

“Faggioli offers a highly sophisticated analysis of the new ecclesial movements while telling the story of the Catholic Church over the past one and a half centuries. His international perspective informs his use of methods that are historical, sociological, and theological. This book stands in a category of its own among works on this subject.”

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Professor of Religious Studies
University of Dayton

“Massimo Faggioli has become one of the most respected theological interpreters of Vatican II and the battle over its meaning. This new book explores a wider set of issues with a related agenda. How are we to assess the variety of new Catholic movements and their relationship to the legacy of Vatican II? His analysis and findings will undoubtedly shape the future debate.”

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Fordham University

“Massimo Faggioli brings his fresh, creative voice to the much neglected subject of ‘new ecclesial movements.’ ‘Sorting out’ movements ‘intimately intertwined’ with ‘the modern papacy and the contemporary church’ requires skills as a theologian and historian, which Faggioli has in abundance. Movements have already transformed Catholicism in Europe and Latin America, and in the future they will either complement or substitute traditional parishes, support or undermine Catholic institutions. Those who wish to understand and share responsibility for the future of Catholicism, in the United States and elsewhere, would do well to consider Faggioli’s nuanced assessment of these mostly Euro-centered movements.”

— David J. O’Brien
College of the Holy Cross (Emeritus)

Sorting Out Catholicism

A Brief History of the New Ecclesial Movements

Massimo Faggioli

Translated by
Demetrio S. Yocum



A Michael Glazier Book

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Prologue to the New English Edition

Sorting Out Catholicism: A Brief History of the New Ecclesial Movements is not merely the English translation of the book published in Italy in the spring of 2008 under the title of *Breve storia dei movimenti cattolici* (and translated into Spanish in 2011). Not only because the second part of this book is essentially new and the result of later reflections following 2008, but also because this book, which Hans Christoffersen, academic publisher of Liturgical Press, has graciously accepted for publication, is the attempt to “translate” for an English-speaking public the research that I began in an Italian and European context.

Moreover, this book is not intended as a comprehensive history of all the Catholic movements that emerged and developed in the twentieth century. In fact, only a few references are made to crucial phenomena in American Catholicism, such as Dorothy Day’s *Catholic Worker*; to more recent evangelical Catholic movements; and, in general, to the more ecumenical and interdenominational character of some of the new Catholic movements and intentional communities outside Europe and in the United States specifically. The main topic of this book deals with the new Catholic movements that originated in Europe in the period between the 1930s and 1970s, which had a relatively direct relationship with the theological and ecclesiological roots of Catholic Action as a form of lay apostolate guided by the Church hierarchy (bishops and popes), and that have since become international Catholic movements, in the sense that they have spread from Europe to the rest of the world. In other words, my research focuses on the transition from a hierarchically led lay apostolate called Catholic Action to new forms of lay apostolate (such as the *Focolare*

movement and the Community of Sant'Egidio) or mixed lay-clerical institutions and congregations (such as Opus Dei and the Legionaries of Christ), without exploring further the kind of evangelical movements that are taking shape today in the Catholic Church, especially outside of Europe.

Further, this book is perhaps more important today than at the time of its first publication in Italy in 2008. Today, world Catholicism is experiencing a particular historical moment in which the influence of Catholic movements is particularly strong, thanks to the New Evangelization launched by Saint John Paul II, resumed by Pope Benedict XVI, and reinvigorated by Pope Francis. American Catholicism is taking an unprecedented leading role for the Church worldwide. Hence, the publication of this book in North America is part of my attempt to act as liaison, or as mediator, of theological ideas and different religious experiences between two continents, Europe and North America, much more distant than what we normally think, even inside the same Catholic world.

What has not changed, however, is the central thesis of the book, namely, that the new ecclesial movements are one of the key experiences for understanding the complexity of the relationship between Catholicism and the modern world in the twentieth century and the relationship between the Second Vatican Council and the experience of the preconciliar and postconciliar Catholic Church and what this experience says about the hermeneutics of Vatican II. The perspective of the research has expanded, as did the intent to understand this particular issue within a scope that is not only European. It is up to the Anglophone reader to judge whether this book is able to account for the argument, intended for a segment of the world, specifically the English-speaking North American one, ever more important for the future of world Catholicism.

For Catholic and non-Catholic readers in the English-speaking world, where Catholic movements of the evangelical type are increasingly flourishing, the usefulness of this book is essentially twofold. First, it allows us, *from a historical point of view*, to draw a comparison between three different moments of the organization of the laity in the Catholic Church: the era of Catholic Action (from the 1920s to the Second Vatican Council); the era of the international new Catholic movements (emerging between World War II and the 1970s); and the current era, characterized by new Catholic movements that have

permanently lost their ties with the first period. The second reason is to offer—*from a theological perspective* and to theologians and those who observe the Catholic Church phenomenon with an eye on the history of the Church—an insight into the ecclesiological effects of the first wave of the new Catholic movements on the balance, typical of Catholicism, between institution and charism. This rationale can be useful for the purpose of forming an opinion on Catholic evangelical movements, even though this book does not directly address that topic, mainly because it takes its start from the perspective of the movements of European origin that eventually spread worldwide.

But this book also tries to address the issue of the role of Catholics (organized in different ways: movements, associations, theological traditions) at the intersection between Church, society, and the power of the State and government. The history of the ecclesial movements is relevant to the issue of the possibility for Catholics to influence “the world” without being completely absorbed by politics but also without being constrained by the institutional mechanisms of the Church.¹ In other words, the phenomenon of the ecclesial movements is a key aspect of a larger issue at the core of the debate about the nature of Catholicism in a secular age. There is no doubt that one of the typical features of our time is a political disillusionment that sometimes becomes an antipolitical sentiment—the ultimate secularism. Catholicism is part of this phenomenon, and in some cases the new ecclesial movements fit the current trend of a Catholicism that undermines political commitment in favor of a reevaluation of Christian charity in a world made of small, almost utopian, communities. Engagement with the world or withdrawal from politics, inclusiveness and radical evangelism, social gospel and political homelessness—these are issues that are, in different measures, part of the spiritual and intellectual experience of the ecclesial movements between the end of the nineteenth century and today. This book is just a brief history of different answers to those questions.

¹ I refer here to the debate with William Cavanaugh and Michael Baxter: see Massimo Faggioli, “A View from Abroad,” in *America* (February 24, 2014): 20–23; Michael Baxter and William T. Cavanaugh, “Reply to ‘A View from Abroad’ by Massimo Faggioli,” in *America* (April 21, 2014): 8; Katie Grimes, in *America* (April 28–May 5, 2014): 6.

I would like to express my gratitude to Enrico Galavotti, Alberto Melloni, Joseph Ruggieri, and Silvia Scatena for the many conversations, friendships, and personal experiences at the John XXIII Foundation for Religious Studies in Bologna between 1996 and 2008.

The English translation of a book that has found many interested readers in Europe and the Spanish-speaking world is the result of Phyllis Zagano's initial interest and curiosity. The department of theology at the University of St. Thomas (St. Paul, Minnesota) has always shown interest in, and patience with, my research agenda. And without my colleagues' support, little of this work would have ever been accomplished. The Vatican II Studies group and the Ecclesiological Investigations group at the American Academy of Religion have become a precious point of reference for my journey.

Special thanks go to Amy Uelmen for all her comments and advice in favor of the "inculturation" of this book in the English-speaking world. My heartfelt thanks go also to Ladislav Orsy, SJ, who gave me the opportunity to present my research on the new Catholic movements at a meeting of the Peter and Paul Seminar at Georgetown University many years ago, in April 2004. Friendships that have developed and accompanied me during the writing of this book include the ones with Kevin Ahern, Thomas Bremer, Kathleen Cummings, Dennis Doyle, Brian Flanagan, Bradford Hinze, Cathleen Kaveny, Gerard Mannion, Mark Massa, SJ, John O'Malley, SJ, James McCartin, Katarina Schuth, Maureen Sullivan, and Terrence Tilley. Their warmth and support have made my transition to America an experience intellectually and humanly irreplaceable and indispensable for the scholar that I strive to be every day.

Particular and sincere thanks to my editor, Lauren L. Murphy, and my translator, Demetrio S. Yocum: their dedication is what the author of a book to be translated in another language always hopes to find.

This book is dedicated to my wife Sarah and our daughter Laura. They always know how to support and share with me their wisdom and grace.

Minneapolis

April 27, 2014

Canonization of St. John XXIII and St. John Paul II



Some of the following chapters have appeared elsewhere. They have been revised and updated for the present book: chapter 2, “Movimenti religiosi,” in *Dizionario del sapere storico-religioso del Novecento*, edited by Alberto Melloni (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010), 1145–53; chapter 9, “Die neuen geistlichen Bewegungen in der katholischen Kirche und die Priesterausbildung in den Seminaren,” *Una Sancta. Zeitschrift für ökumenische Begegnung* 66, no. 2 (2011): 155–63; chapter 10, “Il movimentismo cattolico e l’apologetica dell’inimicizia’ nella chiesa post-conciliare,” in *Tutto è grazia. In omaggio a Giuseppe Ruggieri*, edited by Alberto Melloni (Milan: Jaca Book, 2010), 441–56; chapter 11, “Inclusion and Exclusion in the Ecclesiology of the New Catholic Movements,” in *Ecclesiology and Exclusion*, edited by Dennis Doyle, Pascal D. Bazzell, and Timothy J. Furry (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2012), 199–213. I wish to thank the publishers and editors of these volumes for granting their permission to republish my articles here in their expanded and updated version.

PART 1



The History of the Movements



Reasons for a Historical Survey of the Movements

Undoubtedly, it is not an easy task to categorize the new Catholic movements. Neither their self-definition nor the way they are defined in the Code of Canon Law are of much help. The lowest common denominator can be summarized as a group of faithful Catholics who share the following characteristics: “A charismatic founder, a particular charism, some form of ecclesial reality or expression, a predominantly lay membership, a radical commitment to the Gospel, a form of teaching or training closely linked to its charism, a specific focus and a commitment to bringing its own emphasis or understanding into the life of the Church.”¹

As a result, the new Catholic movements that are the subject of this book are movements such as Communion and Liberation, Opus Dei, the Community of Sant’Egidio, the Focolare Movement, the Neocatechumenal Way, the Cursillos de Cristianidad, the Regnum Christi Movement, the Legionaries of Christ, and others originating and emerging within the Catholic Church between the 1920s and 1970s still active and present beyond their country of origin. In Europe, these movements are often presented as the pope’s new “elite troops,” the

¹ Charles Whitehead, “The Role of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities in the Life of the Church,” in *New Religious Movements in the Catholic Church*, ed. Michael A. Hayes (London and New York: Burns & Oates, 2005), 18. See also Brendan Leahy, *Ecclesial Movements and Communities: Origins, Significance, and Issues* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2011), 14–22.

new vanguard, or the newly created “battalions of the Church”—but also as “divisions within the Church.”

But what are these new “divisions”? A similar question at the beginning of the twenty-first century is no longer posed by dictators concerned about the political-diplomatic structure of the twentieth-century Church: there is no longer someone like Joseph Stalin who sardonically seeks information on the *force* capability of Catholicism. The way to measure or “weigh up” the Church has changed. Even before the absence of dictators interested in a clash with the Church of Rome, there is no longer the old Catholic Church, nor its diplomacy, always active on the international political Cold War chessboard. And gone is the Church’s patient dialogue and silent martyrdom that clashed with a programmatically hostile political system and that symbolically confirmed the end of “Christianity” as a European political and religious power.

The question on the divisions of the Church instead arises in the context of the political and cultural debate on the *militant* fiber of the Church—and more generally on the role of the Churches and Catholicism in the Western world—in the age of globalization and the meeting between civilizations and religions, in the political, cultural, and symbolic arena at the dawn of the third millennium. But the divisions of the Church are also clearly visible by taking into account the polarizing effect of the movements, the recurring tensions among them—and with the bishops.² In theological debates in the Church, as in the public sphere, the “movement” element (here intended as “group of Christians that presupposes a firm commitment and a rule of life that may be habitual or in written form”) is increasingly taking the characteristics of a cumbersome novelty, to which, along with the acknowledged signs of dynamism, the most various labels, hardly ever sympathetic or benevolent, are also attached: radicalism, fundamentalism, papalism and ultramontanism, intellectual narrow-mindedness, sectarianism, ecclesiastical careerism, thirst for power, or worse still.³

² As we have recently seen, for example, between 2010 and 2011 with the very acute tension between the bishops of Japan and the Neocatechumenal movement.

³ For an example of this “conspiracy mythology,” see Gordon Urquhart, *The Pope’s Armada: Unlocking the Secrets of Mysterious and Powerful New Sects in the Church* (New York: Prometheus Press, 1999).

Some consider the ecclesial movements at large as negative, while others simply weigh the risks of one or the other group. Extremely rare are those who intend to offer an assessment without being moved by disparaging or apologetic intents. This reason only provides ample ground for a better understanding of the historical dimension of the phenomenon.

Similarly, in the contemporary Catholic Church the phenomenon of ecclesial movements proves to be central to the understanding of some fundamental dynamics. Not only the large growth of these realities but also the rise of their influence, beyond the numbers they express, represent a phenomenon that reveals a shift of the center of gravity: in the relationship of the Catholic Church with the secular or post-denominational society; in the balance between local dimensions (parish, diocese) and the personal (or virtual) reality of being Church; in the relationship between theology, liturgy, and devotional styles in the contemporary Catholic Church; in the connection between the European “roots” of the Catholic movements and their “branches” in North America, Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

The transitions represented by Pope John Paul II’s death and the beginning of Benedict XVI’s pontificate in April 2005 and by the resignation of Benedict XVI in February 2013 followed by the election of Pope Francis on March 13, 2013, require that the question about the historical range of the post–Vatican II pontificates be also directed to investigating one of the most important and tangible aspects of the Catholic Church at the end of the twentieth century. It is necessary to ask whether the visibility of the new ecclesial groups also translates into a real impact and concrete significance of the phenomenon of the movements within the Church. Conversely, we cannot fail to investigate the movements as a relevant phenomenon given that they have often been idealized, demonized, and at times trivialized, not only in consideration of their numerical size and social rootedness, but also in evaluating their forward thrust over the long-term period of the post–Vatican II Catholic Church and the future of the Church in the twenty-first century.⁴

⁴ See John L. Allen Jr., *The Future Church: How Ten Trends Are Revolutionizing the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 425.

To answer these questions, it is essential to:

- research the historical roots of the phenomenon both in the distant past and in the present more close at hand
- deconstruct both the foundational myths as well as the anti-movement propaganda
- identify the common/different socio-political coordinates between the various movements
- put forward the current trends and possible objectives but also the tensions between the ecclesiological model “papacy–bishops–ordained ministry” and the more “fluid” one embodied by the movements

The reality of the movements visible on the scene of international Catholicism goes deeper and far beyond most of the well-known names always in the public eye, at the funerals of popes, or at Catholic rallies in the streets of Rome and elsewhere. Christianity in the twentieth century, better still in the second half of the twentieth century, has taken on the traits of a reality “on the move,” that is, dynamic and driven—whether one accepts or not the pro-movement line of the Church—by progressive forces as well as conservative ones: relatively visible and solid, variously structured, with or without labels, yet in a way all characterized by a “dialectical” or antagonistic relationship (either deliberate or spontaneous, depending on the history of each of these movements) with the local and episcopal structure of the Catholic Church.

The historiographical and mass media *vulgata* (official version)—both the apologetically slanted and the more critical one—claims that John Paul II’s long pontificate gave a decisive boost to the development of these particular associations within the Catholic Church. Equally accepted is the view of the pontificate of his successor, Benedict XVI, who would have harvested the fruits, sharing the same strategic vision that animated the Polish pope in his relationship with the movements,⁵ albeit

⁵ Substantially different opinions on John Paul II’s pontificate can be found in Alberto Melloni, *Chiesa madre, chiesa matrigna. Un discorso storico sul cristianesimo che cambia* (Turin: Einaudi, 2005); Daniele Menozzi, *Giovanni Paolo II. Una transizione incompiuta?* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2006); Giovanni Miccoli, *In difesa della*

without the charismatic leadership style of his predecessor.⁶ It is a way of interpreting the relations between the two pontiffs, which, however, does not necessarily correspond to the recent history of the movements within the Roman Catholic Church. Rather, it shows how the “movement” element has become a kind of litmus test that does not reveal the index of bitterness of the object observed but that of the observer.

In any case, the movements today seem to have become the index to evaluate the health of the Church and its ability to draw the faithful at moments and in associations different from the local units of parishes and dioceses created in ancient times on the model of the Roman Empire, strengthened in the Middle Ages during the clash with princes and emperors, and perfected on the model of Church that came out from the Council of Trent. Through the movements, observers can analyze one of the most evident, but at the same time “unreadable,” Church phenomena characterized by a light but not random structure and essentially difficult to exploit by the media beyond the sporadic events of mixed political-religious street gatherings.

The topic has its own present-day relevance, which not only derives from the superficial and partial view of the popular press on the numerical strength or the political orientation of each ecclesial movement. Rather, it stems from passing the mark of the end of a century, the twentieth century, which has seen dramatic changes in the “identity” of the Catholic Church as well as the Christian Churches.⁷ It is therefore useful to offer an overview of the journey of the movement phenomenon within the Church, bearing in mind that the movement element, intended as dialectical or transversal to the institutional and historical Churches, cuts across contemporary Christianity as a whole, through languages and continents. It certainly affects Catholicism in a particular way, given the particular historical and institutional model on which it exerts its influence.

fede. La chiesa di Giovanni Paolo II e di Benedetto XVI (Milan: Rizzoli, 2007); Andrea Riccardi, *Giovanni Paolo II. La biografia* (Cinisello B.: San Paolo, 2011).

⁶ See Joseph Ratzinger, “I movimenti ecclesiali e la loro collocazione teologica,” in *I movimenti nella chiesa*. Atti del convegno mondiale dei movimenti ecclesiali (Rome, May 27–29, 1998), Pontificio Consiglio per i Laici (Vatican City, 1999), 23–51 (English translation: “The Ecclesial Movements: A Theological Reflection on Their Place in the Church,” *Communio* 25 [Fall 1998]: 480–504).

⁷ See *Le chiese del Novecento*, ed. Giuseppe Ruggieri (Bologna: EDB, 2003).

Hence, it is worth asking, at the onset of this study, some questions that are at the heart of the matter and that should guide the path of inquiry on ecclesial movements.

1. Christianity's Return to Being a "Movement"

During the course of the twentieth century we have started to understand the importance of the "movement" phenomenon as a co-essential element of Christianity, together with the *societas perfecta iuridice* ("juridically perfect institution") of the Counter-Reformation shaped by the Council of Trent (1545–63).⁸ The Church of the Counter-Reformation, which in many ways remained unchanged from the end of the Ancien Régime until the Second Vatican Council (1959–65),⁹ saw itself as a legal institution that already consisted of its own institutional, political, and sociological legitimacy and therefore, from the outset, excluded the possibility of an extraordinary element, or one that was not yet legally regulated with regard to the canonical norm of the institutional church. This new awareness of the movement element was the result of the crisis of this Tridentine and post-Tridentine ecclesiology, which between the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century had begun to show its significant delays regarding the cultural, social, moral, and epistemological evolution of the Western world. On the one hand, these delays stemmed from the Church's institutional self-referentiality; on the other, from its loyalty to the political and social system of the Ancien Régime.

A few decades later, in the 1970s, the post-Vatican II era, and with the advent of sociological, ethnographical, and anthropological disciplines devoted to the study of Christian origins,¹⁰ the studies of

⁸ See Giuseppe Alberigo, Massimo Marcocchi, Claudio Scarpati, *Il concilio di Trento. Istanze di riforma e aspetti dottrinali* (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1997); John W. O'Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013).

⁹ See *Storia del concilio Vaticano II*, 5 vols., ed. Giuseppe Alberigo (Leuven-Bologna: Peeters-Il Mulino, 1995–2001); English version: *History of Vatican II*, 5 vols., ed. Giuseppe Alberigo, English ed. Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995–2006); John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008).

¹⁰ See Claudio Gianotto, "Il movimento di Gesù," *Concilium: "Movimenti" in the Church*, ed. Alberto Melloni (2003/3): 36–51; Massimo Faggioli, "Studi sui movimenti

early Christianity as a movement, the so-called Jesus movement, offered a “radical” reading (focused on the true roots of Christianity) of a phenomenon, that of the “new movements,” that in those years was beginning to take a more visible and concrete shape. It also captured the desire for reform in the postconciliar Church.

To what extent have the contemporary ecclesial movements revived the Jesus movement or the apostolic and post-apostolic moment? In speaking of language, symbolism, ecclesiology, liturgy, to what extent do contemporary ecclesial movements draw on a religious movement born before the fateful union of Christianity with the Roman Empire and, ultimately, with political power? To what extent are the current ecclesial movements the offspring of the golden age of the Catholic Action tradition during the central decades of the twentieth century? Are they to be considered as a continuation of this tradition or a replacement of the basic theological, social, and institutional aspects of the typical form of lay association within the Catholic Church?

In other words, is the Catholic movement culture a conscious (or unconscious) development of the “end of the Constantinian era” (dating back to the covenant between the Church and the Western powers, initiated by Emperor Constantine), as suggested by the Dominican theologian Marie-Dominique Chenu?¹¹ Or is the movement culture in the Church instead to be interpreted as the rejection of the idea of leaving behind the Constantinian era and the attempt to recover on the social and communal level what had been lost on the political level?

What are the effects of the impact of the movements on the Church as a whole? Are they “stirring” the Catholic Church and bringing innovations that go beyond the traditional Catholic socio-communal model? Or are the movements contributing to slowing down a Catholic Church that seems to have forgotten and shelved that period of opportunities and dialogue represented by the 1960s and 1970s?

religiosi,” in *Dizionario delle scienze storico-religiose nel Novecento*, ed. Alberto Melloni (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010), 1145–53.

¹¹ See Marie-Dominique Chenu, “La fine dell’era costantiniana,” in *Un concilio per il nostro tempo* (Brescia: Querininana, 1962), 46–68 (original French edition: “La fin de l’ère constantinienne,” in Jean-Pierre Dubois-Dumée et al., *Un concile pour notre temps* [Paris: Cerf, 1961], 59–87). See also Gianmaria Zamagni, *Fine dell’era costantiniana. Retrospectiva genealogica di un concetto critico* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011).

2. Framing the Movement

It has become more difficult to try to assess and describe ecclesial movements. Apart from this reason, in the limited space of this book the reader will surely not find a new categorization of the movements, according to the different types of membership and leadership, theological-spiritual guidance, political orientations, and areas of expansion. There are already many definitions for “Catholic movements” based on sound analytical and theological foundations, among which are the following:

- reform, social, and Church movements¹²
- movements of pilgrims and converts¹³
- lay, spiritual, and ecclesial movements¹⁴
- movements of institutional, spiritual-emotional, and ascetic-sectarian mobilization¹⁵
- movements of spiritual and apostolic commitment, of Christian animation of temporal realities, of Christian inspiration that operates in temporal realities¹⁶
- movements of spiritual and apostolic intra-ecclesial commitment, and movements of Christian animation of temporal realities¹⁷

A brief overview of the typologies makes it clear that within ecclesial movements there are today many different and contradictory

¹² See Alberto Melloni, “Movimenti. De significatione verborum,” *Concilium: “Movimenti” in the Church*, ed. Alberto Melloni (2003/3): 13–34.

¹³ See Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *Le pèlerin et le converti. La religion en mouvement* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999).

¹⁴ See Jean B. Beyer, “De motu ecclesiali quaesita et dubia,” *Periodica* 78 (1989): 437–52.

¹⁵ See Gianni Ambrosio, “Cammino ecclesiale e percorsi aggregativi,” in *La Scuola Cattolica* 116 (1988): 441–60.

¹⁶ See Agostino Favale, *Movimenti ecclesiali contemporanei. Dimensioni storiche, teologico-spirituali ed apostoliche*, 2nd ed. (Rome: LAS, 1982; 4th ed., 1991); Agostino Favale, *Segni di vitalità nella Chiesa. Movimenti e nuove comunità* (Rome: LAS, 2009).

¹⁷ See Piersandro Vanzan, “Elementi comuni e identificativi dell’attuale fenomeno movimentista intraecclesiale con cenni a rischi e speranze,” in *Fedeli Associazioni Movimenti* (Milan: Glossa, 2002), 187–206.

elements among them: traditionalist nostalgias and liturgical aestheticisms (not only of the supporters of the preconciliar Mass in Latin, such as the New Liturgical Movement); anxieties of Church reform in an ecumenical sense; revivals of clericalism; contractors of pastoral and social services at the expense of the government and the state; strong personalities' protagonisms and antagonisms; political and ecclesiastical powers—and abuse of powers. At the heart of a movement there is often the simple need to live the Gospel outside the imposed or socially inherited conventions, in communities that go beyond “associative” boundaries and symbolic dictates of a specific creed.

For this reason, one of the central questions for understanding the various orientations, worldviews, and visions of the Church of these movements remains the articulation of the relationship between the Catholic movement of the early twentieth century and the contemporary movements in terms of referential political ideologies, ecclesiology, types of membership, ecclesial praxis and ecclesiastical politics, explicit goals, and latent functions.

One of the most successful interpretive keys is still that of a transition from a Catholic movement of *lay mobilization* (with all the hierarchical dependencies on the ecclesiastical authority) between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the *theological movements* for biblical, ecumenical, liturgical, patristic *ressourcement* of the early twentieth century and the *postconciliar movements* that have excluded from their horizon the urgency of a “reform” (in the institutional sense) of the Catholic Church to engage primarily instead in self-reform efforts guided by the charismatic and spiritual renewal, the service to others, ascetic practices, and the “return to the sources.”

Nevertheless, it is evident that, in order to frame the contemporary ecclesial movements and their distinctive features, the crucial aspect to consider is the legacy and reception (whether conscious or not) of the theology of Vatican II or, conversely, the revival of the intransigent culture typical of the late nineteenth century.

3. Chronology and Historical Framing of the Phenomenon

To identify the “genome” of the ecclesial movements today, we need to take a step forward with regard to the state of the studies currently available: from a sociological categorization it is necessary to switch to a historical approach that seeks to identify not just the “schools” or

the movements' ideological leanings but also the various stages of the formation of this type of magma difficult to classify.

The centrality of the question of the movements in the post-conciliar Church and at the turn of the twenty-first century is clear to all. In a climate such as the present one, where sociology and ethnography have largely replaced history for the understanding of religious phenomena, the risk is to stop at the snapshot taken in different places and at particular times of the religious-political media-friendly presentations of Western Catholicism. The fact is that even the new ecclesial groups, simply labeled as “movements,” have a history that may reveal much about their genesis, their development, their role, and their current configuration.

To begin to understand the phenomenon in its entirety, we need not only a chronology of events, individuals, and their connections but also a historical view able to recognize defining moments as well as disruptions. The enticement to match the history of the movements in the Church with the history of individual pontificates suffers from two pathologies of classic “ecclesiastical historiography”: the sluggishness of the historian, who squeezes every event and phenomenon within the reassuring frame of contemporary pontifical annals, and the myopia typical of those who consider phenomena internal to the Catholic Church as always original, fundamental, and therefore independent from the broader political and cultural phenomena and the “spirit of the age” (from which even the Church can hardly escape). There is a clear need for a historical framing that reestablishes a specific historical development of the ecclesial movements, though without denying the contribution of the popes, thus incorporating them in the larger course of contemporary history.

4. A History beyond the Foundational Myths

A historical view is all the more necessary, considering the subject at hand. Such an approach is essential in order to do away with an exclusively sociological analysis and to leave behind the obstructive mythology represented by both the insiders' apologetic historiography and the hagiography of the founders—products that currently make up the vast majority of the bibliography on ecclesial movements.

Each movement tends to represent itself on the basis of *ad hoc* historical/biographical reconstructions, in most cases the result of cele-

bratory and laudatory approaches. Only a few isolated analyses, fruit of a theological vision faithful to the ecclesiology of Vatican II, diverge from this “internal” or “official” approach. These studies underline the “subversive” potential of the movements within the Catholic Church, almost fearing the re-proposal of the *duo genera christianorum*, that is, the “two kinds of Christians” (clergy on one side and laity on the other side, clearly separated). In this perspective, the programmatic division between clergy and laity has been replaced in our contemporary age by the separation between “ordinary Christians,” namely, the “the loose” laity (unorganized, unaffiliated), and the elite troops formed by the members of ecclesial movements.

Beyond the self-representations or hostile attitudes, which are the effect of conspiracy theories, if it is true that there is a division between the diocesan/parish realities and that of the movements, the map of the positions within the Church is more complex, variable, and reluctant to embrace dogmatic or ideological classifications as well as the contraposition between ecclesial movements and the “Church of Vatican II.”

5. Movements beyond Lobbies

The movement-structure does not fit well into rigid classifications, nor is there a correspondence between movement-structure and its position in the “political spectrum” of the contemporary Church. One of the fascinating aspects of the study of the movements lies largely in the discovery of the variety, flexibility, and adaptability of the movement-structure in relation to the typology of its members (clergy and laity together), its agenda (spiritual, ecclesiastical, political, humanitarian), its position inside or outside the administrative system of the Catholic Church or the local churches and their institutional bodies, and its referential theological and political cultures.

A historical look free from the need to retrace the exploits of a single association or founder allows us to look at the movements as divisions of the Church or vanguards of mobilization but also as a source of *division* (possible or real) within the Church. Hence, “division” is intended both as specific fields of the apostolate and also as the divisive effect caused by the movements, seen as compact entities and therefore potentially divided or “total institutions” of a contemporary Church still struggling to find moments and places of synthesis, sharing, and

communion. From this point of view, it is increasingly important to keep in mind that the different initial conditions of Catholicism more locally defined (by the cultural environment, the religious landscape of a given area, the legal status of the relations between Church and state, etc.) play a major role on the effects that a Catholic movement has on any given local church. In this sense, the differences between the practical ecclesiology of European Catholicism and that of the non-European Churches are still little explored.

6. The “Spring of the Movements” and the Second Vatican Council

One of the key issues is the link between the event of the Second Vatican Council, on the one hand, and the first new associative experiences in the 1920s and the 1930s together with the blossoming of movements starting from the end of the 1960s, on the other. Enthusiasts claim that the movements are the true “fruit of Vatican II,” in that they are *the* practical implementation of the new ecclesiology of the people of God, of the new theology of the laity, and of a Church open to the world and to young people. Critics draw attention instead to the unrelated nature of certain typical aspects of the ecclesial movement culture with respect to Vatican II: the central role of the charismatic leader, disregard for the authority of the diocesan bishops, and leader-centered and antimodern political culture (which is often accompanied by a totally depoliticized and alienating *Weltanschauung*). Beyond any simplification, the Second Vatican Council plays a central role in the identification and self-identification—explicit or implicit—of the movements.

Even if we take into account the potential added value given by the movements to the reception-rejection of the Second Vatican Council, however, it is important to give to the interpretation of the phenomenon of the movements its own autonomy with regard to the controversy surrounding the council, especially in relation to the protagonists of this controversy. To apply to the movements the “logic of alliances,” pitting “pre-Vatican II nostalgics” against “Vatican II loyalists,” means to hide the incongruities between the official proclamations of loyalty to the conciliar principles and the unconscious yet deep and creative reception (or rejection in some cases) of Vatican II in most of the contemporary ecclesial movements.

7. Ecclesial Movements within the Twentieth-Century Movement Culture

The deep roots of the Catholic movement culture date back to the intransigent culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the beginning of the crisis of the episcopal authority in the government of the Church marked by the First Vatican Council (1869–70), and the recognition of the anti-institutional nature of the Jesus of Nazareth movement as its original feature. But the contributions to the organizational and political culture of the movements in the Church do not come only from the theological and ecclesial world but tap into the political and social culture of Europe and the contemporary Western world as well.¹⁸

The issue touches on the relationship between the origin of the culture of “mass mobilization” in the language and political practice of the first half of the century and the characteristics of the movements in the Church: the leader’s role and group ideology, the relationship between the vanguard and the ecclesial community, and the “representations” of the idea of Church.

For the period between World War II and Vatican II, there is also the question of the existence and nature of the transition from a “movement culture of the elites”—the liturgical, ecumenical, biblical, patristic movements, all originating in Europe and North America, as the vanguard of the openings of the council¹⁹—to a “base movement culture” born in Mediterranean countries (such as Italy and Spain) less marked by the coexistence with other Churches and Christian denominations and geographically and culturally closer to the Roman See. For the subsequent period, we must also ask whether ecclesial movements have anything in common with the outburst of the “revenge of God” that Gilles Kepel located at the beginning of the 1970s in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.²⁰ The decline of the ecumenical dream on the

¹⁸ See Peter L. Berger, *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness* (New York: Random House, 1973).

¹⁹ See Étienne Fouilloux, “Mouvements théologico-spirituels et concile (1959–1962),” in *À la veille du Concile Vatican II. Vota et réactions en Europe et dans le catholicisme oriental*, ed. Mathijs Lamberigts and Claude Soetens (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 185–99.

²⁰ See Gilles Kepel, *La revanche de Dieu: Chrétiens, juifs et musulmans à la reconquête du monde* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1991). English translation: *The Revenge of God*

one hand and the globalization of the religious language on the other encourages people to question the trans-denominational and multi-religious scope of the movement element in the twentieth-century religious world, which has borne some fruits within the Catholic Church. But losing sight of what happened in the global religious landscape of the past few decades would make it impossible to grasp certain parallel and crucial elements.

8. Retreat? Or New Birth?

Both the apologetic and the demonizing views of the movements tend to emphasize the power of these organizations, associating them with a facet of the new strength of the contemporary Church: new spiritual forces, agencies of organized activism, political lobbying, and forms of rejection or non-reception of Vatican II—or all of these elements combined. It is undeniable, beyond the more or less reliable figures that are periodically made public regarding the nature of these groups, that the international expansion of the movements and their development are difficult to trace without referring to the most publicized names and “labels” spread by the media.

Worth asking is whether this phenomenon is after all indicative of a change of Catholicity and of some of its specific “vanguards” or “rearguards.” It is an effort that must be made, in a society more refractory to the language of faith, whereby to “believe” and to “belong” are no longer coextensive but two different entities, where to belong not always presupposes a belief and to believe does not always mean belonging.²¹

Nevertheless, they are two entities that meet at an intersection: less cumbersome than the self-representations of the Catholic kind but broader and more diverse than the theories of both the secularization and part of the de-privatization of religion.²²

God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism in the Modern World; trans. Alan Braley (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994).

²¹ See Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

²² See José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).