

Fundamentalism in Christianity

Intellectual Output 2, Unit V



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Protestant fundamentalism and Catholic fundamentalism

The terms “fundamentalism” and “traditionalist” refer to specific forms of Christian radicalism in Protestant and Roman Catholic contexts.

The term “integralists”, in the Roman Catholic context, first referred to Catholics who wanted to subordinate the state to Catholic moral principles and were against the idea of a society ruled by secular values. Since the Second Vatican Council that opened Catholicism to modernity, integralism was no longer supported by Catholic authorities but was endorsed by a new group called “traditionalists”, who claim to be faithful to a Roman Catholic tradition that they argue cannot change: thus they still hold on to the Latin Mass.

The term “fundamentalism” first appeared among American Protestants at the beginning of the 20th century as a reaction against theological modernism; fundamentalists intend to go back to what they argue are the “fundamentals” of Christianity, among which a literal reading of the Bible, that leads them to oppose modern science and theology, thus their opposition to the theory of evolution.

Catholic traditionalism and Protestant fundamentalism are therefore reactions to political and theological modernity, and as reactions to modernity they are also products of modernity: **traditionalist Catholics and fundamentalist Protestants advocate for a moral, doctrinal and liturgical order that they claim should not change through adaptation to modernity.** As they advocate for a conservative moral order, traditionalist Catholics and fundamentalist Protestants can be somewhat active in the liberal democratic pluralist political arena, advocating for traditional family values while opposing same-sex marriage and abortion. Inside their own religious traditions – Catholicism or Protestantism – traditionalist Catholics and fundamentalist Protestants distinguish themselves by their separatism and their opposition to ecumenism.

Related Digital Modules:

- [Christian churches and the modern world](#)
- [Vatican II and ecumenism](#)
- [Christian fundamentalism in America](#)

Source 1a

Catholic traditionalism: the 1974 declaration of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre.

Opponents to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council gathered around French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre (1905-1991), who founded the Society of Saint Pius X in 1970. In his Manifesto published on November 21, 1974 Archbishop Lefebvre expressed his traditionalist point of view, denouncing “liberalism” and “modernism” and other innovations brought by the Second Vatican Council: “Novus Ordo Missae,” “new catechism,” “new priesthood,” “new seminaries.” Archbishop Lefebvre contends that those novelties are in opposition to the “Eternal Rome,” arguing that Catholic tradition is superior to the Church hierarchy. In June 30, 1988, Archbishop Lefebvre ordained traditionalist bishops, acting in opposition to the Pope’s authority, which lead to a schism between Rome and the Society of Saint Pius X.

We hold fast, with all our heart and with all our soul, to Catholic Rome, Guardian of the Catholic Faith and of the traditions necessary to preserve this faith, to Eternal Rome, Mistress of wisdom and truth.

We refuse, on the other hand, and have always refused to follow the Rome of neo-Modernist and neo-Protestant tendencies which were clearly evident in the Second Vatican Council and, after the Council, in all the reforms which issued from it.

All these reforms, indeed, have contributed and are still contributing to the destruction of the Church, to the ruin of the priesthood, to the abolition of the Sacrifice of the Mass and of the sacraments, to the disappearance of religious life, to a naturalist and Teilhardian teaching in universities, seminaries and catechetics; a teaching derived from Liberalism and Protestantism, many times condemned by the solemn Magisterium of the Church. No authority, not even the highest in the hierarchy, can force us to abandon or diminish our Catholic Faith, so clearly expressed and professed by the Church’s Magisterium for nineteen centuries.

....To the *Novus Ordo Missae* correspond a new catechism, a new priesthood, new seminaries, a charismatic Pentecostal Church—all things opposed to orthodoxy and the perennial teaching of the Church.

...We hold fast to all that has been believed and practiced in the faith, morals, liturgy, teaching of the catechism, formation of the priest and institution of the Church, by the Church of all time; to all these things as codified in those books which saw day before the Modernist influence of the Council. This we shall do until such time that the true light of Tradition dissipates the darkness obscuring the sky of Eternal Rome.

Source: <https://sspx.org/en/1974-declaration-of-archbishop-lefebvre>

Source 1b:

The Civitas Movement: a traditionalist Catholic political party against modern society

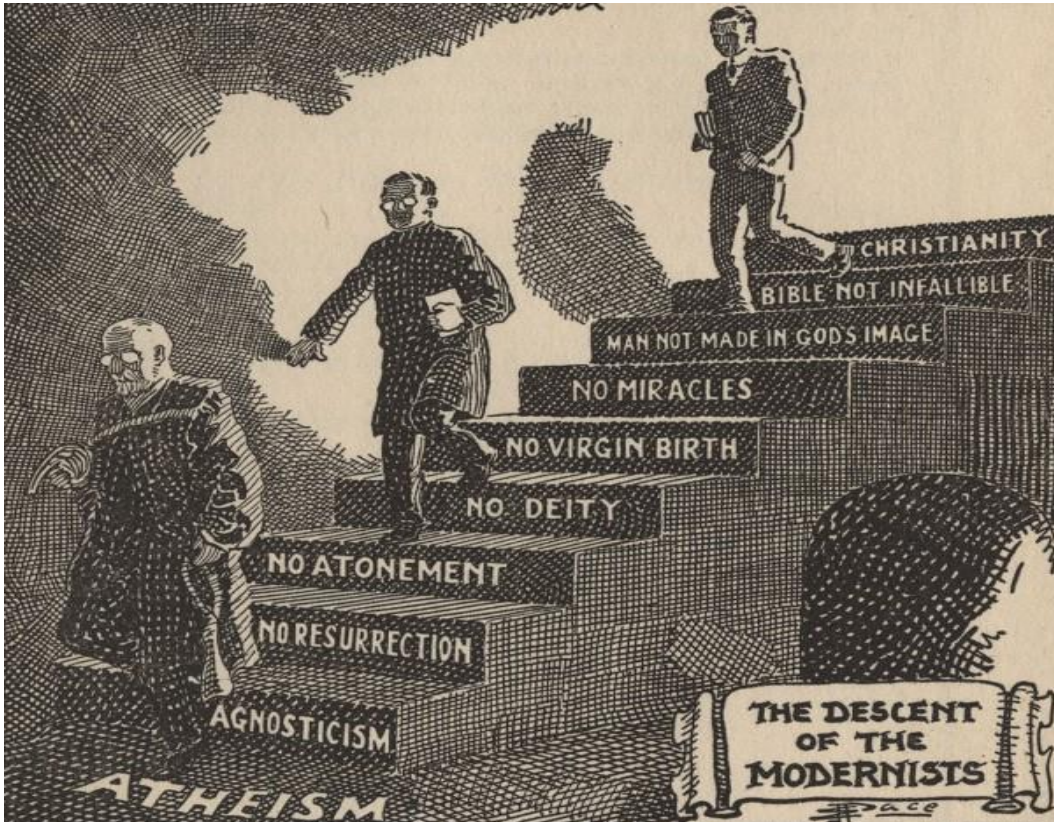
The Civitas Movement (“mouvement Civitas”) is a French political party that promotes the “Catholic City.” The political agenda of Civitas aims at going back on the advances of modernity and as such Civitas Movement is a strong opponent to French laïcité and wants to impose radical Catholic ethics (through the repealing of laws enabling abortion and same-sex marriage) and to forbid “secret societies” such as Freemasonry.



Source : [Institut Civitas](http://www.institutcivitas.com)

Source 2a: Protestant fundamentalism: a reaction to theological modernism

Reacting to theological modernism, Protestant fundamentalism reasserts in a literal way doctrines considered as “fundamentals:” the inerrancy of the Bible; the creation of man in God’s image; the virgin birth of Jesus; the existence of God; the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ; the resurrection. E.J. Pace’s cartoon (below) conveys the idea that when modernists do not adhere to these doctrines, they go down the road of agnosticism and atheism. E. J. Pace’s cartoon was published in a book authored by William Jennings Bryan, an American politician who advocated against the teaching of Evolution in public schools.



Cartoon from E.J. Pace (from the book *Shall Christianity Remain Christian? Seven Questions in Dispute*, 1922, authored by William Jennings Bryan)

Source: <https://www.history.pcusa.org/blog/2015/06/william-jennings-bryan-and-scopes-monkey-trial>

Source 2b: Protestant fundamentalism. The Westboro Baptist Church: a literalist biblical homophobia

The Westboro Baptist Church is part of a religious fundamentalism that displays extreme homophobia (sign on the left: “Fags are worthy of Death – Rom. 1:32; sign on the right: “God still hates fags”). This radical homophobia is reflective of ultra-conservative sexual ethics, and is grounded in a literal understanding of the Bible that reacts against knowledge acquired through modern historical criticism, which tends to put religious texts in their contexts through historical, sociological and philological sciences.



Source: <https://web.archive.org/web/20000302110937/www.godhatesfags.com/fwd.jpg>