

# THE TFP ANSWERS

an Unsigned Attack  
on Its  
*America Needs Fatima* Campaign

by THE AMERICAN TFP

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# INTRODUCTION

Have you been slandered? Has your reputation been ripped apart?

If so, you know the hardship of trying to restore a shredded reputation.

Building a reputation is like building a church. It can take years of loving and careful work. And in a matter of hours, a match and gasoline can burn it all to the ground.

## **Slander and chicken feathers**

A story from the life of Saint Philip Neri helps to understand how devastating slander can be.

On one occasion, a woman confessed sins of slander to Saint Philip Neri and asked for a cure of this bad habit. He said: “Buy a freshly killed chicken and pluck its feathers along the way as you come back to me.”

She did what he said, and returned to him with the plucked chicken. “Now go back,” he said, “and bring me all the feathers you have scattered.” “But I cannot,” she replied, “that is impossible. I cast the feathers carelessly and the wind carried them away. How can I recover them?”

He answered: “You cannot. And so it is with your words of scandal. They have been carried about in every direction. You cannot recall them. Go and slander no more.”

As you know, the Church teaches that slander is a horrendous sin which violates the 8th Commandment. Slander is a lie. It strips and despoils someone not of his material possessions, but of something more precious: his good name.

The Church proclaims the right of Catholics to their good name. Canon 220 states: “No one is permitted to harm illegitimately the good reputation which a person possesses.”



### Forewarned by Our Lord

Our Lord Jesus Christ was slandered. The Pharisees accused Him, among other things, of violating the Sabbath, setting Himself up as a rival king threatening Caesar's rule, being a blasphemer, and casting out devils in the name of Beelzebub.

*“The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you”* (John 15:20).

Good Catholics throughout the centuries have also been slandered. So many lies were spread about Saint Louis de Montfort, for example, that he was banned from preaching in several dioceses, although the Pope had given him the title of Apostolic Missionary. Saint John Bosco was accused of being insane. The Jesuits were expelled from several countries because of the horror stories slanderously fed to kings.

Our Lord forewarned us of this: “The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20).

The American TFP is no exception to this rule.<sup>1</sup> Nor was Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, the founder of the first TFP in Brazil. His courage in face of persecution led Cardinal Echeverría Ruiz of Guayaquil, Ecuador, to write:

It happens that such souls are victims of the most passionate and unfounded attacks, which attempt to silence them and illustrate the obstinacy that often pervades the spirit of some classes of men. When the figures are truly great, however, their adversaries neither bring them down nor silence them, for their unfair attacks ultimately emphasize—against their wishes—the qualities of those elect souls. This is what happened with the Divine Savior: He was attacked, reviled, and martyred by His executioners, but His light, despite the efforts of so many to destroy it, will shine in His Church until the end of times.

*Christianus alter Christus*—the Christian is another Christ. Something analogous happened with Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira over the decades until his recent and regretted death. It was difficult to mention his name in recent times on our continent and even in the greater part of the West without unleashing applause and admiration on one side and, on the other, true verbal storms, always so sodden in passion and so devoid of basis.

Indeed, the fury of the attacks he suffered were frequently unaccompanied by arguments. But his serene, always courteous and incisively rich, clear, and convincing response dissipated objections and placed things in their proper place. This raising of the level of the debate deserved the gratitude of his enemies, but frequently unleashed hatred, resentment, and disdain.<sup>2</sup>

1. “TFP” in this refutation usually refers to the American TFP, but sometimes, depending on the context, might refer to the TFP “family of souls” (see Appendix) or the TFP of another country.

2. Cardinal Bernardino Echeverría Ruiz, “Distinguished Apostle, Ardent and Intrepid Polemist,” translated from an article published in *El Universo*, Guayaquil, Ecuador, Nov. 12, 1995.



# CHAPTER I

## *Unity Publishing's Attack Against the TFP and Its America Needs Fatima Campaign*

For some time, an article attacking the TFP and its *America Needs Fatima* campaign<sup>1</sup> has been posted on the Internet by Unity Publishing. The article may have been written by a Unity staff member, but we are not sure who wrote it since it is unsigned.

There is certainly no indication in it that the author contacted the TFP regarding the numerous accusations made in the article. It seems to us that the Christian approach would have been to first ask the TFP what it had to say in its own defense.

The article lists old lies, all amply refuted by TFPs. The author, however, does not present fairly, much less rebut any TFP answers to earlier critics.

### **Church Hierarchy and the TFP**

The article's author also sweeps aside the support frequently received by the TFP from eminent members of the Church hierarchy, although a representative part of this support has been printed in TFP publications or posted to its website over the years. This is particularly improper since some of these ecclesiastics address the very issue of attacks on the TFPs' good name.

For example, in 1997, Cardinal Alfons M. Stickler, S.D.B., former Librarian and Archivist of the Holy Roman Church, received a letter from a longtime TFP critic complaining about His Eminence's support of the TFPs.

Cardinal Stickler replied:

It was a surprise to receive your letter presenting certain slanderous voices against the TFP as a novelty—as if I were not sufficiently informed. Actually I am very much aware of such gossip. Moreover, I have also known the TFP representatives here in Rome very well for nearly two decades.

Before demonstrating any support for the TFP I investigated with extreme care and diligence the basis of rumors against it. I found no proofs to corroborate such whisper campaigns. At the same time, the TFP has always answered such accusations convincingly. Mention of such refutations in your letter is conspicuously absent.

Allow me to give you an example of such baseless attacks. A year ago I was arduously solicited by a Spanish lady to pronounce myself against the TFP in light of one of these “family cases” that you mention in your letter. The fact is that the TFP member, against whom she had opened a lawsuit, won the court case hands down.

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1. *America Needs Fatima* (ANF) is the American TFP's campaign to spread the Fatima message in the United States. The campaign's goal is to win the heart and soul of America for Mary by spreading Our Lady's Fatima message and promoting devotion to Her Immaculate Heart. For a fuller explanation of ANF and its many activities, please visit ANF's [Frequently Asked Questions](http://www.TFP.org/anf/questions_answers.htm) on the TFP website at [www.TFP.org/anf/questions\\_answers.htm](http://www.TFP.org/anf/questions_answers.htm).

Not only was the judge's decision clear, but a certain ecclesiastical authority that had heedlessly supported the attack against the TFP subsequently lost his position.

In addition, the disgruntled families—a phenomenon not uncommon in the past with many Catholic Orders, Congregations or Groups, and which continues still today—are a very small part of the families who have sons in the TFP.

Based on my scrutiny of the person of Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira and his work, after his death I was pleased to celebrate a Solemn Requiem Mass in Santo Spirito in Sassia near the Vatican for the repose of his soul.

With no less pleasure I wrote the preface to Prof. Roberto de Mattei's biography of Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, *Il Crociato del secolo XX*. Prof. de Mattei, besides documenting his work abundantly, had a personal relationship with Prof. Corrêa de Oliveira for more than twenty years, visiting him in Brazil many times. It is my hope that this work, already published in Italy and France, be also printed in the United States. Both the author and I have received compliments for it from ecclesiastical authorities.

This hearsay of which you speak does not surprise me. If you know the story of St. John Bosco well, you certainly are aware of the numerous unjust and baseless criticisms he and his work had to endure. As have many other benevolent figures and groups in the Church. The same goes for Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira and his work.

But what really leaves me bewildered and sad is that such false witness takes place in circles that should be united and concentrated on the defense of our great common cause of the Church, rather than wasting energies thus.

## Two types of slanderers

“Lie, lie boldly, lie stoutly, lie constantly! Some of it will stick!” said Voltaire, a notorious enemy of the Church during the eighteenth century.

The TFPs divide those who slander them into two categories:

- 1) those who make up lies, and
- 2) those who repeat the lies and are themselves victims of anti-TFP smear campaigns.

Since we do not know who wrote the Unity Publishing article, we will assume for now that the anonymous author is in the second category.

## CHAPTER II

### *The “Cult” Accusation*

The Unity article paints the TFP as a “cult.” To do this it makes numerous assertions (amply refuted by TFPs years ago) which it submits as “proofs.” This is unfair, for three reasons.

First of all, the “cult” accusation carries with it a charge, a stigma that predisposes many against the accused. Mental images and vague memories quickly fill the imagination: Charles Manson, Heaven’s Gate, Jim Jones and the People’s Temple in Jonestown, Guyana. The result is that not a few readers may become much less inclined to give the TFP a chance to defend itself. They may never know that the assertions used are not proofs at all.

Secondly, to label the TFP a “cult,” the author repeats distorted facts. These are “filtered” and “interpreted” to “prove” the “cult” accusation. A TFP member’s recitation of the Rosary becomes the TFP’s “trademark, rapid-fire Rosary!” Its volunteers are extraordinarily dedicated; so they must have been “manipulated,” “coerced” and “trapped” by the TFP!

The systematic distortion may lead readers to accept the author’s circular reasoning: — The TFP is a cult! —Why? —Because it manipulates, coerces, and traps its members. — How do you know the TFP does this? —Because it’s a “destructive and insidious cult.”

Where the author uses the words “manipulation” and “coercion,” he should rightly have used “invitation” and “encouragement.”

The author’s accusations of “manipulation,” “coercion” and “entrapment” by the TFP could just as easily apply to Catholic apostolate or courtship or many other legitimate practices. If the TFP uses “manipulation,” “coercion” and “entrapment,” so do Catholic missionaries, military recruiters, talent scouts, salesmen, and fiancé(e)s acting within the limits of Christian morality.

Accusing the TFP of “manipulation,” “coercion” and “entrapment,” the author insinuates what others have said openly; namely, that TFP members are “brainwashed.”

However, the theory of “brainwashing” denies the God-given freedom of the human will and is therefore hardly reconcilable with Catholic teaching. The theory is likewise discredited by science.<sup>1</sup> For example, psychiatrist James A. C. Brown, former professor at London’s Institute of Psychiatry, wrote in his book *Techniques of Persuasion: From Propaganda to Brainwashing*: “The notion that subliminal perception, brainwashing, or any other device can introduce permanently into the mind an idea completely foreign to it and thus influence behavior must be rejected as absurd.”<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the author ignores the moral and scientific implications of the article’s accusations of “manipulation,” “coercion” and “entrapment.” He definitely ignores the reality of

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1. Cf. The American TFP, *“Brainwashing”: A Myth Exploited by the New “Therapeutic Inquisition”* (Bedford, N.Y.: The Foundation for a Christian Civilization, Inc., 1985), 80 pp.

2. James A. C. Brown, *Techniques of Persuasion: From Propaganda to Brainwashing* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 221.



life in the TFP.

Thirdly, accusing an organization of being a “cult” is a convenient but not necessarily legitimate way of evading a fair debate. It labels as “tainted” anything the “cult” members may say in self-defense and thus violates the accused’s natural law right to self-defense as well as the fundamental principle of justice *Audiatur et altera pars* – **Let the other side be heard!**

While TFP detractors distort facts to label TFP as a “cult,” eminent prelates in the Catholic Church say this accusation is false. For example, a report commissioned by the secularist French National Assembly stated that the French TFP was a “pseudo-Catholic cult,” but Cardinal Jorge Arturo Medina Estevez<sup>3</sup> says that it is not. In a February 11, 2007 letter to Mr. Benoit Bemelmans, President of the French TFP, Cardinal Medina writes:

I remember with pleasure our meeting during my trip to France for the inauguration of the center of studies and formation staffed by TFP members from different countries of Europe.

I know the TFP and I appreciate this movement of lay Catholics who act to defend the principles of Christian Civilization in society, according to their right as recognized by the Code of Canon Law.

Your meritorious campaigns are a positive contribution toward staving off the danger of certain sectors of opinion slipping into a disturbing neo-paganism and complete relativism.

Christians must, therefore, be more courageous in speaking out as the Holy Father has often recalled, particularly a few days ago at St. Paul Outside the Walls.

I know that in France the TFP has been accused of being a sect, which appears to me neither just nor objective. It is strange that persons who claim to uphold secularism, want to determine who is Catholic and who is not.

I see as praiseworthy the TFP’s distinctive way of spreading Christian culture and different forms of popular piety in France such as the Rosary, the Miraculous Medal and devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Thus, it is with all my heart that I encourage you to continue your work in defense of tradition, family and private property, as well as other Christian and Catholic principles that constitute the valid foundation of an authentic humanism.

I assure you of my prayers and grant you my blessing.

The fallacious accusations that the TFP is a “cult” and engages in “brainwashing” are debunked by the facts as to what the organization is and how it operates.

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3. Cardinal Jorge Arturo Medina Estevez is the former Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship. In 2005, at the death of Pope John Paul II, he was Camerlengo of the Catholic Church and, in this capacity, announced to the world the election of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger to the Papal throne as Pope Benedict XVI.

# CHAPTER III

## *Answering the Accusations*

The Unity article rehashes accusations refuted by TFPs over the years. In this text we will refer to several past refutations, using the abbreviations listed here alphabetically next to their corresponding titles.

**CED**—*Analyse par la TFP brésilienne d’une prise de position de la CNBB sur la “TFP et sa famille d’âmes”* [Analysis of the Brazilian TFP on a position taken by the NCBB regarding “TFP and its family of souls”] (mimeograph by Société française pour la défense de la tradition, famille, et propriété, 1989), 49 pp.

**FDY**—*The TFP’s Defense Against Fidelity’s Onslaught: Let the Other Side Also Be Heard* (Pleasantville, N.Y.: The American TFP, 1989), 170 pp.

**GV-RA**—*Guerreiros da Virgem: A Réplica da Autenticidade* [Warriors of the Virgin: The Reply of Authenticity] (São Paulo: Artpress, 1986), 350 pp.

**IDD**—*Imbroglia, Detraction, Delirium—Remarks on a Report About the TFPs—Verdict on a Report—the Thesis: Absurd; the Argumentation: Groundless; the Witnesses: Anonymous* (Pleasantville, N.Y.: The American TFP, 1983), 260 pp.

**NCBB**—*The NCBB Note on the Brazilian TFP: Unfounded Statements, Biased and Impassioned Assessments* (Spring Grove, Penn.: The American TFP, 1997), 14 pp.

**REF**—*Refutação da TFP a uma Investida Frustra* [The TFP’s Reply to a Vain Onslaught] (São Paulo: Artpress, 1984), 498 pp.

**SC**—*Servitudo ex Caritate* [Servitude of Love] (São Paulo: Artpress, 1985), 304 pp.

**TIM**—*Timely Reflections and Examples of Saints for Our Times* (New York: The Foundation for a Christian Civilization, Inc., 1989), 416 pp.

**UK**—*Let the Other Side Also Be Heard: The TFPs’ Defense Against an Unprovoked Smear* (London, U.K.: Tradition, Family, Property Representative Bureau for the United Kingdom, 1992), 160 pp.

### **Important Note to the Reader:**

Most of the accusations in the Unity article have little or nothing to do with the American TFP, but are distortions of facts occurring in or attributed to foreign TFPs, especially the Brazilian and French TFPs.

Each TFP is autonomous and solely responsible for its actions.

It is improper for the author to ascribe to the American TFP and its *America Needs Fatima* campaign these distortions of facts relating to foreign TFPs.

Further, these distortions were made by detractors many years ago, and have been amply refuted by the French, Brazilian, and American TFPs.

(See the Appendix for a broader discussion of the nature of the TFPs and the relations between them.)

The main accusations in the Unity article will now be presented, along with a TFP clarification.

Unity:

1. “...an organization called *The Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property (TFP)*, founded in Brazil by Professor Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira in 1960.”

TFP:

Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira founded The **Brazilian** Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family, and Property—TFP in 1960. Autonomous, sister TFPs were later founded in other countries. In the U.S., the first members of the American TFP began their apostolate in 1973. For a more complete explanation of the nature of the TFPs around the world, their “family of souls,” and canonical status, please see the Appendix.

(**FDY**, p. 9, pp.101-103; **IDD**, pp. 55-57, 180-182; **UK**, p. 31, 124)

Unity:

2. “Dr. Plinio claimed to have a ‘private, prophetic charism’ enabling him to look at a young man’s face or photo and discern that the young man had ‘tao’ (sometimes ‘tau’).”

TFP:

In accordance with Brazilian custom, Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira was often referred to as “Dr. Plinio” by reporters, students, politicians, bishops, etc. Over the decades, this Brazilian usage was adopted in TFPs around the world.

Not only Dr. Plinio, but many founders of religious orders, congregations, and lay groups have had a special clarity in discerning those called to join their apostolate. Is this bad? No.

Like other vibrant groups, TFPs have their own household language or jargon, with improvised or “domestic” expressions that frequently do not have the rigorous character of scientific terminology. “Thau” is a word taken from Ezechiel 9:4. The prophet used it in the context of decrying his own corrupt times. It is used in the TFP to designate those who discern and reject the abominations in today’s world and are willing to react against them. Could Dr. Plinio discern “thau” (or the absence of it) in someone wanting to join a TFP? Most of the time, yes. Is this wrong? No.

Yet the author makes it sound like Dr. Plinio was some kind of con artist duping naïve followers.

(**IDD**, pp. 180-184; **FDY**, pp. 54-55)

Unity:

3. “Boys and young men possessing ‘tao’ are told that to refuse this ‘vocation’ is tantamount to condemning their own soul to hell.... To make them afraid to leave the

*group, stories are circulated throughout TFP of the horribly-violent, sudden deaths of ex-TFPers.”*

TFP:

Love for the values of Christian civilization, and not fear, is what unites TFP members. “I will draw them with the bands of love,” writes Saint Louis de Montfort in *True Devotion to Mary*. We, and many others, seek to surrender ourselves to this love.

(GV-RA, pp. 40-44, 153-177)

Unity:

4. *“Those who leave are called ‘apostates,’ even if they remain faithful Catholics.”*

TFP:

Most of our former members remain dedicated Catholics and many are generous TFP supporters and donors.

Dictionaries often define the word “apostate” as “a person who renounces his religion, cause, party, etc.” In TFP jargon, the word is indeed used in the restricted sense of “one who left the TFP,” without implying that the former member has thereby left the Church.

Following the example given over decades by Dr. Plinio, current members pray regularly for former members and are grateful for the latter’s prayers for them.

(IDD, pp.143-145)

Unity:

5. *“This entire recruitment procedure is in violation of Canon Law 219 prohibiting any coercion in choosing or remaining in any state of life.”*

TFP:

The TFP’s recruitment coerces no one. It is not coercion to use logical arguments to encourage people to embrace the noble ideal of defending and promoting the values of Christian civilization in the ranks of the TFP.

To dedicate themselves full-time, many TFP members freely choose to remain single. Their unmarried state—and that of numerous other unmarried lay Catholics down through the ages—is accepted by the Church.

However, some TFP critics have a serious problem with the practice and try to bring public and private pressure to bear against TFP members as if the Church had forbidden this freely chosen state. Perhaps they have forgotten that Canon 219 applies to them as it does to us.

Unity:

6. “*They are required to make vows of celibacy and obedience to TFP.*”

TFP:

No TFP member was ever required to make vows of celibacy or obedience to the organization.

For a time, some members of the Brazilian TFP, in their personal capacity and not as TFP members, made personal, *private*, and temporary vows to Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira in *his* personal capacity as their spiritual director, not in his capacity as founder and president of the Brazilian TFP. These vows were strictly limited in time and scope and were intended to help these individuals grow spiritually.

The Church has a long history of lay spiritual directors, for example, Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Catherine of Genoa, and Baron Gaston Jean Baptiste de Renty (1611-1649), a French noble who provided spiritual direction to several Carmelite nuns.

One need not be a member of the clergy or a religious order to make a vow. The Church recognizes this right to all the faithful. Canon 1191 §2 states: “Unless they are prohibited by law, all who possess suitable use of reason are capable of making a vow.” (See also canons 210, 214, 1191 and 1192.)<sup>1</sup>

(IDD, pp. 149-150; SC, pp. 176-183; CED, pp. 63-65)

Unity:

7. “*TFP, a ‘vocation’ higher than the vocation to married life or to the priesthood.*”

TFP:

The TFP proclaims the priestly vocation to be the highest on earth. That it is the

1. One should not confuse spiritual direction with sacramental Confession or consultations to resolve doubts in moral matters. Using observation and counsel, spiritual direction is aimed at helping someone overcome their own defects and give themselves more completely to God.

The legitimacy of making private vows to a *lay* spiritual director (one who is not a priest) is fully accepted within the Church. For example, the famous Jesuit Fr. Francisco Suárez (1548-1617) says: “[T]he vow of obedience...can be validly and honestly made to a good and prudent man, to whom, he who wishes to make the vow, submits himself in order to be governed by him, be it by promising God that he will obey so and so, be it by promising also to that man, that he will obey him in everything that concerns the good of his own soul and the service of God.... And it is not necessary that this representative of God be a public minister with power from the Church to exercise this task. It is sufficient that he be voluntarily and prudently chosen by he who is making the vow” (Fr. Francisco Suárez, *De Religione* [Paris: Editeur Vivès, 1860], Tr. VII, lib. II, cap. XV, nn. 7-8, vol. XV, p. 194).

The same is defended by one of the great canonists of all time, Fr. Dominique-Marie Bouix (1808-1870): “Titius approaches Sempronius, a lay and private man, but one who is outstanding for his prudence and sanctity of life. Titius makes the three vows in the latter’s hands, making a total surrender of himself to God. Sempronius, in his turn, accepts this surrender, in God’s name, and commits himself to provide direction to Titius who has submitted to this direction through the vow of obedience.... The total surrender to God made by Titius is in and of itself legitimate and pleasing to God. The agreement whereby Titius obliges himself to obey Sempronius is legitimate. Given that all of this is legitimate and pleasing to God, one concludes logically that God ratifies the acceptance made by Sempronius” (Fr. Dominique-Marie Bouix, *Tractatus de Iure Regularium* [Paris-Brussels: Ruffet, 1867], t. 1, pp. 58-59).



highest vocation does not imply that everyone should be a priest, however. Obviously only those called by God to be priests should be priests.

TFP members love their own vocation, among other reasons, because it is *theirs*. However, they work tirelessly to uphold marriage and the priesthood. Please visit the TFP website ([www.TFP.org](http://www.TFP.org)) and read about our campaigns defending the Church and the priesthood as well as marriage and the family.

(FDY, p. 56)

Unity:

8. *“Before his death on Oct. 3, 1995, Dr. Plinio often prophesied that he would see the battle of Armageddon within his own lifetime. His followers were kept in a constant state of agitation, expecting this cataclysmic event at any moment. The warrior monks are supposed to be key participants in Armageddon and the subsequent ‘Reign of Mary’.”*

TFP:

Like many Catholics trying to live the Fatima message, TFP members are indeed concerned that today’s increasingly pagan world may bring on itself a great chastisement. TFP members do not refer to this possible chastisement as “the battle of Armageddon.”

The expression “Reign of Mary” comes from Saint Louis de Montfort. Many other saints allude prophetically to this triumph of Our Lady. TFP members look to such a time with hope and confidence.

Dr. Plinio never said that he would surely live to see the chastisement mentioned by Our Lady at Fatima. What he did say, was that, should this chastisement come, he would like to fight for the Church and Christian civilization in the same. As for witnessing the Reign of Mary, his usual expression was “If Our Lady in Her mercy permits me to reach there.” (Cf. **IDD**, p. 196)

As for the future, TFP members hope to continue doing what they do now—working as Catholic laymen in society to defend the Church and Christian civilization.

(FDY, pp. 28-29, 62, 88-89; **GV-RA**, pp. 241-243)

Unity:

9. *“This false prophet was treated as a ‘living saint’; his followers would bow in his presence, revere his personal belongings...”*

TFP:

Having repeated distorted facts, the author now calls Dr. Plinio a “false prophet.”

As the TFP has pointed out in the past, there is much ignorance even among Catholics regarding prophetism, which is often viewed as an aberration in the modern world. However, contemporary theologians frequently and naturally treat of prophetism as a phenomenon existing also in our days.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, stated in a 1988 interview:

There is a vast misunderstanding about the notion of prophecy today. The prophet is seen as a great accuser in the line of the “masters of suspicion” who perceives the negative in everything. This is as false as the opinion that formerly prevailed and confused the prophet with the soothsayer.

In reality, the prophet is the spiritual man in the sense St. Paul gives this expression; that is, he is the one totally imbued with the Spirit of God and who, for that reason, is able to see rightly and to judge accordingly. Therefore, his mission is to do the work of the Holy Spirit, that is, convince the world of sin, of justice and of judgment (John 16:8). Since he sees everything in the light of God, he has an inexorable perception regarding whatever pertains to sin. He must uncover the hypocrisy and falsehood hidden in human affairs in order to clear the way toward the truth.<sup>2</sup>

It is in this sense expounded by the future Benedict XVI that people have applied the term “prophetism” to the action of Dr. Plinio. This use of the term is neither extravagant nor, much less, contrary to the doctrine, laws and customs of the Church. This is what really matters for a Catholic.

Based on their first-hand knowledge of him, most TFP members did consider Dr. Plinio a “living saint,” subject, of course, to any Church decision on the matter in the future. Their consequent “reverence” for him and “his personal belongings” was nothing new in Catholic practice.

Church history abounds with examples of such “reverence.” Fervent Catholics tried to pull threads or cut strips of cloth off the garments of Saint Dominic, Saint Francis, Saint Anthony of Padua, Saint Vincent Ferrer, Saint Bernadette Soubirous, for example. Unable to reach Saint Vincent, some Spaniards plucked hairs off his horse to keep as relics! Grateful French Catholics mobbed Saint Joan of Arc to touch her or have her touch keepsakes for them. The early Jesuits kept clips of Saint Ignatius of Loyola’s hair and pieces of paper he had written on. The body of Saint Maximilian Kolbe having been cremated by the Nazis, the only relics we have of him today are relics like hair trimmings collected by people who, while he was still alive, believed he was a saint. These good Catholics were following the example of Saint Thérèse of the Little Flower. She once wrote to Father Rouland, a missionary in China, requesting a lock of his hair. She wanted it, she said, so that, when the good priest entered Heaven with the palm of martyrdom, she would have a relic of him.

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2. Interview of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger with Chilean daily *El Mercurio*, June 12, 1988, in **FDY**, p. 63.

Contrary to what some critics claim, Dr. Plinio did not encourage this kind of behavior toward himself.

(**TIM**, pp. 137-176; **IDD**, p. 200; **REF**, pp. 104-110; **FDY**, pp. 59-63)

Unity:

**10.** “...and compose hymns honoring him and his mother.”

TFP:

In itself, there is nothing wrong with composing songs, poems, or hymns about someone. We read in the Old Testament: “Now when David returned, after he slew the Philistine [Goliath], the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with timbrels of joy, and coronets. And the women sung as they played, and they said: Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was exceeding angry, and this word was displeasing in his eyes, and he said: They have given David ten thousands, and to me they have given but a thousand; what can he have more but the kingdom?” (1 Kings, 18:6-8).

Persons are also the subject of the medieval “chansons de geste,” sagas, epics, ballads, and other musical and literary genres.

However, the TFP has not composed any hymn in honor of Dr. Plinio or his mother. Many years ago some young TFP members did take the liberty to compose some lyrics that included Dr. Plinio and his mother. TFP directors strongly discouraged their use.

Unity:

**11.** “Some militants chant a litany to Donna Lucilla [sic], Dr. Plinio’s deceased mother...”

TFP:

No TFP members chant a litany to Dona Lucilia. As explained in TFP refutations, two teenage members of the Brazilian TFP created this litany on their own. Dr. Plinio formally forbade it. That was 1979! The author omits all mention of this.

Furthermore, when critics began alleging that the litany proved that the TFP was unorthodox, Dr. Plinio asked Mr. Gustavo A. Solimeo—a veteran member of the Brazilian TFP and author of several studies involving Canon Law and Church practices—to do a study of the litany. Mr. Solimeo’s study concluded that there was nothing in the litany against the laws of the Church. As we have repeatedly stated, and as the author of the Unity article has omitted to acknowledge, this TFP study was submitted to Fr. Victorino Rodriguez y Rodriguez, O.P., a theologian of world renown, for his appraisal. His written opinion states:

First: Several of the invocations are somewhat naive, others unduly extravagant

or technical to the Group, and others somewhat ambiguous, hence the whole misunderstanding. For all of this, **I think Dr. Plinio did well to prohibit it.**

Second: Nevertheless, I believe it is exaggerated to qualify some of the invocations as heterodox or blasphemous, not taking into account the relativity of the language employed. That God is the Light and Source of Light does not exclude that others may participate and spread that light. That Mary is the Universal Mediatrix does not exclude secondary mediators, just as Mary's mediation does not exclude the principal mediation of Christ." (Our emphasis.)

(REF, pp. 239-250, 391-460; FDY, pp. 63-69; UK, pp. 91-93)

Unity:

12. *"...or substitute the name of Donna Lucilla [sic] for Mary and the name of Plinio for Jesus while reciting the Hail Mary."*

TFP:

This accusation is baseless. Substituting Lucilia for Mary or Plinio for Jesus in praying the Hail Mary is not done in the TFP.

Some followers of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre accused the French TFP of this in 1979. They tried to make the organization responsible for the action of a 16-year-old attending its school. It was the teenager's own creation and cannot be attributed to the French TFP.

TFP critics present a gravely distorted picture by not mentioning that Dr. Plinio and the directors of the French TFP immediately denounced and condemned this substitution. They act in bad faith when, knowing about these disciplinary measures, they continue affirming that this substitution is practiced by TFP members.

(IDD, pp. 191-192; FDY, pp. 47-48; REF, pp. 231-239, 435-436)

Unity:

13. *"Many of the finest and most devout Catholic families in Brazil fell for the outward appearance of orthodoxy and enrolled their sons in schools and training centers run by TFP in Brazil."*

TFP:

The Brazilian TFP never had schools.

The supreme insult one can hurl at a faithful Catholic is to accuse him of being unorthodox. That is the offense TFP members feel when the author uses the expression "outward appearance of orthodoxy."

Yet, despite the gravity of the accusation, the author cannot prove the TFP has strayed in the least from Catholic faith and morals. In this line, it must be said that

Dr. Plinio's lifelong custom in regards to issues involving Canon Law and Catholic faith and morals was to always consult with eminent theologians and canonists in Brazil, Spain, and Italy.

Unity:

14. *"On April 18, 1985 the NCBB (National Council of Brazilian Bishops) condemned the group and ordered Catholics to have nothing to do with it..."*

TFP:

Due to the length of the TFP's refutation of this accusation, it is dealt with separately in Chapter IV.

Unity:

15. *"TFP cleverly organizes events that draw faithful, even prominent, Catholics into innocent association with the group. Photographs or endorsement letters are then produced to persuade other Catholics to lend their support or to convince them that TFP is a faithful Catholic group."*

TFP:

Was Cardinal Alfons Stickler a dupe? "Before demonstrating any support for the TFP," he writes, "I investigated with extreme care and diligence the basis of rumors against it. I found no proofs to corroborate such whisper campaigns. At the same time, the TFP has always answered such accusations convincingly. Mention of such refutations in your letter is conspicuously absent."

Cardinal Stickler is not alone. The TFP has **more than 700 letters** from U.S. bishops and diocesan officials encouraging us in our activities.

Unity:

16. *"Some families have lost their sons."*

TFP:

The author provides no names with this offensive accusation. All TFP members are adults and on good terms with their parents. Any minors participating temporarily in activities of the organization, such as its "Call to Chivalry" summer camps, do so only with written parental authorization.

(IDD, p. 108)

Unity:



17. *“Boys and young men who are selected for membership in the group soon learn to have contempt for their parents while also plying them with requests for money to support the work of the group.”*

TFP:

“...selected for membership?” The TFP does not “select” its members. TFP leadership approves membership status for **adult** individuals, who demonstrate they understand and love the TFP ideal, and freely wish to join the organization after a reasonable period of reflection and trying out of TFP life.

TFP members honor their parents and do not burden them with requests for money to support the organization. The TFP funds its apostolate with donations from the Catholic public at large.

(FDY, pp. 57-58)

Unity:

18. *“Sometimes TFP recruits married men. They are instructed that their ‘tao’ or ‘vocation’ is a higher calling than their family life. The group makes heavy demands on their time. Observers and former members report that it is not unusual for a married man to spend every weekend working full-time for TFP. If his wife objects, she will be told that she ‘does not have the grace’ to understand the TFP mission.”*

TFP:

The accusation attributed by Unity’s author to the anonymous “observers and former members” is false. Thousands of men and women, single or married, provide volunteer help to the TFP apostolate. In keeping with Catholic freedom, each decides how much time to give, when and where. The TFP does not encourage the volunteering of one spouse against the wishes of the other. To do so would weaken that family life the TFP strives to strengthen and vivify in today’s society, when so many threats undermine the sacred institutions of marriage and the family.

(FDY, p. 96)

Unity:

19. *“The ‘spiritual formation’ that TFP gives to children unwittingly placed in its care fosters anti-clericalism and contempt for their fellow Catholics.”*

TFP:

Over a thousand boys have attended the TFP’s “Call to Chivalry” and other summer or winter camps. They are always taught to respect priests and fellow Catholics. In some cases, boys and their fathers attend camp together. The 10-day “Call to Chivalry” camps

include Mass, Confession, and the daily Rosary. The priests who generously provide religious assistance at camp will vouch for the respect accorded them by the participants.

Hundreds of young ladies and their mothers have attended the “Mothers and Daughters” teas organized by the TFP. At these formal teas young ladies learn about the Christian roots of the social graces, which include, of course, respect for others.

From his outrageous accusation, it would seem the author of the Unity article knows nothing of this.

(IDD, pp. 116-124)

Unity:

20. *“They are urged to receive daily communion, but have scant regard for the Mass. TFP families and militants frequently wait outside reciting their trademark, rapid-fire Rosaries and come into Mass just in time to receive communion. They call Catholics who faithfully assist at Mass ‘white heretics.’”*

TFP:

The TFP encourages its members to go to Confession frequently and to receive Holy Communion daily if possible. It expects its members to attend Mass devoutly. TFP members serve, sing, and play the organ during Mass.

The “trademark, rapid-fire” Rosary accusation is worn-out and untrue.

“White heresy” is part of the household language of the TFP. It is used to designate a syrupy sentimentality that saps Catholics of their militancy. If it referred to “Catholics who faithfully assist at Mass”, we too would be “white heretics,” since we “faithfully assist at Mass.”

(IDD, pp. 45-48, 124, 126-129; FDY, p. 98)

Unity:

21. *“TFP exists, not to build up the body of Christ, but to perpetuate itself and further the self-aggrandizement of its leaders.”*

TFP:

The TFP exists “to build up the body of Christ.” Since the TFP’s mission is far from accomplished, why should the TFP seek dissolution? Just to gratify its enemies?

“...further the self-aggrandizement of its leaders?” What “leaders” is the author referring to? Dr. Plinio? He died in 1995... Does the author even know who the directors of the American TFP are? Has the author ever met them? All have more than 20 years of selfless, dedicated TFP service. They do not seek aggrandizement.

“By their fruits you shall know them,” said Our Lord (Matt. 7:16). Please visit the

TFP website ([www.TFP.org](http://www.TFP.org)) and read about our activities, and then make a judgment about our fruits. Or even better, come to see us and our works.

Unity:

22. *“Catholic youths who join TFP with the noble vision of defending of tradition, family and property end up separated from Catholic tradition, do not start families of their own and after the finest years of their young manhood are used up, find they have acquired no substantial property of their own. When they finally leave, often despairing, they are without money, education or marketable job experience.”*

TFP:

He who commits himself to defend an ideal, to further a cause, usually does it with sacrifice, at some personal cost. And he does this gladly. This generous and noble dedication is at the heart of any service to a cause. The extent of the dedication and sacrifice will vary from person to person, as it varies from cause to cause, but all expect this personal sacrifice to some degree.

Let us imagine, for example, a young man who resolves to dedicate himself as a lay catechist to spread the faith in a distant land. There, far from home and his loved ones, he endures many privations, sickness, perhaps even risk of life at the hands of enemies of the faith. When, after many years, perhaps even a lifetime, he returns to his home country, he is not sad over the sacrifice he has made. Rather, he has a supernatural joy that is only fully understood by those who, like himself, have labored like good servants in “the Lord’s vineyard.”

TFP members have a joy akin to that of this lay missionary. Their dedication to the TFP ideal—the promotion of Christian civilization and the defense of the Church that gave rise to it—tends to be for life. It was this way with Dr. Plinio, who started his apostolate at the age of 19 and did not stop until he died in 1995, at the age of 86. The oldest members of the Brazilian TFP, having joined Dr. Plinio in this apostolate before the organization was even founded, have dedicated themselves now for sixty years.

Anyone wanting to really understand the TFP must see it in terms of a lay Catholic vocation, not as a professional career.

TFP members acquire many skills within the organization, but training people for the workforce is not the TFP’s mission. Nevertheless, former members credit the Catholic formation they received in the TFP for keeping them on the good path in life’s many trials. That is infinitely more valuable than a good job.

The accusation that TFP members are “separated from Catholic tradition” is simply absurd! How are TFP members “separated from Catholic tradition” when...

- they defend the traditional teachings of the Supreme Magisterium of the Catholic Church in matters of faith and morals;
- they defend the traditional, hierarchical nature of the Church and the rights of

the Catholic hierarchy against liberal Catholics pushing for a democratic and egalitarian Church;

- they defend traditional marriage against the subversion of homosexuality<sup>3</sup> and same-sex “marriage”;
- they defend the sacred and traditional inviolability of the seal of Confession when legislators in Louisiana and New Hampshire attempt to enact into law measures that would force priests to reveal to State authorities certain sins confessed to them;
- they defend the traditional honor bestowed on our nation’s flag when our Supreme Court rules one has a constitutional right to burn it as an expression of “free speech.”

Numerous other examples are detailed at [www.TFP.org](http://www.TFP.org) and the reader is invited to browse through them.

TFP members dedicate themselves to defend the Church and Christian civilization. This inevitably leads to a great union with and love for Catholic tradition. Alluding to this union and love, Dr. Plinio summed up his life-long efforts in defense of the Church and Christian civilization as follows:

*When still very young,  
I marveled at the ruins of Christendom,  
gave them my heart,  
turned my back on all I could expect,  
and made of that past, so full of blessings,  
my future.*

Unity:

- 23.** *“In no way am I saying that there is anything evil or flawed about the character of the TFP rank and file. But they are trapped, believing that to leave is an act of apostasy that will endanger their souls.”*

TFP:

After falsely accusing the TFP of being a “cult” and its members of engaging in unorthodox practices, the author denies “saying that there is anything evil or flawed about the character of the TFP rank and file.” However, if the accusations the author makes

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**3.** The indiscriminate use of the word *homosexual* and its synonyms has generated much confusion in the public. Many times, it is unclear if it refers to someone with same-sex attraction only or if it refers to someone who practices homosexual acts. This confusion favors the homosexual agenda. We cannot equate people with same-sex attraction who resist it and are chaste with those who engage in homosexual behavior. These are two distinct and essentially different moral realities. Thus, we use *homosexual* to refer only to those who practice *homosexual* acts and thereby deserve moral reprobation.

were true, there would be something “evil or flawed” in the character of “the TFP rank and file.” As previously stated though, the accusations are false.

By using the word “trapped,” the author reinforces the “destructive and insidious cult” conclusion he wants the reader to accept.

As already stated, what bonds TFP members is not fear. It is a shared love for the Church and Christian civilization and the desire to defend both, as Catholic laymen, in temporal society. This builds tremendous morale and camaraderie among us.

Unity:

24. *“If the activities and mission of the group had genuine appeal to spiritually-inclined youths, it would not be necessary to manipulate them into joining or coerce them to make them stay.”*

TFP:

Here again, the author’s reasoning is fallacious. The author has not proven the “manipulation” and “coercion” accusations, which are completely false. Yet they are now presented as a given, to “prove” the accusation that the TFP has no “genuine appeal to spiritually-inclined youths.”

The TFP attracts new members by showing:

- (a) the Catholic Church and Christian civilization in their truth, goodness, and beauty, and;
- (b) how deceitful, hideous and hateful is the Revolution (the process of evil undermining the Church and Christian civilization since the decadence of the Middle Ages) as it seeks to draw souls away from Christ and His Church, leading them to eternal damnation.

Once this religious-historical perspective is clear, the TFP shows how its defense of the Church and Christian civilization is noble, honorable and deserving of dedication. There is nothing manipulative or coercive about this.

Many TFP members are “spiritually-inclined.” They have experienced the TFP’s “genuine appeal.”

In meetings on doctrinal issues, Dr. Plinio would often urge TFP members to check for themselves if his words agreed with the teaching of the Supreme Magisterium of the Church and, if they did agree, to accept them because of that concordance. This is an appeal to reason and solid orthodoxy. It is the opposite of manipulation and coercion.

(GV-RA, pp. 37-42, 191-225)

Unity:

25. *“There is no doubt that this group is a destructive and insidious cult.”*



TFP:

This false accusation is most offensive. To classify the TFP as “cult,” the Unity article’s author would need to prove that it professes doctrines and admits practices contrary to those of the Catholic Church. However, the author does not do this.

The TFP is a bona fide Catholic organization that has been a constructive and beneficial force in the lives of thousands of its members, friends, supporters, and benefactors. A few disgruntled former members do not annul this reality.

(FDY, pp. 30-33)

Unity:

26. “*A cult that is robbing the Church of vocations...*”

TFP:

Who is the author to determine this? By working with youth and families on Catholic issues, and doing what it can to block the course of evil in the world today, the TFP automatically contributes to favorable conditions for priestly vocations.

*Similis, simili gaudet* (Like takes pleasure in like). Since the TFP is an organization of lay Catholics attracting individuals to carry out a lay apostolate in the temporal sphere, is it not reasonable to believe that the people it attracts have a lay vocation and not a vocation to the priesthood?

Even so, some young men who think they have or might have the TFP vocation eventually decide otherwise and go on to become priests. This happens in any sizeable TFP. One young man joined the Brazilian TFP, realized that it was not for him, and is an archbishop today. He is on good terms with his former associates in the TFP. Similarly, many young men join the seminary thinking they have a vocation to the priesthood only to find out that they do not.

The author’s false premise is that the TFP vocation is not legitimate. However, the principles underpinning the legitimacy of the TFP vocation are found in the Code of Canon Law.<sup>4</sup>

(IDD, pp. 122-123)

Unity:

27. “*...and secretly promoting the idolatrous admiration of a false prophet.*”

4. Some of the pertinent canons are:

Canon 210: “All the Christian faithful must direct their efforts to lead a holy life and to promote the growth of the Church and its continual sanctification, according to their own condition.”

Canon 211: “All the Christian faithful have the duty and right to work so that the divine message of salvation more and more reaches all people in every age and in every land.”

Canon 225: “§1. Since, like all the Christian faithful, lay persons are designated by God for the apostolate through baptism and confirmation, they are bound by the general obligation and possess the right as individuals, or joined in as

TFP:

While TFP members admire Dr. Plinio for his outstanding virtue in life, they adore God alone.

Readers may judge from the following excerpts of Dr. Plinio's last will and testament whether TFP members have good reason to admire him.

In the name of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, my Mother and Lady. Amen.

I declare that I have lived and hope to die in the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Faith, which I hold with all the strength of my soul. I cannot find sufficient words to thank Our Lady for the privilege of having lived since my very first days and of dying, as I hope, in the Holy Church. To it I have always devoted, currently devote, and hope to devote until my last breath absolutely all my love. All the persons, institutions, and doctrines I have loved in the course of my life and currently love, I have loved and love solely because they were or are in accord with the Holy Church, and in the measure to which they were or are in accord with the Holy Church. Likewise, I never opposed institutions, persons, or doctrines except insofar as they were opposed to the Holy Catholic Church....

In the same manner, I thank Our Lady—without being able to find adequate words—for the grace of having read and disseminated the Treatise of *True Devotion to the Most Holy Virgin*, of Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, and of having consecrated myself to Her as Her perpetual slave. Our Lady was always the Light of my life and from Her clemency I hope She will continue to be my Light and my Help until the last moment of my existence....

The spiritual link that unites me to each member of the Brazilian TFP, as well as to those of the other TFPs, is such that it is impossible to mention anyone in par-

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sociations, to work so that the divine message of salvation is made known and accepted by all persons everywhere in the world. This obligation is even more compelling in those circumstances in which only through them can people hear the Gospel and know Christ.

“§2. According to each one's own condition, they are also bound by a particular duty to imbue and perfect the order of temporal affairs with the spirit of the Gospel and thus to give witness to Christ, especially in carrying out these same affairs and in exercising secular functions.”

Canon 227: “The lay Christian faithful have the right to have recognized that freedom which all citizens have in the affairs of the earthly city. When using that same freedom, however, they are to take care that their actions are imbued with the spirit of the Gospel and are to heed the doctrine set forth by the magisterium of the Church. In matters of opinion, moreover, they are to avoid setting forth their own opinion as the doctrine of the Church.”

Canon 214: “The Christian faithful have the right to worship God according to the prescripts of their own rite approved by the legitimate pastors of the Church and to follow their own form of spiritual life so long as it is consonant with the doctrine of the Church.”

Canon 215: “The Christian faithful are at liberty freely to found and direct associations for purposes of charity or piety or for the promotion of the Christian vocation in the world and to hold meetings for the common pursuit of these purposes.”

Canon 216: “Since they participate in the mission of the Church, all the Christian faithful have the right to promote or sustain apostolic action even by their own undertakings, according to their own state and condition. Nevertheless, no undertaking is to claim the name Catholic without the consent of competent ecclesiastical authority.”

(Our emphasis.)

ticular to express to him my affection. I ask Our Lady to bless each and every one of them. After death, I hope to be near Her, praying for all of them, thus helping them more efficaciously than in this earthly life.

I forgive with my whole soul those who have given me cause for complaint...

I have no instructions to give for the eventuality of my death; Our Lady will provide better than I. In any event, from the depth of my soul and on my knees, I beseech each and everyone to be completely devoted to Our Lady all the days of their lives.

## CHAPTER IV

### *The National Conference of Bishops of Brazil and Its 1985 Note on the Brazilian TFP*

In its rush to condemn us, the Unity article cites a 1985 note of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (NCBB) regarding the Brazilian TFP. In the process, it claims for the note an accuracy and a weight it simply does not have, as we will explain in this chapter.

Unity:

*“On April 18, 1985 the NCBB (National Council of Brazilian Bishops) condemned the group and ordered Catholics to have nothing to do with it. The response of the group has been to claim that its anti-Communist stance prompted the bishops’ opposition, and that the condemnation was just an ‘unsigned note.’ On the contrary: the condemnation was written on the letterhead of the NCBB and published in several of Brazil’s largest newspapers. It is the misleading teachings of the group and the damage it has done to Catholic families that prompted the bishops’ warning, which characterized the group as a ‘cult of personality’ (meaning that they are giving excessive or worshipful devotion to their leader) and also accused the group of ‘abusing the name of Holy Mary.’ The official nature of the notice was subsequently confirmed by the Under-Secretary General of the Brazilian Conference, Fr. Valentini Netto on Dec. 8, 1995.”*

TFP:

First: Yes, this NCBB press note was approved by “an expressive majority”<sup>1</sup> of bishops at the NCBB’s annual meeting, on April 19, 1985.<sup>2</sup> (NCBB, p. 3.) On April 20, the note was published in several Brazilian newspapers.

Nevertheless, the NCBB note **must be seen in its twofold context**:

- (a) The immediate context: The note was issued in the midst of a leftist media uproar against the Brazilian TFP, and based itself on the false accusations circulated by the media. This is clear from the NCBB note itself when it states, “**according to news items circulated.**” (NCBB, p. 1.) The Unity author does not mention this important fact.
- (b) The background context: For decades, Brazil has been divided over the question

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1. *Comunicado Mensal*, no. 388, April 30, 1985, p. 341.

2. The NCBB note reads as follows: “The lack of communion of TFP (the Brazilian Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family, and Property) with the Church in Brazil, its hierarchy, and the Holy Father is well known.

“Its esoteric character, the religious fanaticism, the cult given to the personality of its leader and his mother, the abusive use of the name of Mary Most Holy, **according to news items circulated**, cannot in any way merit the approval of the Church.

“We regret the inconveniences occasioned by a civil society that manifests itself as a Catholic religious entity, without connection to the legitimate shepherds.

“That being so, the Bishops of Brazil exhort Catholics not to join TFP or collaborate with it.” (Our emphasis.)

of socialist and confiscatory land reform. Many Catholics oppose it for religious and economic reasons. They believe it will lead to greater poverty and the destruction of the right to private property, and the transformation of Brazil, the world's largest Catholic country, into a gigantic Cuba. The Brazilian TFP has been in this debate from the beginning. In the 1960s—when Bishop Helder Camara and other prelates were using the NCBB's prestige to favor land reform—Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, together with the economist Luiz Mendonça de Freitas and the ordinaries of two Brazilian dioceses, Archbishop Geraldo de Proença Sigaud of Diamantina and Bishop Antônio de Castro Mayer of Campos, authored the book *Land Reform: A Question of Conscience*. The book emphasized the duty of Catholics to oppose leftist land reform, even when proposed or supported by ecclesiastics. Such a reform, the book argued, violates the Seventh and Tenth commandments and the traditional teachings of the Popes.

The Brazilian TFP promoted this book, and others that followed it, with highly visible months-long street campaigns, and media advertisements. One of the subsequent books, *I Am a Catholic: May I Oppose Land Reform?* by Prof. Corrêa de Oliveira and the American-educated economist Carlos Patricio del Campo, showed that “The Church and the Land Problem,” a document on land reform approved by 172 bishops at the February 1980 General Assembly of the NCBB, contradicts the traditional teachings of the Supreme Magisterium of the Church.

The decades-old polemic between the Brazilian TFP and the NCBB over land reform is the background context of the 1985 note.

Second: The “expressive majority” of bishops who approved the note based on false accusations in the leftist media never pronounced themselves on the TFP response to these false charges which had been circulating for several years. The TFP response consisted primarily of three books, all published before the NCBB note:

- (a) *Imbroglia, Detraction, Delirium—Remarks on a Report About the TFPs—Verdict on a Report—the Thesis: Absurd; the Argumentation: Groundless; the Witnesses: Anonymous*. This 260-page book was first published in 1980 by the French TFP.
- (b) *Timely Reflections and Examples of Saints for Our Times*. This 416-page book was first published by the Brazilian TFP in June 1984.
- (c) *The TFP's Reply to a Vain Onslaught*. This 498-page book was first published by the Brazilian TFP in June 1984.

The last two books were submitted to Fr. Victorino Rodriguez y Rodriguez, O.P. This world-renowned theologian reviewed both books thoroughly and gave a written opinion in which he vouches for the full Catholicity of the TFP position expounded in the same.

Since the false accusations of heterodoxy are repeated in the Unity article and



addressed elsewhere in this refutation, we will not discuss them in connection with the NCBB 1985 note.

Third: The day after the NCBB note was published in the Brazilian media, the Brazilian TFP gave the following respectful statement to the press:

TFP found it hard to believe that the note of the NCBB published by *O Estado de S. Paulo* on April 20 really expresses the thought of the illustrious episcopal body, such is the accumulation of unfounded statements and biased and impassioned assessments in the text.

TFP does not renounce the possibility of yet producing a more detailed analysis of the NCBB's pronouncement. In any case, it will remain faithful to its unbreakable tradition: It will render to the ecclesiastical authority all the respect and obedience prescribed in Canon Law for civic organizations of Catholic inspiration.

Already now, TFP affirms that it willingly accepts, and has always accepted, the vigilance of the Sacred Hierarchy in matters of Faith and morals.

If the NCBB considers that TFP expressed a heterodox concept or did a single action in the line of yesterday's communiqué, we would like to know exactly what it was. Should the existence of any error or the illicitness of any action be proven, TFP will certainly accept correction.

However, justice forbids TFP from accepting as valid vague and generic accusations like those in the NCBB text. Specific facts and proofs must be presented.

TFP awaits, then, the enumeration of the facts and proofs with a totally tranquil conscience and is ready to publicly defend its honor to the fullest legitimate and necessary extent, even if this must be done, in sorrow, in relation to sacred pastors—Paulo Corrêa de Brito Filho, TFP Press Secretary. (Our emphasis.)<sup>3</sup>

As can be seen, the Brazilian TFP (a) denies that the accusations are true; (b) reiterates its total submission to the vigilance of the hierarchy in matters of faith and morals; (c) reiterates its willingness to accept correction should any error or the illicitness of any action by the organization be proven; (d) requests *specificity, clarity, and proofs* in the charges against the organization, as opposed to vague and generic accusations. (NCBB, p. 2.)

The Brazilian TFP issued a more complete response to the NCBB note on May 13, 1997. It is available online in English at [www.TFP.org/ref/1985NCBB.htm](http://www.TFP.org/ref/1985NCBB.htm).

Fourth: Considering the Brazilian TFP's denial of the charges, public submission to episcopal vigilance, willingness to accept correction, and request for specific facts and proofs, it is significant that since 1985, neither the NCBB nor any Brazilian bishop acting on his own ever contacted the Brazilian TFP to institute a canonical inquiry into the veracity of the grave charges made in the 1985 note.

Fifth: The NCBB 1985 note had no impact on Brazilian Catholic support for TFP.

3. The TFP note was published in full in *Folha de S. Paulo* and *Jornal da Tarde*, São Paulo, 4/23/85; *O Estado de S. Paulo*, 4/24/85; *A Cidade*, Campos (State of Rio), 4/29/85. *Jornal do Brasil* published a summary of it April 22, 1985.

The Brazilian TFP did not lose one donor, member, friend or supporter. For many Brazilian Catholics, the note merely reflected the decades-long polemic between the TFP and pro-liberation theology bishops<sup>4</sup> over socialist and confiscatory land reform.

Sixth: The American TFP is not the subject of the NCBB note. The Brazilian TFP and the American TFP are separate, autonomous organizations. Each TFP is solely responsible for its actions.

Seventh: Despite the NCBB note, numerous Brazilian bishops continued to give written support to campaigns of the Brazilian TFP. So much for a note that “condemned the group and ordered Catholics to have nothing to do with it.”

Just this year, twenty-two Brazilian bishops provided letters of support to be used as evidence in the French TFP’s legal confrontation with the secularist French government. These bishops speak of their experience with the Brazilian TFP and affirm its Catholicity, denying that it is a “pseudo-Catholic cult.” (NCBB, pp. 11-12.)

A reasonable explanation for this support is that the Brazilian hierarchy has been divided for some time. (NCBB, pp. 9-11.) In 1985 the larger faction favored leftist political parties and liberation theology and opposed the Brazilian TFP. In the 22 years that have elapsed since the 1985 NCBB note, the size and the composition of the contending groups have changed.

Eighth: As the Brazilian TFP’s 14-page response of May 13, 1997 demonstrates, the NCBB note is not a canonical document. The Brazilian TFP’s response explains the note’s context and exact scope and authority. (NCBB, p. 4.) It also explains the status of the Brazilian TFP in Canon Law (NCBB, pp. 4-7) and the tragic influence of Marxist liberation theology among Brazilian bishops. (NCBB, pp. 8-11.) Again, the response is available online in English at [www.TFP.org/ref/1985NCBB.htm](http://www.TFP.org/ref/1985NCBB.htm).

Ninth: Neither the Brazilian TFP’s response of April 21, 1985, nor its response of May 13, 1997, makes the claim that the NCBB statement was “just an ‘unsigned note.’”

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4. Contrary to what the Unity article asserts, the Brazilian TFP’s anti-communist stance has much to do with the opposition from liberal Brazilian bishops. For forty plus years, the Brazilian TFP respectfully, but publicly opposed the socialist and confiscatory land reform policy adopted by most Brazilian bishops.

It may be difficult for Americans to fathom how a majority of bishops could adopt positions favorable to liberation theology and socioeconomic policies advocated by Marxists. However, Latin Americans have experienced this tragic reality for years. Examples are legion. Take the letter sent by Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns of São Paulo (at the time, archbishop of the diocese with the largest number of faithful in the world) to the communist tyrant Fidel Castro on the 30th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. The Cardinal’s letter was delivered by Friar Betto, a leading proponent of liberation theology. The letter was published January 6, 1989, in *Granma* (the official newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party) and in the January 21, 1989 issue of *O São Paulo* (the São Paulo archdiocesan newspaper). Cardinal Arns writes:

Dear Fidel,

Peace and well-being!

I take advantage of Friar Betto’s trip to embrace you and greet the Cuban people on the 30th anniversary of the Revolution....

Cuba today can take pride in being, in our continent so impoverished by foreign debt, an example of social justice. The Christian faith clearly sees in the conquests of the Revolution the signs of the Reign of God....

I keep you in my daily prayers, asking the Father to grant you always the grace of ably guiding the destiny of your country. Receive my fraternal embrace on the feast of the 30th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution.

On the contrary, the Brazilian TFP's 1997 response gives abundant details on how the NCBB note was drafted, amended, voted on, and then published in the Brazilian media.

Tenth: No special significance need be attached to Fr. Valentini Netto's December 8, 1995 confirmation of the 1985 NCBB note. What matters is whether the accusations are true. The Brazilian TFP denied their veracity and requested proofs already two days after the NCBB note was approved. In any case, the note does not apply to the American TFP. Each TFP is autonomous.

In short, the 1985 NCBB note has no canonical implications for the Brazilian TFP. It is not a condemnation, an interdict or an excommunication. It is not even an ecclesiastical censure. It does not bind or oblige the faithful in any way. It is a note approved by bishops in the context of the Brazilian TFP's longtime opposition to socialist land reform, and the adoption by these bishops of positions favorable to liberation theology and socioeconomic policies advocated by Marxists. Moreover, it is based on false accusations made during a *leftist* media uproar against the Brazilian TFP and fails to consider the published TFP refutations of these false accusations.

(NCBB, pp. 1-14)

The TFP invites readers desiring further information to visit [www.TFP.org](http://www.TFP.org) or to contact the organization directly. TFP staff will be glad to assist them.





Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira  
1908–1995

*"When still very young, I marveled at the ruins of Christendom, gave them my heart, turned my back on all I could expect, and made of that past full of blessings, my future."*

—Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira

Cardinal Alfons Stickler, former Librarian and Archivist of the Holy Roman Church, celebrated a 30-day Requiem Mass for the repose of the soul of Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, at the church of Santo Spirito in Sassia, in Rome.



# The American TFP and its America Needs Fatima campaign — continuous activity in defense of Christian Civilization

*"By their fruits you shall know them."*

—Matthew 7:16



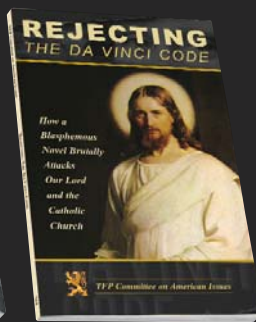
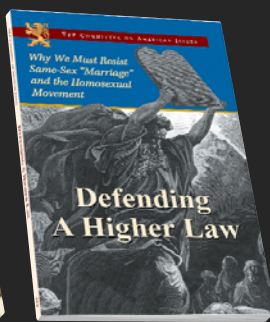
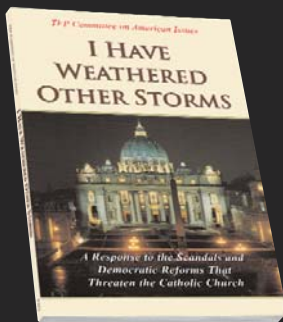
*March for Life since 1973*



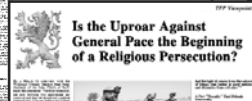
*Anti-Blasphemy rallies*







*Recent publications  
in defense of  
Catholic principles*



## *Fatima Home Visitation Program*



## *Gatherings and conferences*



## *Working with the youth*



## *TFP Student Action*





# APPENDIX

## *Explanation on the Civil and Canonical Nature of the TFPs and Their “Family of Souls”*

*by Gustavo A. Solimeo*

**1.** The Societies for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property—TFP constitute what in non-technical language could be called a “family of souls” inspired by the action and work of the eminent Brazilian Catholic intellectual Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, particularly his luminous essay *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, published in 1959 and updated in 1977 and 1992.

Thus, the TFPs are not one international organization, headquartered in Brazil and with “affiliates” in various countries. Rather, the TFPs form an ensemble of local, autonomous organizations, established in accordance with the legislation and peculiarities of their respective countries. Fraternally linked by the same doctrinal inspiration and the same final objective, the TFPs maintain between themselves a friendly exchange of persons and publications, which naturally favors a certain resemblance in methods of action, internal organization, and the formation of their members, without impairing in any way, however, the full autonomy and responsibility of each TFP.

**2.** The TFPs define themselves as associations of “apostolic inspiration,” constituted by lay members of the faithful who are guided by the traditional doctrine of the Supreme Magisterium of the Church and act in the temporal sphere under their sole and exclusive responsibility, and which have structured themselves under civil law.

Consequently, they are not, nor do they pretend to be “Catholic associations” in the sense of associations which are canonically recognized or included in the ecclesiastical juridical order (cf. Code of Canon Law, canons 300, 216). Rather, they are “associations of Catholics,” formed by a free agreement among some of the faithful exercising their right to freely “found and direct associations for purposes of charity or piety or for the promotion of the Christian vocation in the world” (canon 215).

The TFPs have as their purpose—in accordance with the specific conditions of their respective countries—the preservation of Christian civilization in what concerns directly the temporal order or in what is indirectly related to it, in light of the aggression—at times hidden, other times open and declared—of socialism and communism, irreconcilable adversaries of the principles of the natural law and Catholic morality. Thus their motto: Tradition, Family, Property—pillars of Christian civilization.

**3.** The faithful’s right of association does not depend on the adoption of canonical by-laws. This right permits associations founded and directed by them to adopt a civil juridical structure.

This is explained by Prof. Javier Hervada, Chair of Philosophy of Law and Natural Law at the University of Navarre, Spain: “Associations, undertakings, or works of apostolic inspiration ‘established by the free choice of the laity and regulated by their prudent judgment’ (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* 24), can have either a civil juridical structure or a canonical



one” (*Código de Derecho Canónico—Edición anotada* [Pamplona, Spain: EUNSA, 1983], commentary on canon 225).

Prof. Giuseppe Dalla Torre, Chair of Ecclesiastical Law at the University of Bologna, Italy, observes in the same line: “[When these associations of the faithful] pursue purposes inscribed immediately in the temporal order, and purposes in the spiritual order only mediately, the Code renounces to regulate them, consequently relegating this—even if tacitly—to civil law” (*Comento al Codice di Diritto Canonico*, a cura di Mons. Pio Vito Pinto [Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1985], commentary on canon 215).

4. It is true that the present Code of Canon Law permits associations founded and directed by members of the faithful to be included in the ecclesiastical juridical order, by means of a review (*recognitio*, canon 299 §3) of their bylaws. However, the Code does not order such introduction; this is a right of freedom, which cannot be blocked or imposed, and which the faithful use or not, depending on their free choice. If the contrary were true, the right assured to the faithful to freely form and direct associations (cf. canon 215) would be gutted and rendered meaningless. The canons which regulate this right (canons 298 to 329) apply exclusively to those associations which have chosen to be included in the ecclesiastical juridical order.

5. As for an association of the faithful declaring itself “Catholic” in its inspiration, methods of formation, activities, etc., not only is this a right, but even a duty, if the faithful do not want to betray their Baptism. They do not need, therefore, any permission or license from ecclesiastical authority to do this.

This changes though, when the association or apostolic work wants to include in its name, the title “Catholic.” The organization can do this only with permission from competent ecclesiastical authority (cf. canons 216, 300, 803 §3 and 808). The permission requirement is due to the necessity of distinguishing institutions with an official character, invested with a mission to act *nomine Ecclesiae* (“in the name of the Church”) (cf. canons 116 §1 and 313), from those undertakings which operate under the sole and exclusive responsibility of the private persons who promote them.

Such is not the case of the Societies for the Defense of Tradition, Family, and Property. Their appellation permits no misunderstanding and they carry out their activities in their own name.

6. The juridical nature of such civil associations is not altered simply because religious practices develop within them, and even the imitation of certain aspects of canonical consecrated life (life in common under discipline exercised by a moderator, use of a uniform, limited cloister, etc.), aspects, as is readily seen, that are more external and secondary. Nor is it altered by the fact that many of its members made, in their personal capacity, private vows of obedience to a learned and prudent man, as well as that of chastity or celibacy.

In effect, on the one hand, it does not seem that the emulation of canonical consecrated life is forbidden outside of associations which have been duly approved by ecclesiastical authority. On the contrary, numerous papal and conciliar texts, and ordinances in the Code of Canon Law encourage such emulation on the part of lay people who live in the world,

either alone or grouped in associations. On the other hand, all the practices described here are of an exclusively private character, and conform to the laws and doctrines of the Church. As a result, the stipulations of canon 214 of the Code of Canon Law properly apply: “The Christian faithful have the right...to follow their own form of spiritual life so long as it is consonant with the doctrine of the Church” (see also canons 210, 215 and 298 §1).

7. From everything stated above, one understands that the TFPs constitute a mixed reality: if seen from the perspective of civil law, they are civil, membership associations governed by their bylaws; if seen from the perspective of ecclesiastical laws, they can be considered as private associations of the faithful, which are not recognized (cf. canon 299 §3) and have no ecclesiastical juridic personality (cf. canon 322 §2). Thus, from the perspective of Canon Law, the TFPs are *de facto* associations.

8. Consequently, the TFPs as such are not subject to the ecclesiastical authority’s *power of governance* but only to its power of vigilance in *rebus fidei et morum* (in matters of faith and morals) and in what concerns ecclesiastical discipline, in the same way and in the same measure as the faithful, considered individually, who make up the TFPs’ membership.

This because they “are not canonical institutions, i.e. they are not the subject of rights and obligations different from those of the physical persons who form the association” (Msgr. Dominique Le Tourneau, “Réflexions sur la partie ‘De Christifidelibus’ du Code,” in *L’Année Canonique* (Paris, 1984) vol. 28, p. 188).

(Translated from the original Portuguese by the American TFP.)