

1-1-1996

# Catholic-Evangelical Relations: Signs of Progress

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## Repository Citation

Rausch, Thomas P., "Catholic-Evangelical Relations: Signs of Progress" (1996). *Theological Studies Faculty Works*. 188.  
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## Recommended Citation

Rausch, Thomas P. "Catholic-Evangelical Relations: Signs of Progress," *One in Christ* 32/2 (1996) 40-52.

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## Catholic-Evangelical Relations: Signs of Progress\*

Relations between Catholics and Evangelical Christians historically have not been close. American Protestantism was largely evangelical until the triumph of liberal Protestantism in the twentieth century. Since Vatican II Catholics have generally been more comfortable with Protestants from the so-called 'mainline' Churches, those established traditions stemming from the sixteenth century Reformation, each with a clear sense of its own ecclesial and theological identity and its own historical relationship to the Catholic Church.

Evangelicals are more difficult for Catholics to categorise. First, modern Evangelical Christianity appeared at some distance from Catholicism, emerging as it did out of a number of revivals within eighteenth and nineteenth century Protestantism, Pietism within German Lutheranism, Wesley's Methodist movement within the Church of England, and the 'Great Awakening' within early American Protestantism. Second, Evangelical Christianity is pluralistic, embracing a wide variety of Evangelicals as well as Pentecostals and fundamentalists. Fifty percent are members of historic Churches, some belong to Evangelical or Pentecostal Churches and congregations, others are non-denominational Christians. In the United States many of them are conservative 'establishment Evangelicals' who constitute a large percentage of the 'religious right' represented by groups such as the Christian Coalition, founded by Pat Robertson.<sup>1</sup> Others are 'new Evangelicals' whose Christian witness includes a practical concern for the social implications of the gospel. The Sojourners community and the Church of the Savior, both in Washington, DC, are representative of this group. But what is common to all Evangelicals is a 'born again' or conversion experience establishing a personal relationship with Jesus as one's Lord and Savior, an insistence on the sufficiency of Scripture ('*sola Scriptura*'), and an urgency for bringing the saving word of the gospel to others.

Evangelicals and Pentecostals have often been hostile towards Catholics. Many have argued that Catholicism is a false religion, teaching works righteousness instead of justification by faith alone, substituting the Church for the Lord, encouraging non-biblical practices such as veneration of Mary and the saints. Pentecostals dislike the formalism of worship in the liturgical Churches, seeing it as a substitution for the vitality of the Spirit, and are profoundly suspicious of the historical-critical theological

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1. See George W. Gerner, 'Catholics and the "Religious Right": We Are Being Wooed', *Commonweal* 122 (5 May, 1995), pp. 15–20.

methodologies used by Catholics and mainline Protestants. Since many Evangelicals and Pentecostals consider baptised Catholics as being among the unsaved, they have made them the object of their evangelising efforts, and with considerable success. Millions of Hispanic Catholics in Latin America and the United States have joined Evangelical and especially Pentecostal congregations.<sup>2</sup>

Catholics have often been guilty of stereotyping Evangelicals and Pentecostals. Without bothering to distinguish the varieties of Evangelical Christianity, they have tended to dismiss all Evangelicals as fundamentalists. Even the Vatican has failed to distinguish between Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches and groups such as the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses, lumping them all together in its official documents under the term 'sects'. Many of the former were deeply offended when Pope John Paul II in his remarks at the Fourth General Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM), held at Santo Domingo in 1992, implicitly included them among the 'sects' which he characterised as acting like 'rapacious wolves', devouring Latin American Catholics and 'causing division and discord' in Catholic communities.<sup>3</sup> In 1993 Cardinal Edward Cassidy, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, noting that the Catholic Church was in 'fruitful dialogue' with Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians, stated that they should not be designated as 'sects'.<sup>4</sup> However, the Cardinal's caution is not always observed in Latin America.

Relations in Latin America between Catholics and Protestants have deteriorated to the point that the governing board for the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) decided not to invite official representatives of the Catholic Church to its Third General Assembly in Concepción, Chile in late January 1995 because of worsening relations between Catholics and Protestants throughout the continent. Both traditions seem to be changing. Although only thirty percent of the representatives attending the CLAI assembly were Pentecostals, Felipe Adolf, then CLAI's Executive Secretary, says that the traditional Protestant Churches in Latin America are adopting new liturgies and worship practices that make them resemble

2. See for example David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990); Allan Figueroa Deck, 'The Challenge of Evangelical/Pentecostal Christianity to Hispanic Catholicism', in *Hispanic Catholic Culture in the U.S.: Issues and Concerns*, ed. Jay P. Dolan and Allan Figueroa Deck (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), pp. 409–39.

3. John Paul II, 'Opening Address to the Fourth Conference of the Latin American Episcopate', *Origins* 22 (22 October, 1992), p. 326; see also Edward L. Cleary, 'Report from Santo Domingo – II: John Paul Cries "Wolf": Misreading the Pentecostals', *Commonweal* 119 (20 November, 1992), p. 7.

4. Cardinal Edward Cassidy, 'Prolusio', in the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service* 84 (1993), p. 122.

the Pentecostal and charismatic Churches.<sup>5</sup> Protestant theologian José Míguez-Bonino described the Catholic Church as moving from the positions it espoused at the time of Vatican II to a 'neo-Christendom', and many expressed concern over the Vatican's policy of naming conservatives to replace progressive and ecumenically-minded bishops.<sup>6</sup> Others object that Catholic bishops in many Latin American countries continue to insist that only Catholicism be taught in the state-supported schools, in spite of the presence of students from other Churches. As the Episcopal bishop of Mexico City has said, the Catholic Church in Mexico has a 'superiority complex'. Because it is the Church of the majority, 'it feels that there is no reason to take the other Churches into consideration'.<sup>7</sup>

Evangelicals and Pentecostals have generally been slow to embrace the ecumenical movement. Many fear that drawing closer to other Churches would mean a blurring of doctrinal differences, and they often misunderstand the goal of ecumenism as implying some kind of institutional superchurch, an anathema to the individualism of so many Evangelicals. Most Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches have refused to take part in the World Council of Churches, considering its agenda as more social-political than religious; they see 'spiritual' unity as more biblical.<sup>8</sup> Many Southern Baptists, who see the true Church as spiritual and invisible, will argue that ecumenism has never been part of the mission of the Baptist Churches.

### Signs of progress

In recent years, however, there have been some significant signs of progress. On the international level some dialogues have been initiated. The first formal meeting of the Pentecostal-Roman Catholic Dialogue took place in 1972.<sup>9</sup> An Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission was established in 1977.<sup>10</sup> However, official dialogue is difficult. Catholics are challenged to find new ways of relating to dialogue partners who represent 'streams' or 'movements' rather than clear ecclesial traditions.<sup>11</sup> The

5. Stephen Brown, 'Altered Ecumenism: An Interview with Felipe Adolf', *One World* 202 (Jan-Feb 1995), pp. 4-6.

6. Eugene L. Stockwell, 'Open and Closed', *Christian Century* 112 (22-29 March, 1995), p. 318.

7. Sergio Carranza-Gomez, 'Ecumenical Relations in Mexico', *Ecumenical Trends* 24 (July/August 1995), p. 13.

8. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., 'Pentecostals and Visible Church Unity', *One World* 192 (January-February 1994), p. 11.

9. See Kilian McDonnell, 'The Death of Mythologies: The Classical Pentecostal/Roman Catholic Dialogue', *America* 172 (5 March, 1995), p. 14; also Jerry L. Sandige, ed. *Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (1977-1984): A Study in Developing Ecumenism* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987).

10. Basil Meeking and John Stott, eds. *The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission: 1977-1984* (William B. Eerdmans/ The Paternoster Press, 1986).

11. Peter Hocken, 'Ecumenical Dialogue: The Importance of Dialogue with Evangelicals and Pentecostals', *One in Christ*, 1994/2, p. 115; Hocken's article gives a much more complete history of efforts at dialogue.

participants from these movements are not always official representatives of any international body, nor are they always supported by their communities. Neither the Pentecostal World Conference nor the national Pentecostal Fellowship of North America or its successor, the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America, has supported the Pentecostal-Roman Catholic Dialogue, so some participants must come on their own and occasionally at a cost that is more than financial. Yet as Peter Hocken has pointed out, 'the greater vitality' of these 'non-ecumenicals', in contrast to the mainline or 'ecumenical' traditions, 'suggests that the ecumenical movement, at least in its more institutional expressions, has somehow lost touch with the most dynamic currents of revival and renewal'.<sup>12</sup>

Dialogues are important. But there can be no real ecumenical progress until Christians in local congregations begin to recognise each other as sharing in common faith and thus as brothers and sisters in the Lord. Thus what is particularly significant in relations between Evangelical-Pentecostal Christians and Catholics are the new relationships presently being formed at the grass roots. In what is a surprising development to many ecumenists, representatives of these traditions are beginning to recognise the number of concerns they share in common, among them, strengthening the family, the welfare of children, the sanctity of life, the place of religious values in society, and – most importantly – evangelization. Even more significantly, they are beginning to cooperate in ways which only a few years ago would have seemed impossible. Some examples:

### Youth and renewal ministries

Evangelicals are effective communicators; as Peter Hocken says, 'their distinctive witness to the Spirit lies primarily in the areas of conversion-evangelization, discipleship training, congregational planting, and spiritual empowerment'.<sup>13</sup> They have been particularly successful in working with young people through ministries such as Young Life, Campus Crusade for Christ, and Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. Unfortunately, the often negative evaluation of the Catholic Church by these groups has made most Catholics hesitant to try and work with them. In parishes, Catholic youth ministers have for years watched in frustration while young Catholics who showed little interest in their programs would accompany their non-Catholic friends to Young Life meetings at a Protestant church. College campus ministers have objected that groups like Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship and Campus Crusade for Christ have often tended to work in competition with the historic Churches and in fact are often anti-ecclesial, setting up independent fellowships, sometimes with non-denominational

12. Hocken, 'Ecumenical Dialogue', p. 104.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

sacramental rituals. Few campus ministers at Catholic institutions have been open to welcoming these groups to their campuses. One campus minister told me that at his campus, a private non-Catholic college, InterVarsity sponsored an 'ecumenical' gathering of prayer and fellowship at the university pool. At the end of an afternoon of testimonies and exhortation, one of the team said, 'Well, we have a pool here; what is to prevent us from celebrating baptism for those who want to give themselves to the Lord?' It sounded spontaneous, but in fact had all been carefully planned in advance.

In the last few years, however, there have been signs of a new sensitivity to Catholics in some of these groups and they have begun to work with Catholic pastors and youth ministers rather than in competition with them. As early as 1975 in Poland, Father Francziszek Blachnicki, founder of the Light-Life Movement, recognised the effectiveness of Evangelical Protestants in evangelization and began a close collaboration with Campus Crusade for Christ.<sup>14</sup> Since then, Campus Crusade has been exploring other possible ways of participating with established Churches in Church renewal. An internal Campus Crusade report on European missions describes a number of signs of new life within European Churches.<sup>15</sup> In Florence a Campus Crusade for Christ team was having limited success working with Catholics, since for them, renewal meant joining a Protestant Church. But when they met a Bible study group from a Catholic parish, they were impressed and changed their approach. After an initial presentation to a group from the parish, the parish priest invited them to begin a women's Bible study and later on to work with the parish youth. Their ministry in cooperation with the parish staff now touches hundreds of families.

The report also speaks highly of Alpha-Omega, an officially recognised lay Roman Catholic movement for the evangelization of Italy. With staffs in Rome, Modena, and Verona, Alpha-Omega trains teams which do direct evangelization in parishes under the supervision of the local priest. It uses a book based on Campus Crusade's 'Four Spiritual Laws' to present the gospel to parish families. The report urges this model of evangelization, working through the local parish and parish priest, as a model for Italy and other European countries. It praises the openness of the Catholic Church to Bible teaching and argues that Protestants and Catholics can work together in this 'ecumenical' ministry, even if this sometimes occasions 'criticism from well-meaning relatives, friends and colleagues' for working with Catholics.

Peter Hocken tells a similar story of the Evangelical para-Church agency, Youth With a Mission (YWAM). Founded in the late 1950s, the

14. See Peter Hocken, 'Ecumenical Issues in Evangelization', *One in Christ*, 1995/1, p. 4.

15. Kalevi Lethinen, 'Evidences of New Life in Europe: Problems associated with European Missions', an unpublished Campus Crusade staff report.

members of YWAM shared the belief that Catholics were not real Christians until Bruce Clewett, a young American working in Poland, began to ask if it really helped young Poles to attempt to draw them out of their own Catholic culture and tradition and turn them into westernised Protestants. His own realisation that Catholics could stay in their churches, arrived at after two years of prayer, led to a gradual change in YWAM which today cooperates with Catholics in Malta, Ghana, Uganda, Austria, and the Philippines. In Ireland, the YWAM staff as of 1994 was seventy-five percent Catholic.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most successful Evangelical ministries to adolescents is Young Life. In recent years Young Life has been seeking to develop its ministry in partnership with local congregations, and has made efforts to cooperate more effectively with Catholics.

An internal Young Life document entitled *The Church and Young Life: Partners in Ministry* has a special section on 'Ministering to and with Catholic Young People', written by Dan Ponsetto, a Catholic campus minister at Boston College who himself went through a conversion experience through Young Life as a high school student. Its purpose is to help Protestant youth ministers understand the different religious culture of young Catholics by explaining the experience of faith from a Catholic perspective, including the meaning of sacramental reconciliation, the centrality of the Eucharist, Catholic teaching on Mary and the saints, a proper understanding of the papacy and its authority, and the differences between the Catholic and Protestant biblical canon. Particularly effective is its discussion of the different languages that Protestants and Catholics use to describe conversion. It stresses that for Catholics conversion is seen as a life-long process, and hence it is confusing or even insulting to talk to a young Catholic about becoming a Christian when he or she has been involved for years in weekly worship, religious education, retreats, and has made a conscious decision to receive the sacrament of confirmation.<sup>17</sup>

Unfortunately, as several Young Life staffers admitted to me, this kind of openness does not characterise all Young Life groups, just as there are many Catholic dioceses which want nothing to do with Young Life or other Evangelical para-Church groups. But there is also much promise. Ponsetto's guide, written in 1991, is still being circulated in varying degrees within Young Life. In some parts of the country Young Life and Catholics are working together in collaborative programs for training youth ministers. Bishop Richard Hanifen of Colorado Springs served on Young Life's Church Relations Advisory Council for a number of years and has taken part in some of their national conferences on Christian leadership. His diocese has entered a partnership with Young Life. For a

16. Hocken, 'Ecumenical Issues', pp. 7-8.

17. *The Church and Young Life: Partners in Ministry* (Colorado Springs, CO: Young Life Ministry Resources Department, 1992), p. 51.

number of years, Young Life has sent several representatives to the annual meeting of the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry; one of them commented on how much Young Life was learning from the Catholic Church's liturgical tradition and from its commitment to social justice. If Young Life and other Evangelical outreach agencies such as Campus Crusade for Christ and YWAM were to bring their zeal and evangelical skills to the renewal of Catholic parishes and communities, it could be a significant contribution to building up the body of Christ.

One of the most rapidly growing Evangelical renewal movements is Promise Keepers, a Christian men's movement founded in 1990 by Bill McCartney, a former Catholic, then head football coach at the University of Colorado.<sup>18</sup> The movement gathers men for mass rallies which combine evangelical exhortations, personal sharing, and public prayer. At the end of a rally those who wish to become part of Promise Keepers are asked to make seven commitments: to honor the teaching of Jesus through worship, prayer, and obedience to his Word; pursue vital relationships with other men who as brothers will help each keep his promises; practice spiritual, ethical, and moral purity; build strong marriages and families; support their local church and pastor; reach beyond denominational and racial boundaries; and put into practice the Great Commandment (Mark 12:30–31) and the Great Commission (Matt 28:19–20).

Promise Keepers began as an Evangelical movement but Catholic men are becoming involved in it and beginning to establish Promise Keepers groups in their parishes. Though it has been slow to include Catholic men in its leadership and has drawn some criticism from women for its emphasis on traditional male family roles, the fact that it does not proselytise and is supportive of local congregations is winning the movement Catholic support. A rally at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum in May 1995 drew 100,000 men.

#### *Evangelization and development*

Another significant development is the growing recognition in both traditions of the inseparability of evangelization and action on behalf of justice. In some circles within the Evangelical community, this recognition is bringing about a call for cooperation with the Catholic Church precisely as Church. This is particularly true of World Vision International, probably the most effective evangelical relief agency.

World Vision describes itself as an international partnership of Christians whose mission is to work with the poor and oppressed 'to promote human transformation, seek justice and bear witness to the good news of the Kingdom of God'.<sup>19</sup> There have been tensions between World

18. See Edward Gilbreath, 'Manhood's Great Awakening', *Christianity Today* 39 (6 February, 1995), pp. 20–28.

19. World Vision International, Mission Statement.

Vision and the Catholic Church in the past, as both sides admit. Though it presents itself as a humanitarian service, Catholics engaged in development and relief work have sometimes experienced World Vision as a primarily Evangelical organisation using its relief funds for the purpose of proselytising, and many object to its promotional practices. Several years ago Catholic relief officials refused to work with World Vision in Ethiopia, though they cooperated with the Lutherans and the Orthodox. In 1990, Trocaire – the Irish Catholic Agency for Development Aid to Third World countries – was sued by World Vision of Ireland for libel. Trocaire's director had accused World Vision of proselytising with the money they collected in Ireland, and had the support of a number of Church people from the Philippines. The suit was settled out of court.

However, World Vision is presently in the midst of an internal transformation with important ecumenical implications. From being an Evangelical relief organisation with an exclusively Protestant missionary interest, it increasingly sees itself as a Christian agency committed to relief, sustainable development, and Christian witness at the service of the universal Church. This shift is due partly to the fact that World Vision recognises that it has a number of Catholics on its staff and among its supporters. And partly it reflects a new appreciation of the Catholic Church's emphasis on evangelization and development. An internal report entitled 'The Catholic Church in Mission: Evolution of the Church's Teaching on Development and Evangelization', written by Eugene Daniels, Senior Advisor on Church Relations for World Vision International, was prepared as part of the 'process of reflecting on the meaning and implications of inclusiveness in Church relationships, particularly as it relates to the Roman Catholic Church'.<sup>20</sup>

Daniels traces the development of Catholic social teaching from the time of Leo XIII through Vatican II and subsequent papal teaching. Particularly important for Daniels and World Vision is Paul VI's insistence in *Evangelium nuntiandi* on the 'specifically religious finality of evangelization' (EN 32) and the 'profound' link he sees between evangelization and liberation/development (EN 31), as well as John Paul II's firm affirmation of the continuing importance of the Church's evangelical mission in *Redemptoris missio*. In his Preface Daniels acknowledges Catholic concerns: '1) that World Vision encouraged proselytism through its project relationships, and 2) that it fostered paternalism through its sponsorship of children'. But the 'Implications for Ministry and Mission' he draws out at the end of his report are both hopeful and challenging. He notes 'the broad area of convergence between Catholic teaching and a philosophy of ministry embraced by a number of

20. Eugene Daniels, 'The Catholic Church In Mission: Evolution of the Church's Teaching on Development and Evangelization', World Vision International April 1993, Preface (2).

Evangelical developmental agencies', a concern for development as part of evangelization on the part of both bodies, and the need for 'a positive response from Evangelicals' to the Catholic affirmation of the importance of ecumenical cooperation in responding to the unprecedented human needs facing the universal Church.

Daniels' report is a part of a transformation taking place within World Vision which represents a rediscovery of ecclesiology. A new policy statement on relationships with Christian Churches (fifth draft, 20 November, 1995) calls on its members to 'respond constructively to opportunities for joint participation in ministries that promote human transformation, seek justice and bear witness to Jesus Christ', reject proselytism, and 'affirm and promote unity in the body of Christ'. There are some encouraging signs that World Vision is taking practical steps towards this kind of ecumenical cooperation. Recently, its work in the Philippines was reconstituted under a national board, the World Vision Development Foundation, which has responsibility for strategic oversight of its programme there. Among its members is Deogracias Iniguez, the Catholic bishop of Iba (Zambales); he serves as vice-chair of the board and represented it at one of the recent triennial meetings of the World Vision International Council.

Another expression of a new relationship was the unofficial statement 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium', the result of an eighteen month consultation organised by Richard John Neuhaus, a recent convert to the Catholic Church and editor of the journal *First Things*, and former Nixon White House aid Charles Colson, now deeply involved in prison ministry.<sup>21</sup> The statement was signed by twenty Catholic and twenty Evangelical scholars. Though theologically quite sophisticated, it tends to focus on those moral and social concerns shared by Catholic neo-conservatives and the religious right, among them, opposition to abortion, euthanasia, pornography, and the idea that in areas of marriage, parenthood, and family, tolerance 'requires the promotion of moral equivalence between the normative and the deviant'. The statement supports the transmission of 'our cultural heritage' and parental choice in public education, 'a vibrant market economy' as part of a free society, and a renewed appreciation of western culture.

Unfortunately, as Michael Russell at the Christian Coalition's Virginia Beach headquarters admits, 'the major vehicle for joining action with Roman Catholics at the institutional level has been the Coalition's voter guides'.<sup>22</sup> The US Catholic bishops are concerned over this attempt to

21. 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium', *First Things* (May 1994), pp. 15–22.

22. Cited by George W. Gerner, 'Catholics and the "Religious Right": We are being Wooed', *Commonweal* 122 (5 May, 1995), p. 17. The Christian Coalition was founded by Pat Robertson.

forge a link between the Catholic Church and the agenda of the conservative Christian Coalition through a parallel 'Catholic Alliance'. On the Evangelical side, there has been considerable controversy about this attempt to acknowledge a common Christian mission with Catholics. Nevertheless, the statement has had the effect of requiring those in both traditions to rethink how they perceive the other.

#### *Evangelicals and Hispanic Catholics*

Evangelical Christianity's most serious challenge to Catholicism is in regard to Hispanic Catholics. Allan Figueroa Deck cites a number of studies which show that the Pentecostal movement is the most rapidly growing expression of Christianity today, and that in both Latin America and the United States, Evangelical and Pentecostal groups are gathering significant numbers of Hispanic Catholics into their Churches.<sup>23</sup>

Rather than simply criticising these Evangelical/Pentecostal Christians for proselytising, Deck suggests a number of reasons for their success. Both Hispanic Catholicism and Evangelical Christianity are premodern. Hispanic Catholicism is a popular Catholicism; it 'is fundamentally a system of symbols with an exceedingly undeveloped formal doctrine or theology'.<sup>24</sup> Communicated orally within the family, it is 'almost totally' lacking rational articulation. Deck sees an 'unanalysed affinity' between this popular Catholicism – with its 'concern for an immediate experience of God, a strong orientation toward the transcendent, an implicit belief in miracles, a practical orientation towards healing, and a tendency to personalise or individualise one's relationship with the divine' – and Evangelical/Pentecostal Christianity.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Hispanic Catholics are particularly attracted to the emphasis on personal conversion and the smaller, more affective assemblies they find among Evangelical/Pentecostal Christians.

The traditional divisions between Catholics and Christians from Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches are particularly painful for Hispanics. Conversion from one tradition to another usually causes painful splits in their families, and there is often pressure brought to bear on Catholic members to leave their 'false Church'. Recently Bishop Ricardo Ramirez of Las Cruces, New Mexico has called for a new emphasis on ecumenism among Hispanic Christians.<sup>26</sup> He notes that there have been

23. Deck, 'The Challenge of Evangelical/Pentecostal Christianity to Hispanic Catholicism', pp. 410–16 (see footnote 2).

24. Allan Figueroa Deck, "'A Pox on Both Your Houses': A View of Catholic Conservative-Liberal Polarities from the Hispanic Margin", in *Being Right: Conservative Catholics in America*, ed. Mary Jo Weaver and R. Scott Appleby (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 96.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 412–22.

26. Ricardo Ramirez, 'The Crisis in Ecumenism Among Hispanic Christians', *Origins* 24 (23 March, 1995), pp. 660–67.

offenses on both sides, including an historical unwillingness to welcome Protestants on the part of Latin American Catholicism that has left deep wounds, and he lists numerous contemporary examples of an unwillingness of the two traditions to recognise and respect each other. Nor has ecumenism been a priority for either side: 'What is causing Christian dissension at the grass-roots level is the fact that Protestant and Roman Catholic leaders are never seen together, either praying, talking or working in united ministry. If the people see that it is all right to mix with one another, then they might follow our example'.<sup>27</sup>

There have been some encouraging signs of a new attitude on the part of Catholic and Evangelical Hispanics on the level of scholarship and pastoral formation. The Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians (ACHTUS) in the United States meets regularly with Hispanic theologians from other Churches and now sponsors the *Journal of Hispanic-Latino Theology*. Particularly effective has been the Hispanic Summer Program, supported by the Fund for Theological Education with an initial grant from the Pew Foundation. The program, presently involving some fifteen Protestant and Catholic seminaries and theological centers, brings together students from both traditions for two weeks of intensive courses, discussions, and worship experiences, mostly in Spanish. Of the seven sessions held so far, five were hosted by Protestant seminaries, two by Catholic schools of theology, and the faculty has included professors from both traditions. United Methodist Justo Gonzalez, director of the program, hopes to expand it to include from fifteen to twenty-five seminaries.

### Conclusion

The dialogues between the Catholic Church and representatives of Evangelical and Pentecostal communities are important. There remain significant theological differences on questions such as the authority of Scripture, the nature of the Church and its relation to the gospel, whether it is a visible or invisible communion, a local or universal fellowship, the meaning of baptism and the Eucharist, the requirements of an apostolic ministry, and the veneration of Mary and the saints. One encouraging sign was the commitment made at the October 1994 meeting of black and white Pentecostal leaders in Memphis, Tennessee, which resulted in a new, multi-ethnic fellowship called the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America. At this meeting, these leaders pledged 'to work for genuine and visible manifestations of Christian unity'. This departs from the traditional Pentecostal unwillingness to speak of unity in anything other than spiritual terms.<sup>28</sup>

Misunderstandings and tensions between the two traditions remain

27. *Ibid.*, p. 666.

28. See David Cole, 'Current Pentecostal/Ecumenical Tensions', *Ecumenical Trends* 24 (May 1995), p. 77.

strong. A booklet recently published by the Southern Baptist Convention entitled *Sharing Our Faith with Roman Catholic Friends* still mistakenly asserts that Mary as 'mediatrix' is a dogma of the Church and that Catholics believe that Christ is 'sacrificed at the celebration of the Mass'.<sup>29</sup> The 1994 Neuhaus/Colson statement drew considerable criticism from Conservative Evangelicals for its openness to Catholics, and two Southern Baptist signers had subsequently to withdraw their names because of fears that they might be seen as speaking for the Southern Baptist Convention. Some Catholics continue to criticise it for its conservative social and political agenda.

But there are also significant signs of a new and vital relationship emerging from the grass-roots. Catholics and Evangelicals share far more than a mutual interest in right to life and family values. Both remain strongly committed to the Church's evangelical mission. Both are committed to the central doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the atoning death and bodily Resurrection of Jesus. And both are concerned with a personally appropriated faith, Catholics through their emphasis on spirituality, Evangelicals through their stress on a personal relationship with Jesus.

Catholics could learn a great deal about what Pope John Paul II has called the 'new evangelization', calling those no longer involved with the Church to a living sense of the faith, from Evangelical Christians.<sup>30</sup> Some Catholics are beginning to take them seriously, calling for a new cooperation and learning from them about the needs of Hispanic Catholics. Evangelicals are showing a new interest in ecumenism. Some are learning to work with Catholics rather than presuming that joining a Protestant community is the only way to live a renewed life of faith. When Pope John Paul II visited New York in October 1995, there were several Evangelicals among the Christian leaders who met with him. At that gathering, Pat Robertson pledged to work for Christian unity between Catholics and Evangelicals.<sup>31</sup>

In Los Angeles Catholics and Evangelicals have been meeting since 1987; their dialogue, cosponsored by the archdiocese and Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, remains the only one of its kind. At a recent meeting I listened to Isaac Canales, an Evangelical Hispanic pastor educated at Harvard University and Fuller Seminary, talking about members of his congregation who were former Catholics, as were his own parents. One was a grandmother, 'very Catholic', her home full of shrines to the saints, but she never went to church. Another had been a member of

29. Daniel R. Sanchez, *Sharing Our Faith with Roman Catholic Friends: Leader's Guide* (Atlanta, GA: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1992), pp. 13, 52, 47.

30. See Avery Dulles, 'John Paul II and the New Evangelization', *America* 166 (1992), pp. 52-59; 69-72.

31. Heidi Schlumpf Kezmoh, 'Top Evangelicals Confer with Pope', *Christianity Today* 39 (13 November, 1995), p. 88.

the very large local Catholic parish, 'but not a Christian; she was doing drugs'. After her conversion, she wanted to be baptised, but Revd Canal did not allow her to until later, when her own parents also asked to become members of the church. A third remained active at the same Catholic parish, but came each Wednesday night for the Bible study, finding that his own life in Christ was beginning to deepen. A fourth also remained in his parish, but finding its liturgy cold, came to the Evangelical church for its warmth and fellowship.

What if the pastors of the two churches were to begin their own dialog about the needs of their people? What if Catholic parishes or dioceses were to consider forming some of their lay ministers and evangelists programs like Campus Crusade and Young Life? What if the growing interchange between Hispanic seminarians were to lead to a new interest in liturgical prayer and a sense for the catholicity and universality of the Church in the Evangelical pastors of tomorrow? What if Catholics and Evangelicals were to admit how much they could learn from each other

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The Pope goes still further by declaring also that the ecumenical way is the way of the Church: 'This unity which the Lord has bestowed on his Church and in which wishes to embrace all people, is not something added on, but stands at the very heart of Christ's mission . . . it belongs to the very essence of this community' (9) . . . one of the most beautiful passages of the encyclical, . . . the Holy Father explains that 'to believe in Christ means to desire unity; to desire unity means to desire the Church; to desire the Church means to desire the communion of grace which corresponds to the Father's plan from all eternity. Such is the meaning of Christ's prayer: "*Ut unum sint*"' (9).

Cardinal Cassidy on *Ut Unum Sint*, p. 83.