Democrats, in other words, became part of President Richard Nixon's "silent majority" or, slightly later, identified themselves as "Reagan Democrats." Thus some white working class ethnic Catholics and many Black Americans find themselves—despite objectively not radically different socio-economic statuses—basically, with certain qualifications (e.g. school choice), on opposite sides of the barricades in the contemporary American culture war.

A final issue that also treads the line between culpable decision-making and historical determinacy, i.e., between responsibility and innocence, regarding the failure to evangelize the Black American community involves the analysis of the three, more or less, distinctive historical postures of the African American community vis-à-vis the broader Catholic American community in terms of the issue of racial segregation vs. integration vs. cultural pluralism (Varacalli, 2006). The first period was segregationist/separatist as African American Catholic leaders such as the black lawyer Thomas Wyatt Turner, who founded the Federated Colored Catholics Association, pushed the view that it was best that black Catholics have their own distinctive parishes, neighborhoods, cultural life, and organizations. One could speculate that this position, given the socially isolated and discriminatory position that Blacks clearly occupied in both society and the Catholic Church in early American history, was not favorable to effective evangelization among the African population. This position gave way to the

integrationist response, popular in the 1940s through the mid-1960s, that emphasized the commonality of humanity and the universalism of Catholicism, a position most forcibly put forth by Jesuit Fathers John La Farge, S.J. and William Markee, S.J. (1957) who created and advocated Catholic interracial councils. The potential weakness of the integrationist model is precisely the opposite of that promoted by Turner, i.e., it might well have been viewed as too rejecting of, or at least indifferent to, Black religious and cultural sensibilities. The integrationist model fell out of favor with many African American Catholics during the middle-1960s, due to either radical/pluralistic/segregationist/separatist visions that coincided with the rise of the Black Power movement or to more moderate versions of religious and cultural pluralism, the latter still popular today. The more moderate version of a Black Catholic religious and cultural pluralism tries to tread a line between a radical rejection of American society and non-African religious institutions and an allegiance untouched, in any significant way, by the black African heritage.

It is within the moderate version of religious and cultural pluralism or what I've called a "realistic multiculturalism" that one can find some hope that the Catholic Church can attract Black Americans to the Catholic fold. Unfortunately, this potentially positive development is overwhelmed at present by three powerful historical realities unfavorable to the possibility of significant evangelization among the Black population. One is the weakened state of the Catholic sub-culture, which makes Catholicism a less attractive option for Blacks—as for all other groups—in terms of social status, prestige, and membership appeal. The second is the weakening of the system of Catholic primary and secondary education, so actually and potentially attractive to large segments of the Black population who have been failed by the secular school establishment. These developments, again, can be assigned to the counter-productive policies of the liberal Catholic establishment. The third, final, and again, related factor is the abandonment of inner-city Catholic parishes, schools, hospitals, social welfare agencies and other altruistic organizations as cost-cutting devices given the weakened financial status of the Catholic community in general and the move of a large sector of the middle-class Catholic population out of the inner cities and to the suburbs. The decision to de-emphasize the inner city is a prudential one subject to legitimate debate. But, I think, it was a wrong-headed decision which, unfortunately, finds supporters from across the liberal-orthodox spectrum. The Catholic Church could—and I argue, should—find the will and commitment—perhaps through revenue sharing among all parishes in a diocese and through national

Catholic subsidies, to maintain a strong presence in the inner cities, thus making possible a major contribution to the spiritual and material welfare of many Black Americans, immigrants, and other minorities. The evangelization possibilities associated with this option could have been, and could still be, enormous.

Conclusion: Other Important Themes in the Catholic History of the United States

It is the case, of course, that there are many other worthy themes in the Catholic history of the United States that are interrelated and overlap with the six discussed in this essay; indeed, some might judge that they are even more important. Just a few of these would involve Catholic education, the role of women and the emergence of a feminist movement, immigration and nativism, differing theological, philosophical, organizational and devotional styles within the tradition; and controversies over "trusteeism," the "Cahensly affair," "the heresy of Americanism," the impact of the Second Vatican Council, and the role of the Catholic politician. Some of these themes and others are touched upon in my most recent volume, *The Catholic Experience in America*. However, they are deserving of more intensive and in-depth analysis.

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