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MATTHEW D. STROUD

INFALLIBLE TEXTS AND RIGHTEOUS INTERPRETATIONS:
DON QUIJOTE AND RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM

Religion in *Don Quijote* has been a frequent subject of inquiry over the past century. As a “vehicle for religious expression,” to use Ziolkowski’s terminology (1), Cervantes’s masterpiece has been studied as an analogy of the relationship between religious faith and the world around it (Ziolkowski 8), as a manifestation of the historic clash between the secularization of the modern era and the waning medieval domination by “religious institutions and symbols” (Ziolkowski 9, citing Berger 107), as a vessel of both the spirit and the letter of selected pronouncements of the Council of Trent (Descouzis 479), as a text that fell under the scrutiny of the Inquisition (Castro, “Cervantes” 427; Boruchoff 40-49), proof of Cervantes’s own religious orthodoxy or lack thereof (Spitzer 61; Castro, *El pensamiento* 240-320), and a study of the nature of belief and its relationship to truth: “truth is always a function of belief” (Forcione 109). Special attention, of course, has been paid to the scrutiny of Don Quijote’s library by the priest, Pero Pérez, in Part 1, Chapter 5 (Eisenberg, Ziolkowski 28), Quijote’s encounter with Ricote (Ramírez-Araujo, Boruchoff 53), and the more than 160 quotations from and allusions to passages from the Bible (Monroy 79-173), as well as “minor irreverences” and “occasional jibes” seen throughout (Ziolkowski 27-28). This brief overview is, of course, only a taste of the scholarship available on the subject, but it will suffice here to establish the scope and breadth of previous discussion of religion in the *Quijote*.

This present study will attempt to view the actions and beliefs of the character of Don Quijote in light of a facet of religious expression that has become increasingly visible and culturally important on

a global scale in the past few decades, religious fundamentalism. More to the point, what is proposed here is an exploration of the way in which Don Quijote's treatment of the chivalresque texts that inform his fantasies, as well as his actions as a knight-errant, mirror the manner in which religious fundamentalists treat their sacred texts and the ways in which they carry their beliefs into their daily lives. The point here is not to claim that Cervantes himself took a position one way or the other on fundamentalism, that he intended Don Quijote to be a means to provide commentary on the phenomenon, or that he had any conception of fundamentalism as we know it. Rather, the guiding spirit here is that afforded to all succeeding generations: the opportunity and the obligation to review received texts in the light of the shifting priorities of the contexts in which one reads them, in this case religious fundamentalism as it exists at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The term, "fundamentalism," dates from 1920 and is credited to Curtis Lee Laws, editor of a conservative religious publication, *Watchman-Examiner*. It was based on a series of pamphlets entitled "The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth," published between 1910 and 1915 (Power 43). As a religious, political, and social phenomenon, fundamentalism has been quite rigorously studied by such preeminent scholars as Martin Marty, R. Scott Appleby, and J. K. Hadden. Some of the enumerated characteristics of religious fundamentalism – such as the fundamentalist defense of traditional Christian values against modern ways of thinking (Hadden 1637) – overlap with more general studies of religion in the novel. Fundamentalists are deeply concerned with the erosion of religion and its proper role in society (Almond, Sivan, and Appleby 405). They see their primary mission as standing in opposition to modernism (Lawrence 6) and in favor of a "divine restoration" (Lawrence 1). They see themselves as part of an immense cosmic struggle through the filter of which they seize on and reinterpret historical moments (Marty and Appleby 819). The fundamentalist enterprise is nothing less than "a proclamation of reclaimed authority over a sacred tradition which is to be reinstated as an antidote for a society that has strayed from its cultural mooring" (Hadden 1641).

Don Quijote likewise frequently laments the erosion of tradition and condemns modern customs; the most famous and most succinct of his pronouncements regarding the degeneration of the world

occurs in his speech on the *edad dorada* in 1.11. Here the way things used to be, at least in his view of the world, is described in terms that border on the prelapsarian and paradisiacal: "Dichosa edad y siglos dichosos a quien los antiguos pusieron nombre de dorados," "santa edad," "magnífica abundancia," and the like (104-5). This ideal vision of the past is contrasted with the debased and unhappy present: "nuestros detestables siglos," "pestilencia," "malicia," and so on (106). In much the same way that Justice Antonin Scalia of the Supreme Court of the United States views progressive efforts to bring freedom and equality to everyone as a *Kulturkampf* pitting debased modern values against impeccable traditional ones,¹ Quijote clearly views this "cultural war" as a cosmic struggle. Not only can the return of tradition serve as a necessary curative to the dissipation he sees all around him, but he himself has taken on the task of righting the wrongs he sees. Like fundamentalists everywhere, Quijote believes that it is not enough merely to lament the erosion of traditional values; he must declare his own sacred authority and personally commit to their reinstatement: "Destá orden soy yo..." (106).

From a fundamentalist perspective, the use of the term "war" is not merely metaphorical. The world is divided into "us" and "them," good and evil. The fundamentalist project is not just a philosophical or religious debate; it is an active confrontation with those considered to be enemies (Lawrence 100), whom they prefer to demonize and mythologize rather than engage in dialogue (Marty and Appleby 820). When others refuse to accept his version of reality, Quijote quickly and menacingly categorizes them as enemies and threatens them with violence as in the case of the merchants from Toledo in 1.4. Although they are willing to go along with the assertion of Dulcinea's just to placate the irate knight, that is not good enough; they must truly believe blindly as he does: "¡vosotros pagaréis la grande blasfemia que habéis dicho contra tamaña beldad como es la de mi señora!" (60). Rationalism, relativism, pluralism, and secularism are all equated with infidelity (Lawrence ix) or with an insufficient knowledge of or dedication to the sacred principles. Sancho's realism is frequently dismissed as lack of sufficient knowledge or dedication to the cause. When Sancho states unequivocally that the windmills are just that and not giants, Quijote's response is to denigrate Sancho's faith in the *libros de caballería*: "no estás cursado en esto de las aventuras" (I, 8: 82; cf. I, 18: 160: "¡Qué poco

sabes, Sancho, ... de achaque de caballería!"). The more extreme response to a questioning of inerrant truth is the charge of blasphemy, which Quijote hurls at his niece (579;2.6).

Grounded in militarism, as Marty and Appleby point out (ix), fundamentalists fight back against a society they consider to be degenerate, fight for their beliefs, fight with the resources at their disposal, fight against those who disagree with them, and fight under God "or under the signs of some transcendent reference," which, in the analogy to Don Quijote, would be chivalresque ideals.² Because of the stark contrast in which they view "us" versus "them," there is a strong tendency towards Manichaeism (Almond, Sivan, and Appleby 406-7); the current President of the United States has stated, "If you are not with us, you are against us," thus revealing his own Manichaeism as he, according to his own definitions, separates people into categories of good and evil. This black and white view of the world additionally leads one to an extreme rigidity of interpretation (Quijote's actions are so reactionary that even Spanish society under the Inquisition seems too permissive) as well as to grand assertions of the individual's ability to change the course of the world. Given the belief that they have been called or chosen to rid the world of evil, the fundamentalist called to action displays a similar tendency towards Messianism.³ Of course, Don Quijote is not shy about characterizing his mission as divine. When he comes across the group of men taking images of saints to a nearby village for an altar-piece in 2.58, Quijote puts himself quite boldly on the same footing as Saints George, Martin, James, and Paul: "estos santos y caballeros profesaron lo que yo profeso, que es el ejercicio de las armas" (954).

The division of peoples and nations into "us" and "them," "good" and "evil" (Lawrence 108, 116) is a function of belief, or, more exactly, the belief in the authority of a certain text or texts. Not only does the approach one takes to a particular sacred text help to draw boundaries between believers and non-believers; it also bespeaks one's relationship with reality and truth. As Ron Suskind has pointed out with regard to the world view of President George W. Bush and his dependence upon instincts and beliefs to the exclusion of "reality-based" facts and interpretations (46, 51), fundamentalists defend belief-based reinterpretations of historical moments even in the presence of evidence to the contrary. Belief in beings and occurrences such as miracles, angels, demons, and the like are not at

all dependent upon the ability to verify them in reality. Quijote believes that it is possible for wizards to cast spells, that there are *encantadores* and devils, even when Sancho is right there to tell him that what he sees is something else. However, Quijote is not merely deluded when he sees castles instead of inns (43;1.2) or giants instead of windmills (81;1.8); he *must* interpret what he sees according to what he has read in his "sacred" texts. His interpretation is based on his faith (in his chivalric ideals), not in facts grounded in reality.⁴ Of course, Quijote's clearest statement that belief is ultimately not a function of evidence occurs in his discussion of the Cueva de Montesinos: "hay algunos que se cansan en saber y averiguar cosas que después de sabidas y averiguadas no importan un ardite al entendimiento ni a la memoria" (698;2.22).

Central to the beliefs of both fundamentalists and Don Quijote are the texts themselves that are considered to be literally inerrant and absolute descriptions of a revealed, unified truth (Lawrence 6, 109; Almond, Sivan and Appleby 407; Hadden 1637) upon which is based the law that must be followed in order to act in a righteous manner. Similar to the importance of confrontation mentioned above, it is not enough that believers accept these tenets on faith, they demand that "dictates from scripture be publicly recognized and legally enforced" (Lawrence 27; cf. 232). The same is true of one's particular beliefs drawn from textual interpretations. Dulcinea may not have appeared in Quijote's "sacred texts," but because of his readings of them, he not only believes that Aldonza Lorenzo is Dulcinea del Toboso, everyone else must accept his faith-based vision as well: "Todo el mundo se tenga, si todo el mundo no confiesa que no hay en el mundo toda doncella más hermosa que la emperatriz de la Mancha, la sin par Dulcinea del Toboso" (59;1.4). When political power becomes bound up with faith, the result is an application of belief by force, even when those imposing the belief may not believe it themselves. Regarding the existence of Dulcinea, for example, the Duke and Duchess assure Quijote that they will order all those in their household to believe that she exists, that she is high-born and beautiful, and that she is worthy of such a knight as Don Quijote (777;2.32).

Those of us who toil in the groves of literature are quite familiar with problems that arise with privileged interpretations: selectivity, logical fallacies, errors in transmission, inner contradictions, and the like.

Sacred texts, like all others, are just as susceptible to these problems, but fundamentalists, even when they acknowledge their existence, are able to explain away their importance if they pose a challenge to their beliefs. When one pursues the notion of textual truth even further, one comes upon a basic conflict in the fundamentalist reading of a text. As with the case of all readers reading all texts, fundamentalists at some point have to acknowledge a gap between the words and their meaning. While the very words themselves are considered to be literally true, they also bespeak a truth beyond the words themselves that may or may not contradict one or another interpretation. "Scripture may be the highest explicit authority, but it is always cited to advance a principle that supersedes, even while acknowledging, scriptural authority" (Lawrence 116).

Consider just two problems with the notion of inerrancy: textual corruption and translation. Biblical scholars are well aware of the fact that there are no original manuscripts of the Bible, that even the oldest of the copies we know of were written decades, if not centuries, after the fact, and that they disagree among themselves regarding both what they say and how they say it. Nevertheless, the fact that scripture may be derived from corrupt or ambiguous sources does not deter fundamentalists from revering the texts as "canonically fixed, safeguarded, transmitted, and obeyed" (Lawrence 108) or from asserting that their interpretations of those texts, and theirs alone, are the only ones that reflect the truth. Sometimes the arguments border on the absurd; in my own family I have heard intense discussions about the theological implications of the singular verb in the phrase, "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6: 23) when in fact it merely derives from the use of a singular verb with a neuter plural in Greek. The defense of one's interpretation can be violent and full of rage. Not dissimilar is Quijote's reaction to Maese Pedro's *retablo*, which, when it does not conform to his recollection of his reading of the source text, as well as his larger understanding of the world ("entre moros no se usan campanas," 733;2.26), prompts him to violence and destruction. And, of course, what is one to make of the disjunction between the inerrancy of the chivalric novels and the errors that Sancho and Quijote discover in the first part of their own saga (565-66;2.4)?⁵

In addition to the lack of a single, verifiable source text, translation is a thorny problem for Biblical literalists. Considering the variety of languages of importance to Biblical scholarship and tradition

(Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin), it is astonishing that anyone believes that any translation into a modern language can be considered to be inerrant unless one also believes that God inspired the work of the translators. (Not dealt with openly are the differences among translations. Did God inspire all of them equally? If so, how could there be variations?) Translation, of course, is also at the heart of *Don Quijote*, the novel. While the chivalric texts upon which Quijote bases his adventures are for the most part written in Spanish, Quijote is also concerned about the accuracy of the book written about him. Considering his worries that Cide Hamete's text might be full of errors since it was written by a Moor (558;2.3), and considering that in 2.62, he utters his famous assertions that reading a translation is like looking at a tapestry from the back with all the knots and loose strings visible (998), it is surprising that he is willing either to give translators credit for accurately representing a text in another language or that he is willing to elide the problems that translations present. It is surprising, that is, unless there is an element of faith in his mission and commitment to the texts themselves that runs counter to logical argument.

Related to the idea of the text that "reveals" a truth is the effort that is required to read and re-read a text in order to discover that truth. Just as religious scholars over the centuries have pored over passages, even single words, of sacred text, Quijote spent nights on end trying to decipher the meanings of the abstruse chivalric locutions. Of course, just as some Biblical passages are simply inscrutable because of the archaic language in which they are written, or because of errors introduced in the transmission of the text, Cervantes interjects a wry criticism when he notes that Quijote could not possibly have understood the passages, "ni las entendiera el mesmo Aristóteles, si resucitara para solo ello" (1, 1: 37). The issue of interpretation is also related to the notion of exegesis by learned readers of the text who, within the terms of the novel, are more or less equivalent to the various "autores" who dispute minor points such as whether the adventure of Puerto Lápice came before or after that of the windmills (1, 2: 43).⁶ Quijote, of course, does not disparage either the Bible or Spanish history. Indeed, in explaining to Sancho the meaning of "Santiago, y cierra España" in 2.58, he uses the same language to speak of the works of Saint James during the Reconquest as he does in his citations of chivalric novels: "muchas veces le han visto visiblemente en ellas [las batallas], derribando, atropellando, destruyendo y mandando

los agarenos escuadrones, y desta verdad te pudiera traer muchos ejemplos que en las verdaderas historias españolas se cuentan" (956).

One important way that fundamentalists avoid problems based on textual inconsistencies and contradictions is through their selective reverence for different passages of their received texts. Despite the general disdain for modernity, this picking and choosing of scriptures to fight for and scriptures to gloss over reveals how much of modernity they are willing to accept and how much they are ready to fight against (Marty and Appleby 825-26; Almond, Sivan, and Appleby 406; Lawrence 15). Those of us currently living in the United States are more than familiar with the disconnection between the insistence of the religious right on the enforcement of prohibitions against homosexuality while turning a blind eye to matters of divorce, dietary restrictions, and the whole host of "abominations" listed in the Holiness Code in Leviticus. Likewise, Quijote, who reacted violently to points with which he disagreed in Maese Pedro's puppet show, seems to have absolute faith in what the fortune-telling monkey told him (that part of what he alleges to have seen in the Cueva de Montesinos was true and part was false), while, at the same time, "él se atenía más a las verdaderas que a las mentirosas" (750;2.29). Also related to selectivity is the tendency of modern American Christian fundamentalism to alter its interpretation of scripture that is elsewhere proclaimed as inerrant to suit its own personal ends. The theology of wealth, for example, which states that if God loves you He will make you wealthy flies directly into the face of Christ's admonitions to give away all earthly possessions. Quijote seems to have a similar ability to distort textual truth into a defense of his own behavior, as he does when he takes the good news of the birth of Jesus, which is clearly focused on peace, and uses it to support his bellicose adventures: "Esta paz es el verdadero fin de la guerra" (389;1.37).

Just as religious fundamentalism believes in the notion of divine intervention in one's daily life, and therefore in the power of petitionary prayer, Quijote calls upon his own deified Dulcinea to come to his aid in his battle against the evil giants (82;1.8), which those who have a reality-based view of the world see as windmills. The other side of the same coin is the notion that one is punished in this life if one strays from scrupulous adherence to the letter of the law. Similar to the comments of Anita Bryant to the effect that San Francisco suffers earthquakes because so many homosexuals live there, Sancho, who is

able to turn Quijote's arguments against him when it suits his purpose, ascribes their misfortunes to his master's failure to fulfill his vow in accordance with the laws of chivalry: "han sido pena del pecado cometido por vuestra merced contra la orden de su caballería, no habiendo cumplido el juramento que hizo de no comer pan a manteles..." (170;1.19). This linking of text to belief to law to behavior is an important aspect of the projection of fundamentalism into society at large, and is a function of the fundamentalist conception of the relationship between self and others.

One's fundamentalist beliefs are more than just a matter of one's faith; they are a function of one's identity. One does not just believe one or another tenet, one *is* a born-again Christian (and, of course, the whole notion of what "born-again" entails is fodder for yet further heated disagreement). This element of identity is seen in the broad cultural, social, and individual traits ascribed to Muslims and Christians in *Don Quijote*. Ricote's statement, "la Ricota mi hija y Francisca Ricota mi mujer con católicas cristianas, y aunque yo no lo soy tanto, todavía tengo más de cristiano que de moro..." (933;2.54) is couched more in terms of who Ricote and his family are rather than in what religious beliefs they hold. The question of identity is raised again in 2.63, when Ana Félix declares that she is a true Christian "y no de las fingidas ni aparentes" (1005). The notion that one can fake one's identity in matters of religion lies at the heart of both a certain insecurity regarding its nature as well as an opening for the possibility of hypocrisy. If one can pass as a fundamentalist Christian when one is not, then how is one to know who one is? Moreover, who gets to decide who meets all the requirements of fundamentalism and who falls short? The answer is that in addition to its strict behavioral requirements, there is also a strong egoistic tendency in fundamentalism to consider only those who meet one's own criteria to be "real" Christians, despite the fact that two fundamentalists may disagree in substantial ways about what it is that constitutes one's Christian identity. This dispute over who is really who one says he is and who is not is underscored in Sancho's discussion in 2.72, of the Avellaneda *Quijote* with Álvaro Tarfe, who claims to be a great friend of "Don Quijote" (1053). Sancho's assertion, "Todo cualquier otro don Quijote y cualquier otro Sancho Panza es burlería y cosa de sueño" (1054) not only reflects the notion that one's identity can be called into question by someone else, it also

challenges the validity of such assertions of identity altogether since there is no “real” Don Quijote at all. Even within the terms of Cervantes’s literary fiction, “Don Quijote” was the creation of “Alonso Quijano” and was thus just as much a fabrication as Tarfe’s friend created by “Avellaneda” (whoever that is; this is yet another problematic identity). At the end of the day, if one can renounce one’s identity and one’s faith as easily as Don Quijote does (“...yo no soy don Quijote de la Mancha, sino Alonso Quijano, a quien mis costumbres me dieron renombre de *Bueno*. Ya soy enemigo de Amadís de Gaula y de toda la infinita caterva de su linaje, ya me son odiosas todas las historias profanas del andante caballería,” 1063-64), how firm is any assertion of one’s identity? Perhaps the constructed nature of such an identity, along with its fluidity and changeability, are the motivation behind the vehemence with which all fundamentalists practice their faith and proclaim their beliefs. Sometimes people really do protest too much.

Religious idealism serves as the basis of both personal and communal identities (Marty and Appleby 817); fundamentalists consider themselves to be part of a reactionary minority movement. They make little or no effort to blend into the larger society and are, indeed, intentionally scandalous to make the point that outsiders cannot understand them (Marty and Appleby 818). To that end, they generate their own technical vocabulary (Lawrence 100) and adhere to strict behavioral requirements (Almond, Sivan, and Appleby 408). Indeed, fundamentalism also derives from the holiness movement “which was just as concerned with correct behavior as with correct belief” (Hadden 1637). Don Quijote demonstrates all of these qualities.

Quijote relishes his minority status. He carries his unique burden as defender of the old values as a marker of his special mission as a knight-errant. He views himself as above, or at least apart from, the law: “¿Y dónde has visto tú, o leído jamás, que caballero andante haya sido puesto ante la justicia por más homicidios que hubiese cometido?” (98;1.10). Later, at the inn, Quijote protests that he does not have to pay taxes like other people: “¿Qué caballero andante pagó pecho, alcabala, chapín de la reina, moneda forera, portazgo ni barca” (465;1.45). Over and over again, Quijote goes out of his way to assert his vision of the world. While “intentionally scandalous” may be too strong a term, there is no doubt that Quijote seeks out occasions to be provocative, whether it is in his attempt to free the galley-slaves (he could just as easily have accepted the explanation of the guards, 1.22) or in his desire

to prove his madness in the Sierra Morena (“Loco soy, loco he de ser,” 238;1.25). Moreover, that others cannot understand Quijote is proved on two different levels. On the first, which also embodies the use of language that is difficult or impossible to understand, Quijote frequently uses an archaic form of speech and references that his listeners are not likely to grasp. Quijote’s reverence for old texts leads him, especially when he is in activist mode, to speak in archaic language, as when he addresses the “mozas del partido” at the inn (43;1.2) and lectures Maritornes and the inn-keeper’s wife, both of whom are left as confused “como si hablara en griego” (145;1.16). Even when he is not using archaic language, his concepts leave others bewildered, as is the case with the goatherds who listen to his “Golden Age” speech “embobados y suspensos” (106;1.11). On the second level, even those closest to Don Quijote have a hard time understanding his actions. The barber, the priest, his niece, and even Sancho Panza ponder his behavior and wonder at its bizarre and incomprehensible nature (1.6-8). His actions, of course, merely reflect Quijote’s attempt to adhere, to the best of his ability, to the strict behavioral requirements expected of him.

Ultimately, fundamentalism is more than just an approach to religious belief, it is the basis for a code of conduct. Part of the anti-modernism of a fundamentalist approach to life is the insistence that one’s actions must always be in accordance with the models of behavior found in the Bible. The Christian fundamentalist believes that one must live one’s life in imitation of Jesus Christ, thus giving rise to the familiar phrase, “What would Jesus do?” Apparently, this open-ended question is an invitation for vast speculation in instances in which one has no idea what Christ would have done because He was never confronted with such situations. Nevertheless, this righteous imitation, based at least as much on one’s interpretation as on the text imitated, is echoed in Quijote’s insistence upon imitating his chivalric models. When Sancho asks for his back pay, Quijote’s irate response is to note that there is no textual evidence for any squire asking for such thing (748;2.28).⁷ This adherence to behavior based on imitation of the actions depicted in sacred texts extends even to those cases in which Quijote has not suffered as the knights-errant did nor has he been provoked as they were.⁸ Quijote’s response implies that his approach to living as a fundamentalist knight-errant is somehow purer even than that of the knights in the book precise-

ly because he has no real reason to live as he does: “ésa es la fineza de mi negocio; que volverse loco un caballero andante con causa, ni grado ni gracias: el toque está desatinar sin ocasión...” (238; 1.25). His efforts to decide whom to imitate in the Sierra Morena (1.26) clearly show that it does not really matter to him what he does, only that he can ultimately point to some textual model rather than logic, reason, or common sense, as the basis of his actions.

As all readers of *Don Quijote* come to realize, a great part of the joy of reading the book lies in the fact that we, too, are caught up in questions of truth and fiction just as the character Quijote was. When the priest pronounces him “truthfully” dead (“verdaderamente se muere,” 1064), the notions of truth, our faith in the written text, and even the nature of belief itself have been so tested, not to say manipulated, that we find ourselves believing that Quijote really is dead and that there will be no further episodes. That Cervantes assumed that future authors would take his word that Quijote was dead and, even more astonishingly considering its success, the fact that other authors took him at his word, is a testament to the power of belief in a text, even when one knows there are problems with it, even when one knows that it is pure fiction. Don Quijote is a fundamentalist believer in inerrant texts, and his story invites us into his world of certainty and faith, not so much in the adventures of knights errant, but in the power of fiction and interpretation over all evidence to the contrary. Like the fundamentalist’s “faith-based world,” the readers of *Don Quijote* are quite familiar with the way in which one’s beliefs and one’s hopes can trump one’s logic and one’s understanding of the “reality-based world.” This relationship, which lies at the heart of the Baroque preoccupation with reality and appearance, may have been disdained and marginalized by the Enlightenment, but, as modern religious fundamentalism shows us, it has hardly ceased to exist.

At the same time that this reading of the *Quijote* tells us something about a religious fundamentalist view of the world, it also reveals something about the nature of literature and the way one reads a text. Quijote’s principal failing is that he fails to read his source texts as stories, as literature, as fiction. By insisting that they are history, he denies them any validity as works of art. His criticisms of both the Avellaneda text and his own Part I are based more on the accuracy of the events described than on the literary values

that they present. The dichotomy between history and fiction in the *Quijote* has been well studied, but when one couches this conflict in terms of religious belief, it takes on a new and strikingly more relevant meaning. Reading Cervantes’s masterpiece forces the reader to confront the possibility that “history” may be far from factual and that “fiction” may present greater truths even if they are in abstracted form. Ultimately, all readings (whether literalist, interpretive, or casual) view some aspects of the texts as important, to the exclusion of others. Moreover, a righteous literalist interpretation of a sacred inviolate text always eventually confronts different viewpoints expressed by other readers who are equally as firm in their beliefs of their correctness. Unfortunately, as Quijote’s misadventures, seventeenth-century intolerance, and twenty-first century terrorism show us, readers may still be seduced by the notion of an infallible text. The dangers of such interpretations are real, and that is one of the great truths of *Don Quijote*, expressed in a web of fiction, history, belief, and religion.

Notes

1. Scalia’s use of the German term, in his dissent in *Romer v. Evans* (517 U.S. at 636), was the first instance of its use in Supreme Court decisions. For more on the legal contexts of “*Kulturkampf*,” as well as the full legal citation of Scalia’s dissenting opinion, see Michaelson.

2. It would not be accurate to assert that there is no linkage between Quijote’s fundamentalist devotion to chivalresque notions and his Christian beliefs. There are numerous times in which Quijote conflates his belief in the chivalric novels with his belief in Christianity (which does not depart from the warlike approach to Christianity of the novels themselves), as when he notes that one of his missions is to extirpate the seven deadly sins from the “gigantes” they meet (594; 2.8). Nevertheless, the texts upon which he relies are almost exclusively chivalric rather than religious, which at least indirectly creates a division between the two kinds of texts from which he derives his motivation.

3. Almond, Sivan, and Appleby 407–8. Perhaps because of the male-

dominated nature of traditional societies, and despite the presence of many women in fundamentalist movements, an additional characteristic is the fact that such movements are inevitably led by males (Marty and Appleby 826) or, more specifically, populated by "secondary-level male elites led by a charismatic leader" who, of course, is also male (Lawrence 100; cf. 242).

4. As has been well documented, Quijote's willingness to believe in a truth that goes contrary to what his eyes and good judgment tells him is for the most part turned on its head in Part 2. Consider the appearance of the "devil" who comes to announce the arrival of Montesinos in 2.34. Here Quijote is quite skeptical: "Si vos fuérades Diablo..., ya hubiérades conocido al tal caballero don Quijote de la Mancha, pues le tenéis delante" (794).

5. While Quijote adopts an attitude of textual infallibility, the novel as a whole clearly does not. Quite ironically, the myriad layers of textual uncertainty reflect to a remarkable degree the problems facing those who view Biblical scripture as a fixed text that cannot be challenged. In both cases, the narrative thread is complicated by a profusion of voices: multiple authors who are either completely unknown except through the very texts themselves, translators, lost manuscripts, and editorial judgments that one or another part of a text is apocryphal, the same term applied to those books of the Bible that are to be revered but not necessarily believed as undisputed truth (the narrator even uses the term "apócrifo;" see 570, 573;2.5). Those who have studied *Don Quijote* as a criticism of religious dogma have not frequently addressed the notion of textual infallibility head on, but the evidence is there, and it is the same kind of overwhelming evidence that confronts modern fundamentalists, who have actually been known to state that Jesus Christ himself spoke in King James English.

6. The proliferation of authors and narrative voices in the text is also an echo of the various Biblical authors to whom different parts and versions of both the Old and New Testaments are ascribed.

7. It is of some interest that Sancho himself imitates Biblical models, as with his decisions showing the wisdom and mercy of Solomon in his dispensation of the cases brought before him as governor of Barataria (2.45, 47, 49, 51). The greatest difference is that Sancho does not make much of a fuss about the fact that he too is striving to imitate what he has learned from sacred texts.

8. Ironically, the canon, in his attempt to dissuade Quijote from pur-

suing his adventures in knight-errantry and bring him back in line with Church doctrine, also equates Biblical scripture and chivalric novels in his suggestion that, if Quijote insists on imitating textual models, he should look to the Bible, in particular the Book of Judges, for inspiration (494;1.49). In typical Cervantine fashion, Quijote sums up the canon's argument with an apt criticism of his own behavior ("que yo he hecho mal en leerlos [los libros de caballería], y peor en creerlos, y más mal en imitarlos," 495;1.49) before he pronounces his statement of belief that Amadís and the other knights existed as sure as the sun shines and ice is cold. There seems to be little room for a modern-day interpretation other than that belief in the inerrant truth of chivalric novels is no different from a belief in the inerrant truth of stories from the Bible. Even the canon equates the two: "era como una religión de las que ahora se usan de Santiago o de Calatrava" (498;1.49). In Part II, his niece says that Quijote would have made a good priest (579;2.6); Quijote himself is more direct: "religión es la caballería; caballeros santos hay en la gloria" (596;2.8).

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