

Some Controversial Catholic Movements and the Reaction of Church leadership

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Not the author, but Pope Gregorio XVIII of the Palmar de Troya Catholic group with his girlfriend Nieves. (photographer, Pepe Marín)

Introduction

When compared to some European Catholics, United States Catholics appear to have little knowledge and awareness of “Catholic Cults in Our Midst”. This could be due to American traditions and laws which promote freedom of expression, freedom of religious observance and strict separation of Church and state, leading to a hands-off policy. In Europe, on the other hand, some governments, such as France, Belgium, Austria and Catalonia, have official agencies to monitor suspiciously harmful groups, and legislation has been drawn up to control various forms of manipulation and coercion, with emphasis on abuse of the vulnerable.

It could also be that the American public is more interested in exotic-see present *Wild Country* series on Netflix- or violent cults, leading it to dismiss more peaceful and subtler brands. The Catholic cult vacuum could also arise from American Catholics being obsessed for the past fifty years with

doctrinal controversies surrounding the acceptance and interpretation of Vatican II Ecumenical Council reforms, leading to acrimonious discussions and a splitting of the Catholic Church into two opposing bands, roughly along political party lines. Recently, the conservative Catholic stance has been called “Catholic Sectarianism”¹, a terminology that does not help clarify our present issue.

Attempting to fill the vacuum, this paper presents a smorgasbord of Catholic movements and groups which have come to the attention of researchers during the past four decades and of which the American public is only scantily aware. Interventions by Church authorities are mentioned in some cases.

What is also unique about this paper is that the groups in question are mostly mainstream Catholic, possessing some form of official Church approval. They are not maverick or rebellious associations. In fact, many have sprung up as a reaction against progressive movements and are fiercely loyal to the pope and Catholic authorities.

Many Catholics, and particularly the Vatican, tend to assume that “The Church”, because of its divine foundation and guidance, plus its doctrinal orthodoxy, is free from cults, sects and other questionable groups; these being considered an outside threat to be guarded against. The Trojan Horse in the City of God² is usually associated with dangerous progressive theologians and doctrines, such as Liberation Theology and Base Communities, zealously held at bay by Rome’s watchdog, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF)³. When the official Church does focus on “Sects and New Religious Movements” the lion’s part of the study is concerned with “Spiritual and Theological Discernment”.⁴

Regarding serious research about itself, the official Catholic Church is sadly wanting, deaf to the Founder’s quote: *Physician, heal thyself* (Luke 4,23). Dean Hoge, a leading U.S. sociologist of religion, stated on Oct. 13, 1999 that the U.S. Catholic Church is well behind other religious bodies in research on itself. “The Catholic world is less researched. There is less attention, less money, less energy devoted to organizational and social science research among Catholics than among any other religious group I know,” he told a gathering convened by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, known as CARA.

It is refreshing to note that the present pope, Francis, has been the only pope since Vatican II (1962-65) willing to take a critical look at himself⁵, of his role and of the institution, albeit to a limited extent.

Truthfully, although “Rome”, the Roman Curia -as in central Catholic administration- has been mostly sanguine regarding New Religious Movements (its term) in the Church, some local bishops have taken the time and had the courage to question groups that they consider harmful to the faithful under their care. An example of this being how several American dioceses have banned the *Legion of Christ* and its *Regnum Christi* lay movement from operating within their borders because of concerns regarding sneaking into dioceses, recruiting practices, secrecy and use of “spiritual direction” (guidance/influence) given to minors⁶. Catholic bishops in general throughout the world seem to be much more vigilant than the Vatican in monitoring harmful groups. For example, the Conference of French Bishops in 2013 created a Bureau for Sectarian Excesses (*Bureau des Dérives Sectaires*) within their department of Pastoral for New Beliefs (*Pastorale des Nouvelles Croyances*)⁷

From time to time a Catholic institution, such as the *Opus Dei*, comes under public scrutiny, but the accusations are not always on target -as in *the da Vinci Code*- and the association usually meets the accusations with blunt denial or points to their doctrinal orthodoxy, Vatican approval and canonization of its founder. Inside Catholic circles there may be rumblings of criticism against Spanish Fr. Kiko Argüello's *Neo-Catechumenal Way* supplanting regular parish life. Otherwise, cults and sects are considered alien to Holy Mother the Church.

Recently, however, priests, professors, professional psychologists and sociologists have begun to question Catholic complacency going beyond doctrinal orthodoxy (*modus credendi*) and questioning the way of life (*modus operandi*) of some Catholic associations accused of harming the members spiritually, psychologically physically and sexually.

Newer Catholic movements begin to appear in the news and catch the perceptive eye: Italian foundations like *Communion and Liberation* and the *Focolare* Movement. Once we Catholics and Christians have the courage to scratch the surface, other groups, large and small, appear on the horizon as being potentially harmful to their members. Can we find more questionable Catholic movements operating in the USA, Canada and further afield "in the heart of the Catholic Church"?

A 2017 French book, *From Bondage to Freedom*⁸, listed fourteen harmful Catholic communities in Europe, some of which have spread to the US and Canada, and five of which have already received official interventions.

The paper will explore and describe these questionable Catholic groups and movements and describe official interventions in order to heighten Catholic and Christian awareness, and maybe even spur Catholic official leadership to be more pro-active in monitoring and controlling suspect groups.

The writer foresees that more concerned Catholics will raise their voice and demand to bring their "Catholic cult" next door in for questioning.

Characteristics Associated with Cultic Groups

Before going any further, we need to agree upon some criteria which would indicate that a particular groups or association may be harmful to some of the members some of time. We will use the "classic" list of cult characteristics as reviewed by Characteristics Associated with Cultic Groups - Revised

"Concerted efforts at influence and control lie at the core of cultic groups, programs, and relationships. Many members, former members, and supporters of cults are not fully aware of the extent to which members may have been manipulated, exploited, even abused. The following list of social-structural, social-psychological, and interpersonal behavioral patterns commonly found in cultic environments may be helpful in assessing a particular group or relationship.

1. The group displays excessively zealous and unquestioning commitment to its **leader** and (whether he is alive or dead) regards his belief system, ideology, and practices as the Truth, as law.
2. **Questioning, doubt, and dissent** are discouraged or even punished.

3. **Mind-altering practices** (such as meditation, chanting, speaking in tongues, denunciation sessions, and debilitating work routines) are used in excess and serve to suppress doubts about the group and its leader(s)
4. The leadership dictates, sometimes in great detail, **how members should think, act, and feel** (for example, members must get permission to date, change jobs, marry—or leaders prescribe what types of clothes to wear, where to live, whether or not to have children, how to discipline children, and so forth).
5. The group is **elitist**, claiming a special, exalted status for itself, its leader(s), and its members (for example, the leader is considered the Messiah, a special being, an avatar—or the group and/or the leader is on a special mission to save humanity).
6. The group has a polarized **us-versus-them** mentality, which may cause conflict with the wider society.
7. The leader is **not accountable** to any authorities (unlike, for example, teachers, military commanders or ministers, priests, monks, and rabbis of mainstream religious denominations).
8. The group teaches or implies that its supposedly exalted **ends justify whatever means** it deems necessary. This may result in members' participating in behaviors or activities they would have considered reprehensible or unethical before they joined the group (for example, lying to family or friends, or collecting money for bogus charities).
9. The leadership induces feelings of **shame and/or guilt** in order to influence and/or control members. Often, this is done through peer pressure and subtle forms of persuasion.
10. Subservience to the leader or group requires members to **cut ties with family and friends**, and to radically alter the personal goals and activities they had before they joined the group.
11. The group is preoccupied with **bringing in new members**.
12. The group is preoccupied with **making money**.
13. Members are expected to devote **inordinate amounts of time to the group** and group-related activities.
14. Members are encouraged or required to live and/or **socialize only with other group members**.
15. The most loyal members (the “true believers”) feel there can be **no life outside the context of the group**. They believe there is no other way to be and often fear reprisals to themselves or others if they leave (or even consider leaving) the group.

Note: This checklist has gone through many revisions since the author first presented it in the 1990s. Many people have contributed suggestions and feedback to the various revisions, in particular Carol Giambalvo, Janja Lalich, Herb Rosedale, and Patrick Ryan. The current, slightly modified version of this checklist was published in *ICSA Today*, 6(3), 2015.⁹⁹ During our report

we will attempt to point out some of the groups/cult-like characteristics, noting which number characteristic they might represent. (cc #)

Judith Tyding's awakening

Despite the general unawareness-neglect, there *have* been attempts over the past twenty plus years to bring the issue of cults inside the Catholic Church to the public's and to the Hierarchy's attention. Catholics in good standing have been raising the alarm for decades. Worthy of mention is Judith Tydings watershed study which appeared in the 1999 ICSA Journal¹⁰. We draw heavily from Tyding's article at the beginning of this presentation because it focused on abuse and manipulation in Catholic groups. Her study began with:

"Shipwrecked in the Spirit: Implications of Some Controversial Catholic Movements.

Three recently published books charge that certain officially sanctioned Roman Catholic movements manipulate and abuse at least some of their members and may be cults (sects) within the Church. The books describe the personal experiences of former members of some Catholic movements and call on the Church¹¹ to pay more attention to reports of abuse within these movements. The books are reviewed and questions concerning Catholic movements are examined to increase understanding of this understudied subject, prompt Catholic pastoral responses where appropriate, and, because no definitive conclusions can be made at this time, stimulate dialogue and an integrated program of historical, sociological, and psychological research."

The Big Six

The three publications¹² reviewed by Tydings examine Clara Lubich's *Focolare*, the *Communione e Liberazione* movement (both of Italian origin), Kiko Argüello's *Neo-Catechumenate* (Spain), French Catholic *Charismatic Communities*, US Charismatic Communities (with which Tydings is familiar and into which she delves extensively) and the *Opus Dei*.

1. French Charismatic Communities,

Apropos, Tydings writes: "According to Les Naufragés, the French bishop's conference in 1994 listed forty charismatic communities in three hundred locations. "Les Naufragés" says that the three most important monastic-type communities are *les Béatitudes* [The Beatitudes], *le Pain de Vie* [Bread of Life] and *le Verbe de Vie* [Word of Life], which have members, vowed to poverty, chastity, and obedience, as well as several thousand associate members. Of the communities not of the monastic type, according to "Les Naufragés", the largest were *l'Emmanuel*, *les Fondations du Monde Nouveau*, and *le Chemin Neuf*, which account for about five thousand active members."

We revisit some of these below in "Questionable Catholic Groups in Europe" and elsewhere. For now, suffice it to say that the founder of *les Béatitudes*, Bro Ephraim, had his priestly faculties

suspended in 2008 and was thrown out of the community he founded because of serious sexual offenses.¹³

2. American Charismatic Communities

Tydings in her 1999 article, comments:

“A number of American Catholic charismatic covenant communities have come to grief in the last fifteen years (Lennon clarifies, i.e. 1984-99), lending credibility to the testimony of the authors of *les Naufragés*. The local Ordinaries of the Archdioceses of Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Newark, and St. Paul-Minneapolis, and the dioceses of Steubenville, Cleveland, and Lansing have had to address serious problems with local charismatic covenant communities. The media and/or some former members have called the communities cults. At least one Catholic bishop has used the word “cult-like” (underlined by Lennon) to describe a charismatic community (Haferd, 1985, B2). Under the title, “The Cult Next Door,” Baltimore Magazine (Kiger, 1994) discussed the Lamb of God (LOG) Catholic charismatic covenant community in Baltimore, Maryland, which at its peak in the late 1980s numbered more than 250 families (p.36)”.

It must be noted that in the 1980s and 1990s these questionable Catholic groups often blamed “the anti-cult movement” for criticisms and the bishops’ interventions. The Lamb of God community blamed problems on former members who had embraced Adult Children of Alcoholics and Twelve-Step programs.

Despite its troubled beginnings, growing pains, the Catholic Charismatic Movement seems to have found its feet and acceptance in the official Catholic Church.¹⁴ The Catholic Charismatic Renewal National (USA) Service Committee is monitored by Catholic authorities and is alive and vibrant in this country as evidenced by their webpage.¹⁵ Conservative/Traditional Catholics frown on this movement and find fault with some doctrinal and liturgical aspects. Some European charismatic religious communities have been plagued by **cc #1**

- abusive founders and leaders: case in question, Brother Ephraim, *Les Beatitudes*

3. The Opus Dei

When we Google today “Controversial Catholic groups”, the Opus Dei pops up. Tydings states that the OD is a group that has been under scrutiny since its inception and is the subject of Maria del Carmen Tapia’s exposé, *Beyond the Threshold*. Tydings summarizes the movement’s history: Spanish priest, Msgr. José María Escrivá de Balaguer, founded Opus Dei (God’s Work) in 1928. Opus Dei sees its purpose as enabling Catholic lay people to live an intense Catholic Christian life in the world. Opus Dei has rapidly increased in numbers, with members studying and living according to Escrivá’s writings, primarily his 1939 book *Camino*, which was translated into English as *The Way* (1985). In 1950 Opus Dei was the first Catholic group to receive the official designation, “secular institute,” a status that differentiates it from religious orders and congregations. In 1982 Pope John Paul II granted Opus Dei the status of “personal prelature,” which means that it has the

status of a sort of floating diocese, a church jurisdiction without any boundaries. Opus Dei is the only group with that designation in the Church.

In 1992, Pope John Paul beatified Opus Dei founder Msgr. Escrivá only fifteen years after his death, a move surrounded by much controversy and discussed by Newsweek senior writer Kenneth Woodward in his book *Making Saints* (Woodward, 1996). Beatification is the second of three steps towards a person's being declared a saint." Escrivá was made a saint, "canonized", by Pope John Paul II on October 6, 2002¹⁶, seeming to close the door on any serious reform of the Opus Dei.

Regarding María del Carmen Tapia's testimony re living for many years as a prominent member of the Opus Dei, Tydings remarks:

"Some might wonder if a person who left Opus Dei so many years ago could have anything useful to say about the current state of the organization. Tapia believes that her story reveals the inner nature of Opus Dei. In her preface she makes a profound point that must be kept in mind as people ponder how the new movements can be studied, and perhaps checked, reformed, and better overseen by the Church. She writes: "The Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset distinguishes between the defects of political systems due to abuses and those due to uses as the result of the normal functioning of the system. That distinction may help us understand that the problems of Opus Dei stem from its normal functioning. My testimony attempts to portray part of its normal functioning'."

Tydings continues: "Another work lending credibility to Tapia's story is British author Michael Walsh's *Opus Dei, An Investigation into the Secret Society Struggling for Power within the Roman Catholic Church* (Walsh, 1992). Among other topics, Walsh includes some accounts of departures from Opus Dei, including Tapia's story. Walsh concludes his investigative book with the observation that similarities between Opus Dei and some of the NRMs is striking.

It is not hard to make revealing comparisons between organizations such as the Unification Church—the Moonies—and Opus. However, such comparisons do not always work: Opus has throughout its life sought, and eventually received the approbation of the Holy See. On the face of it, the notion that Opus might be classed as a new religious movement or sect operating within Roman Catholicism would seem paradoxical and highly unlikely. Paradoxical or not, the question has to be addressed: is Opus Dei a reputable part of Roman Catholicism or is it a sect at odds with the Church which gave it birth? (Walsh, 1992, pp. 173-174)"

A psychological critique of the Opus Dei by Alberto Moncada, PhD, appearing in an ICSA Newsletter, contends that cultic features appeared more clearly in the third stage of the organization's evolution¹⁷. Moncada's article's bibliography updates info on the Opus Dei through 2006. He states: "The contention that Opus is a sect started to spread when the Belgian Parliament solicited a report on sects in 1997, in which Opus Dei was listed."

Lennon organizes Moncada's thoughts pointing to the following cult-like characteristics

- **cc # 1 Excessively zealous and unquestioning commitment to the founder** who was and is still called El Padre (The Father). The Father is now a canonized saint!

- **cc # 4: Leadership dictates how members should think:** “The militant fundamentalism of Escrivá led him to show internally, with his typical choleric character, his violent opposition to the Second Vatican Council. This produced the first flight of intellectuals, symbolized by the departure of Raimundo Pánikkar, the only theologian worthy of such a name that Opus has had.”
- **cc # 8: The ends justify the means.** “At the same time two axiomatic principles, which were clearly sectarian, were being spread in the interior of the organization — “the end justifies the means” and “intentions prevail over moral codes.” These ideas would shape the moral character of the members and especially of the directors. As Dennis Dubro, an ex-numerary from the United States with experience in the economic management practices of Opus alleged, the directors do not hesitate to conduct business that is clearly immoral or illegal or to manipulate information in the same manner.
- **cc # 11 Preoccupied with bringing in new members.** “Having children close to them in their early years has contributed to allegations concerning the sectarian proselytizing of minors, which is very often a conspiracy between teachers, confessors, and the children’s parents.”
- **cc # 12: Making money.** “... This generated the creation of a sort of mafia and many people got close to Opus for personal interests. The organization and some members engaged in questionable business practices, and this produced the first criticism of Opus Dei (both inside and outside of the Church), allegations of public immorality and conspiring with the Franco government. Hence was born the bad reputation of Opus in international public opinion that cannot be stopped by the vast amounts of people, money, and energy that the organization invests in countering it.”



4. Focolare and the official Catholic Church today:

“On the tenth anniversary of the death of the founder, Chiara Lubich, Pope Benedict sent a message to the movement.

Chiara Lubich passed away on 14 March 2008, at the Focolare headquarters at Rocca di Papa, near Rome, following a long illness.

By Robin Gomes

March 14, 2018

Wednesday marked the 10th anniversary of the death of Chiara Lubich, the charismatic Italian Catholic lay woman who founded the worldwide Focolare Movement for spiritual and social renewal, in order to build a more united world based on respect and esteem for diversity.

Chiara Lubich passed away on 14 March 2008, at the movement's headquarters at Rocca di Papa, near Rome, following a long illness.

She was born Silvia Lubich in Trent, northern Italy, on 22 January 1920. During World War II, while bombs were raining down on her home town, the 23-year old Lubich had a powerful religious experience, which led her to consecrate herself to God.

On 7 December 1943, she changed her name to Chiara, after St. Clare of Assisi. This date is considered the beginning of the Focolare movement.

Through the Focolare (small communities of lay volunteers) she helped contribute to strengthening communion within the Catholic Church and initiated important work for Christian unity, interfaith dialogue and dialogue with contemporary culture. Today amongst its members are also many who profess no particular religion. Pope Benedict XVI had sent a message for Lubich's funeral held in the Roman Basilica of St Paul's Outside the Walls, describing her as a "woman of intrepid faith, a meek messenger of hope and peace".

Speaking on the occasion of her 10th death anniversary, Vatican Secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin recalled Lubich and her movement's obedience and docility to the Church, even in very difficult times. He particularly highlighted her two contributions. While deepening and enlivening the Marian and apostolic character of the Church, she also made a strong call to unity, so that "they all be one," that the world may believe. This, Cardinal Parolin said, she accomplished through love for one another just as Jesus taught us.

Today, the Focolare Movement is present in 194 countries, and there are about 120,000 people who are part of its structures (members) and one and a half million people who adhere to it or sympathize with it." (Vatican News)¹⁸

References to Focolare can be found on I.C.S.A. website, specifically in the following article published in ICSA TODAY:

*I Really Believed That This Way of Living Was Right*¹⁹

Testimony from the Netherlands

"... transcript of an interview, conducted in March 2010, with Monique Goudsmit, in the Dutch magazine *Vriendin*[a] (No. 10, March 10, 2010). [1] Religious sects have often been in the news in recent years. After twenty-five years, Monique succeeded in breaking free from the strict Catholic movement, Focolare[b]. Monique published a book about her experiences: *Bevrijd – Over Identiteitsverlies en de Lange Weg naar Heelwording* (Liberated—About Losing Identity and the Long Road to Healing). (2009). ISBN 978-94-90075-10-1. schrijven@calbona.nl

"A few years ago, I felt a strong urge to write a book. I had gone through such a strong personal growth that I wanted to put those experiences on paper. But I also wanted to skip a certain period

of my life—a time I didn't want to think back upon. However, when I plunged into the work I discovered that those years were indispensable to my story because there lay the roots of my journey of self-discovery.

For twenty-five years I have tried to erase Monique. As a girl of ten I came in contact with the Focolare, a Catholic movement from Italy founded in 1943. My father, with whom I had a strong tie, had been to a gathering. I still recall the fire in his voice when he talked about it. It was as if he had found a great happiness there. What exactly, I didn't understand, but I was very curious. Shortly thereafter he died, completely unexpectedly.

At the ICOSA Conference in Trieste, Italy, July 2013 a former member of the Focolare, Renata Patti, expressed her concerns re the founder and the work²⁰

A book on the Internet, Dec. 20, 2012 is dedicated to a long-serving member of the Focolare who committed suicide close to the Focolare center where she had lived for fifteen years²¹: “To Marisa Baù, a 48-year-old Italian *Focolarina* who recently committed suicide at the end of 2011 and was found hanged close to the residence in Montet, Fribourg, Switzerland.”

The Focolare/Sect web page uses the Lifton criteria to respond in the affirmative:²²

“We believe the Focolare has some sectarian aspects or tendencies and we will give the proof of it.

We have studied the Focolare organization closely and compared this to a study by G.A. Galanti Ph.D. who investigated the Unification Church (Moonie-sect). Our study discovered over 10 different techniques of mind control that are being used by both organizations. These techniques have been described by Robert Jay Lifton in 1961 in his excellent book *Study of brainwashing*. We are convinced that there is clear proof of the sectarian character of the Focolare organization. Let us give you a few examples:

1. Milieu control

The environment where people have their education is a closed one. We found at least 19 so called new villages where Focolare people live and work together to get a two-year education in the doctrine of the organization. In these cities the group is the only reality and members take on the beliefs, values and behaviors of the new culture of Focolare.

2. Mystical manipulation

Members are convinced that the group is working toward a Higher purpose, to bring the world to God and God to the world. They believe that they are different because they live their Ideal instead of only having it. People who join focolare are convinced that they can make a difference in the world.

3. Sacred science

An aura of sacred science surrounds the belief system. This is institutionalized in the ABBA school. The focolare dogmas are presented as Truth. This truth has been revealed to the leader of focolare, Chiara Lubich, and it is not falsifiable.

5. Comunione e Liberazione



Communion and Liberation Lay Movement (CL, from its Italian name)²³, founded by Italian priest, Don Luigi Giussani 1922-2005, was another of Pope John Paul II's favorite groups. Its web page, found in endnote, is stunningly attractive and clear. It was another of the New Religious Movements, more recent than the Opus and the Legion, but with the same charisma for attracting young people, revitalizing and making the Church relevant. From the official page:

“Communion and Liberation is present today in roughly ninety countries on all the inhabited continents, and is guided by Father Julián Carrón, who succeeded Father Giussani after his death in 2005.

No form of membership enrollment is involved, but only the free participation of individual persons. The basic instrument for the formation of those who belong to the Movement is a weekly catechesis which is called the School of Community.

The Movement's official publication is the international monthly magazine *Tracce-Litterae Communionis*, published in English as *Traces*.”

A striking element in the definition is that, apparently, membership does not require promises, vows or community living. A factor that might seem to avoid the pitfalls of other Catholic NRMs.

However, there is a “fraternity” of members: “Among those born by the Movement, this is the most representative group of the charism given to Father Giussani. The Fraternity of CL is a universal Association of believers recognized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity on February 11, 1982. These are adults who freely commit themselves to live following Christ and the Church according to the method provided by the founder.” Still a little vague. *Aleteia*, a Catholic blog tell us a little more in a recent article²⁴: “While it has the largest presence in Italy, CL exists in about 80 countries worldwide. In keeping with its focus on freedom, CL does not require membership to regularly take part, though there are members who make up a Fraternity, consecrated members known as *Memores Domini*, and the *Fraternity of St. Joseph*, as well as an order of priests and a congregation of Sisters.”

A stern criticism of Communion and Liberation appeared on March 15, 2013 in the National Catholic Reporter online.²⁵

Official Vatican description of the Communion and Liberation²⁶.

Criticism of CL has focused above all on the power they have accumulated in Italy, unflagging allegiance to the Catholic Hierarchy and to the pope, their conservative political involvement and cases of corruption. This writer has yet to find well founded concerns re specific cult-like features. Some criticism is represented by the following excerpt from a prominent European specialist focusing on CL's apparent reinstatement of Catholic and pontifical power in Europe: "Thus, for opinion, the accent seems to be placed on the Church's general moral role and on its prophetic capacity. But without denying its existing solicitude for exercising this role, the Church makes at the same time a detour which facilitates the re-establishment of its internal disciplinary power, perhaps even of a new form for "Christendom." Is this not, for example, the best way of understanding the Roman recognition of "Opus Dei" as well as "Communione e Liberazione," two movements which, beyond their strictly religious aspects, aim to control the general functioning of society, taking particularly the economic and media sectors as their starting points (K. Dobbelaere, 1991)? Opus Dei, which was declared "personal prelature" in 1982 and whose founder Escrivá de Balaguer has just been beatified, clearly affirms its project of restoring traditional Christian values and the old orthodoxy. In this way it places itself at the service, including financial service, of Rome, by infiltrating first and foremost the media sector, higher education, and the service sector, particularly banks (Walsh, 1989). As for Communione e Liberazione, it is a mass movement which develops a social, economic and political project seeking to offer an alternative to capitalism which is considered to be sapping Christian culture (Abbruzzese, 1989). Certainly, these two movements do not limit their activities to Europe, but it is clear that they find there a privileged field of action, underpinned as much by the evocation of the "Christian Europe of the Middle Ages" as by the denunciation of lost values, stolen as they were by the materialism common to both liberalism and Marxism."²⁷

Salvatore Abbruzzese would appear to be the most qualified critic of CL; his criticism, however, focuses on CL's doctrine and combative mission in the world.²⁸ Our reference points to a review by prominent Belgian Catholic theologian, Gustave Thils, who appears to be favorable to the Abbruzzese (1989) critique: *Communione e Liberazione. Identité catholique et disqualification du monde* (Communion and Liberation. Catholic Identity and disqualification of the world.)

Further study is needed on the CL's lay consecrated branch *Memores Domini*, four of whose female members take care of Pope Benedict XVI at his residence in the Vatican.²⁹

Some areas of concern regarding CL could be:

cc

- 1. excessively zealous **commitment to the founder**, Don Giussani. (Needs further study.)
- 5. **The group is elitist**; on a special mission to save humanity.
- 8. Some members are accused of using illicit means (corruption) to promote the movement; **the end justifies the means**

6. The Neo-Catechumenal Way



On June 28, 2002 the Vatican official announced approval of the statutes governing this movement.

However, a brief Google search brings up many articles which show that this group is controversial in Catholic circles (Appendix 2).

It remains to be seen whether this is because of some of the group's liturgical practices (ways of celebrating the Mass and distributing Holy Communion, etc.) or because of what could be considered cult-like characteristics. One of the NCW's critics, Chuck White, on his blog *The Thoughtful Catholic*, has published an article where he applies the Langone-Lalich thirteen criteria to the organization and finds similarities.³⁰

cc:

1. The group is focused on a living **leader** to whom members seem to display excessively zealous, unquestioning **commitment**. There is an unhealthy cult of personality around the founder of the NCW, Kiko Arguello.
2. The group is preoccupied with **bringing in new members**. Is anybody really disputing this?
3. The group is preoccupied with making **money**. Kiko's "New Aesthetic" is quite a cash cow, as many are now beginning to see. [Click here](#) to read more about this.
4. **Questioning, doubt, and dissent are discouraged or even punished.** Catechumen's are to listen. Questions are not typically entertained at catechetical sessions.
5. The leadership **dictates -sometimes in great detail-** how members should think, act and feel [for example: members must get permission from leaders to date, change jobs, get married; leaders may prescribe what type of clothes to wear, where to live, how to discipline children, and so forth]. There are many anecdotes regarding the excessive control the catechists have. One mother on Guam was told to have her 13year old son circumcised. Members must ask permission to take off-island vacations. Young men are encouraged to marry "a daughter of Israel" (i.e. a member).

6. **The group is elitist**, claiming a special, exalted status for itself, its leaders and members [for example: the leader is considered the Messiah, or an avatar; the group and/or the leader has a special mission to save humanity].
7. The group has a polarized **us-versus-them mentality**, which causes conflict with the wider society. Some examples: Kiko's followers do not worship with the rest of the faithful on Guam, and their youth do not travel with Guam's faithful to World Youth Day.
8. The group's **leader is not accountable** to any authorities [as are, for example, military commanders and ministers, priests, monks, and rabbis of mainstream denominations].
9. The group teaches or implies that its supposedly exalted **ends justify means** that members would have considered unethical before joining the group [for example: collecting money for bogus charities]
10. The leadership induces **feeling of guilt in members** in order to control them. Many anecdotes exist in our local community to assert this. Catechists exert incredible pressure on those who wish to leave, suggesting that their salvation is at risk.
11. Members' subservience to the group causes them to **cut ties with family, friends, and personal group goals and activities** that were of interest before joining the group. Guam's families have a tight-knit structure, and countless report have come in describing how NCW membership erodes this structure and its obligations.
12. Members are expected to **devote inordinate amounts of time** to the group. Absolutely true. Once active, members no longer have much, if any, time to participate in the events of the wider community.
13. Members are encouraged or required to live and/or **socialize only with other group members**. There seems to be an attempt to replace Guam's tight-knit family structure with the NCW community.

7. Legionaries of Christ and its Regnum Christi Lay Movement.



Because of its controversial nature, its size and its influence, the Legion/Regnum group must be considered the seventh major controversial Catholic Movement.

Tapia's book on her life in the Opus Dei, *Tras el Umbral* (Beyond the Threshold), was published in the original Spanish in or before 1992. Mexican Nelly Ramírez, a prominent member of the Legion-of-Christ-affiliated lesser-known Movement, Regnum Christi, would publish her testimony, *El Reino del Marcial Maciel, la vida oculta de la Legión de Cristo* (Marcial Maciel's Kingdom, the Hidden Life of the Legion of Christ) in 2011. Ramírez left the Regnum after directing a house for "Consecrated Señoritas" in León, Guanajuato, Mexico for seven years. As a superior she was privy to the impressive financial system and the deceptive fund-raising system the Legion of Christ has in place. She describes blind obedience, snitching among the members and always putting up a good front. She also identifies the power holders and their roles in the secretive organization.

For many detailed testimonies and articles on the Legion of Christ go to the ReGAIN webpage, www.regainnetwork.org which has been following the congregation since early 1990. ReGAIN has found that the Legion fulfills many of the features of a cult as described by Lalich & Langone.³¹ Analysis by I.C.S.A., and by cult experts Steven Hassan and Rick Ross confirm this. I.C.S.A. has welcomed former Legionaries to its conferences to explain their experiences, réflexions and analyses regarding their former order. Active members of the order have also been invited to the conferences to express their opposing views but have never availed themselves of the opportunity. I.C.S.A. executive director, Dr. Michael Langone, has expressed his views and concerns on more than one occasion³².

In 2015 Spanish language *Legioteaks* sprung up on Facebook as a forum for disaffected former Legionaries to network and express themselves. It presently has more than 2,000 members. Another recent source critical of the Legion, Spanish language *Veritas Liberabit Vos*, (The Truth will set you Free) tracks Legion steps and missteps.

In 2003 Jay Dunlap, at the time acting spokesperson for the Legion, penned an article for Catholic Answers entitled *Are there Cults in the Church?*³³ The logical riposte to this would be: it all depends on how you define "cults." Mr. Dunlap answers his own question with a resounding: there are no cults in the Catholic Church because the Catholic New Religious Movements have passed scrutiny by the Vatican. The article contains no bibliography or concrete references. See Appendix 1 for a fuller review of this article.

Six years later, Juan Manuel Escovedo would write "Yes, there can be Cults in the Catholic Church"³⁴ in answer to Mr. Dunlap's article. Mr. Escovedo bases his affirmation on an insightful study by canon lawyer, Peter Vere. The study, "... 20 signs of trouble in a new religious group"³⁵ can be considered a classic to detect sect-like tendencies in Catholic groups.

A stern appraisal of the Legion of Christ is reflected in young Dubliner Michael Ledden's MA thesis at Trinity College: *Can we apply Cult language to the Legion of Christ and its Lay Movement Regnum Christi*, 03/22/2102.³⁶ Ledden, who has family ties with the Legion and the Regnum, cites interviews and documents to turn in a "guilty" verdict.

ReGAIN followed up two years later with *How did the Legion of Christ and Regnum Christi Movement become associated with the term "cult"?*³⁷ using the Lalich-Langone checklist while gathering several historic sources and real events to bolster its contention.

Questionable aspects of the Legion of Christ and Regnum Christi Movement

Cc #

1. **Multiple abusing founder to whom old-guard members still profess veneration and presently attempt to reinstate.**
8. Leadership cadre appear to have assimilated his modus operandi, including **the end justifies the means and manipulative procedures.**
11. Main focus on **recruiting**
12. **Obsession with fundraising.**

In 2002, this writer formulated his critique of his former religious order and presented it at an I.C.S.A. conference in Enfield, CT, USA. The presentation was overshadowed by the testimony of Legion founder, Marcial Maciel's sexual abuse victim, Juan Jose Vaca. However, the article was accepted by I.C.S.A.³⁸ for inclusion in its archives and also appeared on the www.regainnetwork.org page. When the Legion sued ReGAIN in August 2007, it demanded this article be taken down as part of the settlement. The areas pin pointed by Lennon were:

Besides all the written rules, the Legion operates in the context of several unwritten, undergirding principles, such as

Cc

2. **Do not question** the Legion Way and what you are told by your superiors. Never publicly or privately express **doubt. Dissent** is not allowed.
3. One Clearly Defined Meditation Method was imposed on all members, which led to **mind-numbing**. Members time was constant non-stop and strictly regulated allowing no down time for personal reflection. Lennon stated: "The Legionary's daily regimen is a constant stream of activities, prayer exercises, and formulas designed to keep him constantly enthused about his calling to the Legion."
4. The article also illustrated the myriad of rules, norms, and recommendations that dictated in great detail **how members should think, act and feel...** Etc.

Smaller Questionable Catholic Groups

Questionable Catholic Groups in Europe

A French review of a 2017 book called *De l'Emprise a la Liberté* (From Bondage to Freedom), entitled *La Verité vous rendra libres* (The Truth will set your Free) by Pascal Hubert,³⁹ will take us back to some groups mentioned in the Tydings essay. It will be interesting to see whether any of the groups mentioned in 1999 are still of concern to watchful French Catholics.

The reader is already familiar with the difficulty in terminology discussed at length by Tydings, how in the USA we talk about “cults” whereas in romance language countries the term “sect” is more common. For the French, a recruit falls under the spell, enchantment, entrapment, *l'emprise*, of the cult. The French language has its own terminology for cults. Controversial and harmful groups are called *dérives sectaires*: translated, this means “sectarian harmful excesses” which this writer finds very enlightening. In this article, “sect-like aberrations” is preferred.

The book, written by a theologian, a philosopher, a psychologist, a lawyer, new evangelization experts, and a canon lawyer - is centered on what the writers believe are the most harmful groups in the official Catholic Church: Focolare, Opus Dei and the Legion of Christ.

“And even more astonishing than the above (proliferation of varied cults since the 1960s) is this other reality, until now almost unknown to the public, of serious sect-like aberrations in the very heart of the Church.

The aim of *De l'emprise a la Liberté. Dérives sectaires au sein de l'Église. Témoignages et réflexions*, (From Bondage to Freedom. Sect-like aberrations in the heart of the Church) is precisely to break this other taboo, using the testimonies of former members who have left three ecclesial movements: Focolare, Opus Dei and Legionaries of Christ.”

The article describes the book’s methodology and how it analyzes these groups from a variety of viewpoints, pointing out similarities and differences. It initially mentions other problematic French-based groups -which we can compare to Tydings list- some of which are active in Canada, the USA and other countries which have come to the attention of observers:

“The serious and wide-spread reality of sect-like aberrations was made known by the French press in 2013. Remember how the president of the French episcopal conference, Monsignor George Pontier, answered a group of some forty victims of sexual and spiritual abuse at the hands of fourteen communities, movements and religious communities: *Béatitudes*, *Famille monastique de Bethléem*, *Legion of Christ*, *Regnum Christi*, *Fraternité Eucharistein*, *Emmanuel et Fraternité de Jesus*, *Soeurs mariales d'Israel et de St Jean*, *Ancien collaborateur du père Labaky*, *Memores Domini* (Communion and Liberation), *Communauté de Nazareth* (Community of Nazareth), *Opus Dei*, *Points-Coeur* (Heart Points), *Communautés Saint Jean* (Communities of Saint John) and *Fraternité diocésaine de Saint-Jean-de-Malte* (Diocesan Fraternity of St. John of Malta).

Only five of the fourteen above-mentioned communities were the subject of canonical process or public exposure:

- *Béatitudes* (Beatitudes), suspension of their founder, Brother Ephraim in 2008),
- *Legion of Christ*, suspension of the founder, Fr. Maciel in 2006),
- *Points-Coeur* (Heart-Points), canonical punishment of the founder, Fr. Thierry de Roucy in 2011
- *Communauté Saint-Jean* (Community of St. John) -accusations officially acknowledged in May 2013 against the founder, Fr. Phillipe- and the
- *Anciens Collaborateurs du père Labaky* (Former cooperators of Fr. Labaky), forbidden to celebrate the sacraments in June 2013.”

What do the authors find wrong with Focolare, Opus and the Legion?

“At the heart of these movements the most troubling aspect is that they spring from a dogmatic theology based on devotion to pain (Fr., *le dolorisme*) and blind obedience.” (op. cit. p. 2). That qualification is not sufficient to classify such movements as sect-like. If the article accuses these three movements of cultism, how is cult-like aberration (Fr., *dérive sectaire*) defined and which criteria appear to fit these movements?

“According to France’s Interdepartmental Mission to oversee and combat sect-like aberrations (acronym Miviludes), it has to do with the “corruption of freedom of thought, opinion or religion” characterized by “the employment by an organized group or an individual (...) of pressures or techniques aimed at creating, maintaining or exploiting in a person a state of psychological or physical subservience, depriving them of part of their free will.”

The characteristics usually associated with a cult-like aberration are the following:

- adulation of founder or foundress, Similar to **cc 1.** •
- totalitarian authoritarianism, Similar to **cc 4.** • blind obedience to the superiors, Similar to **cc 2.**
- depersonalization, loss of identity and autonomy, Similar to **cc 10.**
- recruitment pressure, Similar to **cc 11.** •
- harassment, Similar to **cc 15.**
- proselytism, Similar to **cc 11.**
- members informing on each other, (Not mentioned specifically in cc)
- being kept busy to prevent critical thinking, Similar to **cc 4.**
- unhealthy relationship to money, Similar to **cc 12.**
- moral and sexual abuses, (Not mentioned specifically in cc) • verbal and physical threats to members wanting to leave. Similar to **cc 15,**

Based on numerous testimonies, Sister Chantal-Marie Sorlin, circuit judge in Dijon and chief of the CEF (French Episcopal Conference) sect-like aberrations bureau, has drawn up four major criteria:

1. Personality cult; the founder takes the place of Christ See **cc 1.**
2. Cut-off from the outside world: from family and from outside news. See **cc 10**

3. Mental manipulation: fast recruitment, pressures, inducing guilt (“doubting is from the devil”), blurring the line between internal and external forums, forbidden to criticize the leaders in the name of holy obedience... See **cc 2**. 4. Practical incoherence (money, morals...) See **cc 8**.

One single criterion is not enough to define a group as cult-like aberration but when you have a handful of these signs you can start thinking of a pathological group.” (op. cit. pp. 7-8).

Regarding the Focolare and its spirituality, the article continues: “in the Focolare movement the central idea is unity.... It is necessary to state that, concretely, this ideal of unity means renouncing one’s freedom of thought and action (See **cc 2**). The “me” is despicable; only “us” is valued in this community. However, in practice, this “us” is in fact the personal thought of the foundress, Chiara Lubich, who ho identifies herself with Christ: ‘Every Focolare soul must be an expression of me and nothing else (...). (See **cc 1**). Unity is therefore the unity of one single soul: mine, the soul of Jesus among you, which is me’ (from a 1950 letter). This is not the unity of autonomous and free persons but rather a fusion, a confusion within the foundress’ “me” ...

Such a concept of Unity can only create an idolatrous worship of the foundress and her writings.” (op. cit., p. 8-9)

Regarding the Opus Dei, *The Truth*...tells us:

“In the Opus Dei ranks, the central idea is holiness in ordinary life. Here, too, the idea is quite seductive. But in practice, the demand for holiness pass through blind obedience to the power of the clerics to reach this impossible goal. (See **cc 2**).

A reading of *The Way*, the founder’s central work, makes it clear: ‘Be strong -be virile, -be a man. And then ... be an angel’. Members are also told to: ‘love, bless, sanctify and glorify suffering.’” (op. cit. p. 9). To the outsider, the latter appears to be a form of masochism.

“For the Legion of Christ (Lennon adds: and its motto, *Thy Kingdom Come!*) the central idea is the Evangelization of the World to hasten Christ’s return. In real life, this ideal turns into a frenzied proselytism, leaving little space for freedom of conscience and personal maturation.”

(See **cc 3** and 13).

Here the article refers to a French source of information critical of the Legion of Christ, *Pastorale Nouvelles Croyances et Dérives Sectaires 72, Les Legionnaires du Christ*.⁴⁰

Some lesser known Catholic groups



Community of St. John

The Community of St. John is a religious institute founded by Dominican *Father Marie-Dominique Philippe* in 1975. Their habit is composed of a grey tunic and a scapular similar to the black habit of Benedictine), with a rosary to the waist. Contemplative sisters wear an additional white veil and apostolic sisters, a gray veil.

Since 1986, the Community of the Brothers of St. John has been a religious institute of diocesan right depending on the bishop of Autun, under the authority of the Catholic Church.

We met this group above in the Hubert article: “Communauté Saint-Jean (Community of St. John) -accusations officially acknowledged in May 2013 against the founder, Fr. Phillippe...” The present director of the group acknowledged in 2013 “lapses” of the founder, Fr. MarieDominique Phillippe:

<May 20, 2013

The Community of St. John has acknowledged that its founder, Father Marie-Dominique Philippe, had improper relations with women under his spiritual direction.

Established by Father Philippe in 1975, the Community of St. John grew rapidly, particularly among traditional-minded Catholics in France. Father Philippe led the group until he suffered a debilitating stroke in 2001. Upon his death in 2006, he was praised by Pope Benedict XVI for a life “entirely given to the Lord and to his brothers.”

This community spread to the USA (diocese of Peoria, IL, etc.).

However, the new head of the Community, Father Thomas Joachim, has told members of “convergent and credible” reports that the founder violated his commitment to chastity.>⁴¹

AVREF, a French association monitoring cult-like tendencies in Catholic groups has published a “Black Book” containing a variety of concerns regarding the group, including undue influence and co-dependence, regarding the Communities of St. Jean (Brothers called *pétit-gris*, sisters of active life, and sisters of contemplative life)⁴².

Fr. Marie-Dominique’s brother, also a dominican, Fr. Thomas, asexually bused young women under his pastoral care, too. Fr. Thomas helped Monsieur Jean Vanier found *L’Arche* communities for the

mentally handicapped. Mr. Vanier has minimized the offenses of Fr. Thomas and refused to express true concern and compassion for the victims.

The founder spiritually, mentally and emotionally manipulated and sexually seduced many young female members of the community using his doctrine of the “mystical love between Jesus and his mother.” The Black Book also contains numerous testimonies of the founder’s inappropriate sexualized behaviors with young male members of the community. Because of the poor boundaries between members there are reports of pedophilia and homosexuality among the “Brothers.”⁴¹

The AVREF Bulletin no. 18, 1st Quarter 2004, cited by angelqueen.org, applies its own criteria to the Communities of St. John:

- “Who wields the power in this group? If there are in each branch at least some rules of functioning more or less well adapted, they are hardly used, and the real power is held

by a few insiders who have total allegiance to the person of the founder, Fr. MarieDominique Philippe. This power is wielded in the name of Church and of God himself. Many rules imposed by Church authorities to curb the power of the superiors are not met... (See **cc 1**.)

- Who leave? The holder of knowledge was the founder of the Brothers of St. John who remained in leadership as Prior General until 2003. ... there is no room for free speech, any form of foreign ideas is suspect. ... (See **cc 2**).
- This has outraged many teachers in the community; some have resigned, others would not agree to publicly acknowledge the founder’s authority in education and have been praying to put an end to his orders.
- What is the religious life like? Constant heavy demands on those who enter the religious life leads to physical and neurological exhaustion, leading them to criticize and lose their bearings and their analytical capacity...⁴³ (See **cc 3** and **13**).
- The analysis states that the training system leads to many mental health problems: lack of time for oneself, overwork, lack of inner freedom, weakening by guilt, not being good enough. Some disturbances lead to sexual abuse, rape, homosexual activity, depression and multiple admissions to mental hospitals. (See **cc 9**)

Another French language monitoring group, *prevens sectes*, has voiced concern about the group.

Despite all the concerns mentioned in a variety of sources, the Community of St. John continues unhindered by the Vatican. The American web page of the “Brothers of St. John” speaks glowingly of its expansion to thirty countries and several US states.⁴⁴

Bishop Mc Mahon of Brentwood, England, praised the order. Bishop Benoit Rivière of Autun (France), who oversees the community, said Fr Philippe “had fragilities which take nothing away from the grace he has as founder or from the mission of his congregation.”⁴⁵ And just to complicate things a little more, there is another similarly named controversial group in the Catholic Church.

The Society of St. John

-not to be confused with “The Society of St. John the Evangelist”, an Anglican order.



“Fr. Carlos Urrutigoity, the founder and acknowledged leader of the Society of St. John, claims that the vision for the Society and the City of God came to him when he was teaching at St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary in Winona operated by the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX). In May 1997, the SSPX-ordained priest was expelled from the Winona seminary ostensibly because he wanted to found a new religious order.

After drifting from one diocese to another, the charismatic Fr. Urrutigoity, Father Ensey and a handful of seminarians from St. Thomas were taken in by Bishop James Timlin of the Scranton Diocese, and the Society of St. John (*Societas Sancti Ioannis*) was born.

On May 24, 1998, Bishop Timlin, with the blessing of Rome, gave his canonical approval to the new society. Six months later he ordained two new priests to the SSJ, Fr. Basel Sarweh and Fr. Dominic Carey” in: Engel, R. (2005) *Exploiting Traditionalist Orders, The Society of St. John*.⁴⁶

“On March 21, 2002, a million-dollar civil sexual abuse lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania naming as defendants the Society of St. John based in Shohola, Pa., two of its founding members, Father Carlos Roberto Urrutigoity and Father Eric Ensey, the Diocese of Scranton, Bishop James C. Timlin, the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter headquartered in Elmhurst, Lackawanna County, Pa. and St. Gregory’s Academy also located in Elmhurst.[2]” (ib.) The Diocese of Scranton settled the lawsuit in 2004 for more than \$400,000. It also sent Urrutigoity and Ensey to The Southdown Institute, an organization in Canada, for a detailed psychological evaluation.

On November 19, 2004 the bishop of Scranton, PA, Mons. Joseph Francis Martino issued a canonical decree of suppression against the Society of St. John. The decision to suppress the Society was based primarily on financial grounds and the SSJ’s inability to achieve its stated aim in the six-years of its existence. The decree was published in the diocesan paper, *The Catholic Light*, on November 25, 2004.

Bishop Martino has since turned the matter over to the Holy See, which will have the last word on the SSJ.

“VATICAN CITY (RNS), 2017, Pope Francis is sending a cardinal and a bishop to Paraguay to investigate the activities of a priest previously accused of sex abuse in Pennsylvania, the Vatican’s diplomatic envoy to the Latin American country said.

The cardinal and the bishop will visit the Diocese of Ciudad del Este, in the country’s east in late July, said papal nuncio Monsignor Eliseo Ariotti.

They will likely look into the activities of the Rev. Carlos Urrutigoity, an Argentinian-born priest accused of sexually molesting minors when he served as a priest in Scranton more than a decade ago.

Urrutigoity is now second in command in Ciudad del Este and his career advance has provoked widespread debate among local bishops as well as opposition from the victims’ support group SNAP.”⁴⁷

“By Josephine Mckenna | Religion News Service July 30, 2014

VATICAN CITY — The Vatican has ordered a Roman Catholic diocese in eastern Paraguay to remove a priest accused of sex abuse in the U.S. and to restrict the activities of the bishop who hired him.

Pope Francis sent a cardinal and an archbishop to investigate Carlos Urrutigoity in the diocese of Ciudad del Este. The two men visited the country July 21-26.

The removal is the latest demonstration of the pope’s “zero tolerance” of clerical abuse, and it suggests priests suspected of child abuse in one country can no longer find shelter in other countries.”⁴⁸

Fr. Urrutigoity is presently hiding out in the city of Mendoza in his native Argentina.

Summarizing the founders problems:

- deceitful fundraising, including loans under false pretenses and See **cc 12**
- blatant pedophile and homosexual activity.⁴⁹ See **cc 1**

“Bishop Timlin approved their plan, even though he had not run background checks on any Society of St. John members, nor had he reviewed their seminary formation records.

If he had, perhaps he would have been spared the surprise of reading a February 1999 letter from Bishop Fellay, superior general of the SSPX, warning him that Urrutigoity had approached the bed of a Winona seminarian named Matthew Selinger twice “for obvious dishonest acts.” Fellay informed Timlin that Urrutigoity was “accused of a similar action” in Argentina—“with a seminarian who is now a member of the Society of St. John.” But what disturbed Fellay the most was that Urrutigoity “had a strange, abnormal influence on the seminarians and priests, whom he seemed to attach to his brilliant, charismatic personality.” One of the reasons Fellay rejected Urrutigoity’s proposal to establish the

Society of St. John within SSPX, he explained, was this “gurulike attachment between the disciples and their leader.” If Timlin wanted to investigate further, “we are at your disposal,” Fellay wrote, promising that Selinger was “ready to state under oath the facts mentioned above.” Eventually Selinger would.²⁵⁰



Heralds of the Gospel



The writer was contacted by a former member of this organization in 2014 who expressed his concern after a female friend had just taken her perpetual vows with this association. He was surprised that this controversial group was approved by the Vatican. A cultish association, TFP, after the death of its founder, transformed itself into the Church approved *Heralds of the Gospel*.

Wikipedia: “The Heralds of the Gospel (Portuguese: *Arautos do Evangelho*; Latin: *Evangelii Praecones*, abbreviated to EP)[1] is a Roman Catholic International Association of Pontifical Right based in Brazil.[2] Founded by Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, the organization is active in 78 countries.[3]

The Heralds of the Gospel are a successor organization to the original Brazilian *Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property*, and also claim heritage to the beliefs of its founder, Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira. They were created on 21 September 1999 but were only recognized as an “International Association of Pontifical Right”, the first established by the Holy See in the third millennium, on the liturgical feast of the Chair of St. Peter, 22 February 2001.²⁵¹

Known for their outfit, similar to a short tunic, with a big red and white cross on the chest, and boots like those of jockeys (see photo), the Heralds have spread to 78 countries, count many vocations, involve thousands of young people, and were supported by Slovenian Cardinal Franc Rodè, at the time when he was Prefect of the Vatican Congregation for Religious.

Comentado [JL1]:

The group is under Vatican investigation. Among other reports which started the Vatican investigation, are the letters and videos sent to Rome by Alfonso Beccar Varela regarding strange exorcisms. For at least thirty years there were rumors of the existence within TFP and then the Herald, of a sort of secret society, "Semper viva," following the cult of Donna Lucilia Corrêa, Plinio Corrêa's mother, and João Scognamiglio Clá Dias. A cult that the Church does not allow.

The videos uploaded by Alfonso Beccar Varela are frequently moved to other addresses as the Heralds are trying to undertake legal actions in Brazil to delete them for violating copyright laws. The images show exorcisms performed with formulas not approved by ecclesiastical authority, but above all the footage show encounters between the founder and some priests. Videoclips likely taken without the consent of the interested parties, but from which emerge elements that the Vatican authorities intend to deepen.⁵² In October 2017 the Heralds dropped their court case against the dissident on condition that he stop publishing damaging videos of strange exorcisms practices by some members.

A reading of the founder's words and actions might lead one to believe he demonstrates some narcissistic tendencies: he has resigned so that he "can better fulfill the mission that God has personally given him." (See **cc 1**.)

It would seem he makes his mother the object of worship. This is getting the Vatican's attention. The Congregation for Religious (properly speaking, Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life) is to begin an apostolic visit regarding an international association of faithful, the Heralds of the Gospel, the first born in the Third Millennium, and that has had an enormous growth in the past few years. According to confidential internal sources of the Congregation for Religious, presided by Brazilian Cardinal Joao Braz de Avis, and whose Secretary is Spanish Franciscan Jose Rodriguez Carballo, the formation of a commission composed of a bishop, a nun, and a canon lawyer to inquire into the Heralds of the Gospel is imminent.

A search on the Vatican News page found no response to "Heralds of the Gospel". (5/9/2018)



Miles Jesu (Soldier of Jesus)

“Miles Jesu is a Catholic institute of consecrated life founded on January 12, 1964 in Phoenix, Arizona, USA, whose membership comprises lay people and clerics who take religious vows and in addition, since it is structured as an ecclesial family of consecrated life, it also has people in other states of life as members.[1] Miles Jesu is thus a new form of consecrated life in the Church which has been approved by the Holy See in accordance with canon 605 of the Code of Canon Law, which reserves to the Holy See approval of forms of consecrated life other than the traditional forms.[2]” (Wikipedia)⁵³

The founder’s erratic behavior and abusive governing management style together with allegations of sexual misconduct raised concerns (See **cc 1, 4**)

and former members brought their concerns to the Vicariate (diocese) of Rome, spearheading actions which whistleblower, Andrew Sullivan, would describe so eloquently in *Vatican Intervention*.⁵⁴ The Vatican named a “commissary” to investigate and correct abuses. His report reflects a serious attempt by Catholic authorities to rectify a deviant community.

<ROME, JULY 30, 2010 (Zenit.org).-

Here is the statement released Wednesday on the situation of the ecclesial movement Miles Jesu, written by Missionary of the Precious Blood Father Barry Fischer, who is the pontifical commissary and actual superior of the movement.

* * *

1. In the spring of 2007 the Founder of Miles Jesu, Fr. Alfonso Durán, was removed from the office as Superior General, a position which he filled since the founding of the Ecclesial Family in 1964. Due to serious mental and physical health problems he was judged unable to continue in his position by the ecclesial authorities. Almost at the same time, thirteen members of Miles Jesu presented a request for an investigation into the Institute, indicating in their request alleged irregularities in the practices of Miles Jesu. The Cardinal Vicar of Rome, his Eminence Camillo Ruini, in conjunction with the Congregation of Religious, initiated an Apostolic Visitation under the guidance of Fr. Anthony McSweeney, SSS.

During the Apostolic Visitation a number of irregularities and questionable practices came to light in the sworn testimonies of many members. Also, the behavior of Fr. Durán in regard to certain questionable conduct and his exercise of authority came to light. (See **cc 2**).

The conclusion of the Apostolic Visitation was that an outside person should be called in to work with the Ecclesial Family in order to correct these situations and to work with the members in the renewal of the Institute.

2. In a Decree issued on March 25, 2009, Cardinal Agostino Vallini, the Pope’s Vicar for the Diocese of Rome, named me, Fr. Barry Fischer, C.PP.S., as Commissary for Miles Jesu invested with full authority. The mandate is to write a new Constitution which defines the charism, spirituality, and apostolic nature of the Institute; to develop adequate vocational discernment and formation policies (*ratio formationis*); to review the financial policies, and in general to completely revise all its practices and customs.

During the past seventeen months, I have worked closely with the membership in pursuit of this mandate, as well as with former members who have left during or after the Apostolic Visitation (underlined by Lennon). In time it has become clear and undeniable, that the Founder, Fr.

Alfonso Durán, presented erratic behaviors that were totally beyond the scope of the powers given to him (See **cc 7**).

Some members have identified wounds caused by the inappropriate exercise of authority under his leadership. The mistaken sense of allegiance and obedience instilled in the membership facilitated his behavior, which was totally unacceptable and not in accord with the discipline of the Church nor supportable in any way by a healthy sense of consecrated life.

Members who challenged his actions or behavior were often ostracized. The internal discipline and customs of the Institute provided protection for the Founder. It must be said in justice, that most of the members had no idea of the improper conduct of the Founder. Some of the allegations against Fr. Duran are hearsay and have not been verified. However, many are factual. It is important for all that the truth be disclosed, which is the reason for this public statement.

3. During this year and a half of my ministry with Miles Jesu I have come to know and admire the membership and the charitable projects of the Institute. All are filled with love of God and a sincere desire to dedicate their lives to God's service and to the Church. Members are actively involved in the drawing up of new Constitutions and a complete review of the customs and practices of the Institute in the spirit of the Gospel and in fidelity to the teachings of the Church. Particular attention will be paid to developing new government structures ensuring the proper exercise of authority and promoting an active participation and co-responsibility of the members in the life of the Institute (See **cc 2, 7**)

4. In my personal contact with Cardinal Vallini, I perceive that he wishes to assure the membership and also the lay associates ("Vinculum") of his concern and of his assurance that he accompanies them in this process with his prayers and with his conviction that the membership today has a right to a future. We are in close communication as he follows with interest the process of renewal we are undertaking.

5. As Commissary and in the name of the Church, I wish to express my deep concern for all those members, former members and family members who may have been hurt in the past due to the manner in which authority was exercised. I also am personally grateful for those members who had the courage to solicit the intervention of the Congregation of the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, thus bringing to light the situations under question.

6. Though this communication may come as a surprise and be painful to many members, Vinculum members, and friends of Miles Jesu, the truth cannot be hidden. Only in truth can a better and healthier future for Miles Jesu be achieved. The work of renewal is already in progress and there is enthusiasm for the future that the members are building together. United in prayer and in fraternal love, and assured of the Church's motherly care, we will get through this time of difficulty and come to the dawning of a new day. We walk towards that day in hope and trust in God's loving care and protection.

Fr. Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S.

Commissary

Miles Jesu

July 28, 2010^{>55}

The above statement can give the reader an idea of how Catholic authorities now operate in the case of controversial groups. The use of euphemisms and vague expressions pervade the reports. As a close observer of the Miles Jesu and Legion of Christ Vatican investigations, the writer expresses his reservations regarding the thoroughness and clarity of the interventions. Such reservations do not fall within the scope of the current presentation as they would require a separate detailed study.



Sodalitium Christianae Vitae

(From Wikipedia⁵⁶)

<*Sodalitium Christianae Vitae* (SCV), or Sodalitium[1] of Christian Life is a Society of Apostolic Life of Pontifical Right, according to the Code of Canon Law[2] which governs the Latin Rite branch of the Catholic Church. It was founded in Lima, Peru, by Luis Fernando Figari on December 8, 1971. It acquired its present canonical form when Pope John Paul II gave his Pontifical approval on 8 July 1997.[3] The Sodalitium was the first male religious society in Peru to receive papal approval. By 1997 there were Sodalit communities in several countries.

The Sodalitium is composed of consecrated laymen and priests, called "Sodalits,"[4] who live in community as brothers, live the evangelical counsels through perpetual commitments of celibacy and obedience, as well as the communication of goods.[clarification needed][5]

Being recognised as a lay society of apostolic life of pontifical right, the Sodalitium is under the authority of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life of the Holy See. This is the first lay society of apostolic life to be recognised with Pontifical approval.

In 2003 there were accusations of

- brainwashing of young people, and of (See cc 4)
- elitism, conservatism, and (See cc 5)

- authoritarianism. Later there were (See **cc 2**)
- allegations of sexual abuse by the founder Luis Fernando Figari (See **cc 1**)
- There were also detailed allegations about the founder's extreme right-wing and phalangist activism in his youth.[6][7][8][9] Independent investigators commissioned by the Sodalitium reported that
- (The founder) “Figari sexually assaulted at least one child, manipulated, (See
- sexually abused, or harmed several other young people; and
- physically or psychologically abused dozens of others.”[10]

On 30 January 2017, the Vatican's Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life ordered that Figari be “prohibited from contacting, in any way, persons belonging to the Sodalitium Christianae Vitae, and no way have any direct personal contact with them.”[11]

On 10 January 2018, it was announced that Pope Francis had appointed Bishop Noel Londoño Buitrago of the Diocese of Jericó, Colombia as papal commissioner. He will work alongside the papal delegate, Cardinal Joseph Tobin of the Diocese of Newark.[12] Francis said that a verdict would be reached within a month, and was likely to be unfavourable to Figari. Tobin had found instances of sexual and psychological abuse, and

- financial irregularities.[13]”> (See **cc 12**)

The New York Times picked up an AP release and published an article in January 2018, about the order and the founder.

< A 2017 investigative report commissioned by the society’s new leadership found that Mr. Figari was a charismatic intellectual but also “narcissistic, paranoid, demeaning, vulgar, vindictive, manipulative, racist, sexist, elitist and obsessed with sexual issues and the sexual orientation of SCV members.”

The report, by two Americans and an Irish expert in abuse, found that Mr. Figari sodomized his recruits and forced them to touch him and one another. He liked to watch them “experience pain, discomfort and fear,” and humiliated them to enhance his control over them, the report found.>⁵⁷

Servants of Christ Jesus

Web page - <http://www.scjesus.org/>

“2004 The Founding.

At Franciscan University of Steubenville, God unites Matthew, Thomas and Aron in prayer, reflection on the Philippians 2 hymn, and their inspirations for religious life. God inspires Matthew to communicate His invitation to the men “to step out of the boat and to come follow Him.” The men commit to prayer and penance in founding the community. On Ash Wednesday, Matthew,

Thomas and Aron submit their request to become an Association of the Christian Faithful to Bishop Conlon of the Diocese of Steubenville, Ohio. In June, Aron directs Thomas through the 30-Day Spiritual Exercises, during which the Lord reveals and confirms Thomas' call to pursue family life."

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/servantsdenver/>

This group is very recent and small, with little information from outside sources available. At least two members have already left and are questioning the group. Some parents are beginning to express concerns regarding:

- Sudden and strict isolation from family and friends. (See cc 10)
- Sudden change in recruit's behavior and decisions.
- Premature commitment to taking religious vows and other commitments.

Palmar de Troya Catholic Church



The Palmarian Church or Carmelites of The Holy Face, Palmar de Troya

The mother house stands in a town called Palmar de Troya, close to Sevilla, Spain and has caused quite a stir since setting up a center in Ireland.

The hitherto almost unknown church is described by a small group of concerned Irish former members:

“The Palmarian Church is a fundamentalist apocalyptic, off shoot of the Catholic Church.

Founded in Spain in 1969 by Clemente Gomez (an accountant) & Alonso Corral (a lawyer) this cult flourished in the wake of Vatican II, raking in thousands of followers & millions of pounds, to build a huge basilica in the desert & Clemente Gomez to crown himself Pope, taking the name Gregory XVII.

They grew from a small band of followers into a full-blown personality cult with Gomez at its center.

Today, with Gomez dead, Alonso Corral has taken his place. His teachings have become more militant & martyrdom is commonplace in his teachings.”⁵⁸

< So afraid are family members connected to the Palmarians that we have to heavily edit this short report.” Thus, wrote Dialogue Ireland, a cult-watch group, in December 2017:⁵⁹

With the pomp and circumstance of the Palmarian Pope we forget there are hundreds of families who have been robbed of the love and affection of their relatives. The last pope who left and went on to get married in a kind of playboy celebrity event had been vicious in his maintenance of a rigid dress code and laws which left many children and young people psychologically damaged for life.

Instead of the elderly being in the kind of care which they should have had in their homes in their own country, they have come under the undue influence of this cultist organisation been in fact brought into a prison.

One person relates: “The house in ... is sold and now all of them are in Palmar. ... relatives visited them for the allotted time 45 minutes. They said their relatives had got very thin. On their 1st trip they brought out something they like as they both love it. They told them to bring it home as they’re not allowed to have it. They are holed up in rooms to the side of but within the cathedral (walls) ... lives ..., Hibernicus.”

Magnus Lundberg has done a lot of work and this e-book gives all the background required to understand what is going on.

<https://magnuslundbergblog.files.wordpress.com/2017/05/palmar-final3.pdf> > In

the above, albeit partial information, some red flags appear:

- isolation of members from their families cc 10
- indoctrination of young children cc 4
- detailed control of how members dress cc 4

Catholic Documents & Studies

Tydings mentioned and refers to these documents in her essay. Here we would like to explain them to the readership chronologically and more systematically.

*The Vatican Report, Sects or New Religious Movements: A Pastoral Challenge*⁶⁰, May 3, 1986,

is the work of three Vatican secretariats and the Pontifical Council for Culture. This is the first official attempt by the Vatican -coming late- to respond to the “challenge” of such groups; “challenge”, perhaps, being a euphemism for “threat of winning over our members.” The document is extremely vague and tentative. One interesting statement was found by the author which helps us understand the Catholic Church’s stance at the time of tentative document’s publication:

“In some cases, the phenomenon (New Religious Movements) appears (numbers by Lennon)

1. within the mainline churches themselves (‘sectarian attitudes’). In other cases, it occurs
2. outside the churches (independent or free churches; messianic or prophetic movements),
or
3. against the churches (sects and cults), often establishing for themselves churchlike patterns.
However, not all are religious in their real content or ultimate purpose.” (p. 3)

This would seem to indicate that the official Catholic Church will refer to “sectarian attitudes” when addressing the issue of sect-like groups inside the institution; such groups could be called “intra-ecclesial sects,” once we remember that Catholic teaching has traditionally been more concerned about doctrinal purity (*modus credendi*) than the way groups operate (*modus operandi*). As official Catholic studies enter the area of “New Religious Movements” the reader will notice how these “problems” are generally seen as outside threats to the members of the church. We have just seen above how tentatively the Catholic Church acknowledges that there could be “sectarian attitudes” inside its doors. It still has not clearly identified, described or named such phenomena.

It will take an American Catholic priest, Rev. James J. LeBar, to be more concrete with his 1989 *Cults, Sects, and the New Age*⁶¹. Fr. LeBar does not shy away from the uncomfortable question but even he will couch his questions cautiously: “Some movements within the Church have been accused of cult-like activity by Catholics and non-Catholics alike. The legitimate operation of these movements is not cultic in any fashion, but extremes in local situations might give rise to such allegations.” (p. 87). He names The Fatima Crusaders, also known as the Tridentine Latin Rite Church (TLRC), The Bayside Movement, also known as “Our Lady of the Roses,” “The Apostolic Formation Center,” “The Integrated Humanities Program,” and “The Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement.” Fr. LeBar points to the problem of doctrinal, “Traditionalist,” beliefs in first three cases. The IHP fell into the abuse of forcing its students to be baptized into the Catholic Church to participate. The Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement, specifically its Covenant Communities and its practice of Shepherding/Discipleship are only mentioned by Fr. LeBar (p.95). Judith Tydings will study this last phenomenon in the article we have cited. Where Fr. LeBar shows

greater perceptiveness of cult-like action is in his examination of three female religious orders. (pp. 95-99): “Within the convents themselves, reports from former members indicate

- a total lack of freedom,
- an inability to see God’s will anywhere but in total obedience to the superior and the priest in charge, far in excess of normal practices within religious life.
- Lay associates are not able to make decisions for themselves, and often are expected to do things that are at variance with church practices and in some cases, even with church teachings” (p.96).

He cites a particular case where a nun wanted to force a mother living with the religious community to put her child up for adoption: “About a week before their baby was due, Sister Mary Sarah, R.S.M., now deceased, told the McMackins she had received a message for the Holy Spirit, indicating that the couple should give their child up for adoption. The Religious Sisters of Mercy issued a ‘challenge’ -a common method of precipitating decisions among the community- Mr. McMackin said.” LeBar adds, tellingly: “Because they adhere to traditional values and practices in religious life some people, including church leaders, tend to support these sisters. Others who look at the aberrations can see dangers.” (p.99). The above shows that Fr. LeBar is able to go beyond doctrinal issues and focus on sect-like practices when scrutinizing Catholic religious communities and movements. Does this mean that he is the first Catholic priest to publish his insight regarding concrete sect-like practices inside the Catholic Church?

Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue

The Challenge of the Sects or New Religious Movements: A Pastoral Approach

General Report of Francis Cardinal Arinze to the Extraordinary Consistory of Cardinals, The Vatican, April 5, 1991⁶²

In this second official Catholic approach to the subject of NRMs Cardinal Arinze states:

“The distinction between ecumenical relations and dealings between the Catholic Church and the sects must therefore be carefully considered in this context. It has to be acknowledged that sectarian attitudes could exist in any Church or Ecclesial Community including the Catholic Church. In some parts of the world the activities of members of some of the Christian World Communions, with whom the Catholic Church is in theological dialogue are indistinguishable from those of the sects. On the other hand, the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities often feel the threat of the sects more keenly than the Catholic Church, especially where their numbers are small. This is noted in the Holy Father's recent encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*: "The expansion of these sects represents a threat for the Catholic Church and for all the Ecclesial Communities with which she is engaged in dialogue. Wherever possible, and in the light of local circumstances, the response of Christians can itself be an ecumenical one" (*Redemptoris Missio*, 50)." (number 20).

The author underlines the only phrase in the document relevant to our study, lamenting the dearth of official study of the real everyday challenges of harmful group inside or outside the confines of

the Roman Catholic Church. Cardinal Arinze continues to only consider “sects” those groups which lie outside mainstream Christian churches.

In 1995 the US Catholic bishops published *Sects and New Religious Movements, An Anthology of Texts from the Catholic Church 1986-94*. The table of contents is as follows: Cultural Context and Causes, Diversity of Origin of Movements, Impact and Process of Communication, Spiritual and Theological Discernment, Pastoral Challenges and Pastoral Response, Attitude of Dialogue, and an Appendix, *Sects or New Religious Movements: Pastoral Challenge*. The articles do not approach the problem of the NRM’s from a psychological, sociological or legal perspective and therefore no concrete considerations are presented.

“‘Movements’ in the Church (2003)”

A monograph from the prestigious Catholic periodical “*Concilium*,” edited by Alberto Melloni⁶³, approaches the “movements” phenomenon from a variety of perspectives, including Catholic theology, history and sociology. This particular number is edited by Melloni, an Italian historian of Christianity, and Miklós Tomka, a Hungarian sociologist of religion. Melloni helps to explain the emergence of the Opus Dei and the Legion of Christ in the context of the Catholic Church at the end of the 20th century when “Catholic Action” was losing its strength. “Arising out of mystical experiences like those of José María Escrivá, who in 1928 became mediator of what he quite succinctly called *Obra de Dios*, or in the extreme circumstances like those of the priests who followed Marcial Maciel in proclaiming themselves Legionaries of Christ, these movements wanted from the pope something more than being recognized as splinters of Catholic Action... Thus from the Church-movement there emerged a vision of a movements-church: this radicalized these features with a concrete experience. The chain of command became vertical from the founder; consecration became the sacrament of militancy which involved even married people; the objective of the reconquest of society became the end which justified both the practice of secrecy and extreme visibility; finally, despite the risks already seen by Maurras, direct action was preferred to the slow culture of medication and the project. (p. 15) ... And the person of the pope -the physical possibility of attracting his attention which brought out of limbo the Legionaries in 1965, the Neo-Catechumens in 1974 and Communion and Liberation in 1975 – protected the experience from the mistrust of bishops and the Curia. (p.16) ... And in the polemic John Paul II did not cease to support the movements, ... (p.17).

Italian sociologist Diotallevi, in his chapter *Catholicism by way of Sectarianism*, may have helped Catholic researchers to abandon the old sect-church dichotomy, affirming that the old usage of sect as a group separated from the official Church, or antagonistic to it, is no longer viable: “Even leaving out of account the usefulness and possibility of still talking of ‘sects’ in the classical sense of the term, in a socioreligious context like that of today it does not immediately make sense sociologically to speak of the ‘sectarianization of the Catholic Church’, since a simple opposition of church and sect can no longer be used for the analysis of religious organizations. It is now better to use them as concepts which do not exclude each other.” (Melloni, p.115).

Sandro Magister, a Vaticanist reporter, attempts to spin Diotallevi’s chapter into something more specific, stating “Diotallevi focuses on the problem created by the ‘movements’: Opus Dei, the Sant’ Egidio community, Communion and Liberation, the Legionaries of Christ, Renewal in the

Spirit, the Neocatechumenal Way, Focolare, etc. They see their respective founders, rather than their local bishops, as heads and supreme rulers. They refer directly to the pope as their one connection to the Church. To different degrees they bear the distinctive features of a sect. The risk is that they will transform the Catholic Church into a body of memberships in juxtaposed groups that don't communicate with each other: each movement with its own liturgy, its own discipline, its own system of authority and beliefs."⁶⁴ A careful reading of Diotallevi's article, however, shows that he does not mention one single Catholic group by name. This is in keeping with the tenor of "Movements' in the Church" which sets out to understand the phenomenon of New Catholic Movement within the Catholic Church in a non-judgmental and non-critical way.

Common Characteristics of Harmful Catholic Groups

Instead of a summary, the writer will present his list of cult-like characteristics. Besides Tydings' consideration, the writer has sifted through classical cult characteristics in the psychological and sociological fields (Langone-Tobias, et.al), Catholic attempts such as Peter Vere's *Sifting the Wheat from the Tares*⁶⁵. The criteria described in the French language book, *From Bondage to Freedom*, reviewed here have also been very helpful. Based on over thirty years study and experience interviewing and counseling former members and their families of mostly Catholic harmful groups and on the research of the Catholic groups in this article he presents some specific applications of those common "scientific" criteria most helpful in examining potentially harmful groups:

1. **Abusive founder and/or leaders-Leadership**, including but not limited to serious criminal sexual abuse of members and followers.
2. Manipulative/deceptive/ aggressive **recruiting** of members (young, idealistic, inexperienced, in life transition...),
3. Unscrupulous **fundraising and fraudulent money-management**, "financial irregularities"
4. Insufficient or faulty **Discernment** of calling and life path.
5. **Foreclosure** (Premature major commitments made suddenly or too early, without due deliberation): for example, giving up all earthly belongings, inheritance, going on a faraway mission, rashly embracing celibacy and the priesthood.
6. **Isolation** from family, friends and previous support system; exclusion of "outsiders" and former members.
7. Systematic **Control** of Behavior, Information, Thoughts and Emotions
8. Leaders' **excessive authority and influence**, demanding blind obedience: they directly represent God and speak in his name. Members put them on a pedestal and want to please.
 - a. Superiors and or "spiritual directors" tell members whether or not they "have a vocation," a special call from God from all eternity binding them to this particular life style in this specific group.
 - b. Do not explore or respect candidates' and members' sexual orientation.

c. May tell them to remain single or marry, and whom to marry...

d. Want to control when, where and the how a member can leave.

9. **Black and White thinking prevails**; “no half measures”; with selective scripture quotes to bolster: “He who is not with me is against me.” No room for questioning or doubting.

10. Emphasis on **Discipline, with Unreachable Goals of Holiness or Perfection** -often fleshed out in a multiplicity of rules- which lead to obsessive-compulsivity, guilt feelings and low self-esteem. (Naturally, you are going to fall short).

11. **Community Confession and Shaming** (“Chapter of Faults”) may be used; public humiliation; leaders harshly criticize members in public, “make an example” of them. Members are expected to snitch on each other.

12. **Elitist and Us Vs Them**, siege mentality. We are special, chosen by God... “others would not understand,” Critics “hate and are out to destroy us, the Catholic priesthood, the Church, His Holiness the pope” ...

13. **Heavy-handed retention**: Loss of vocation, sure damnation. Straight to hell! You won’t make it on your own out there. You will fall into serious sin and vices. You are betraying Jesus Turning your back on God!

14. **Ostracism**, emotional cut-off and despising exiting and former members: “failures,” “unfaithful,” “traitors,” “disgruntled old men,” “envious,” “vengeful”

15. **Opponents are harassed**, threatened, pursued and even sued in the name of God, Jesus, Truth, Charity...

Lennon remarks, based on personal and clinical experience, readings, lectures, discussions and in-depth study of some controversial Catholic Movements: most definitions of harmful groups contain the mention of a charismatic leader. It is his contention that even when harmful groups are often founded by “malignant narcissists”, such groups are harmful essentially because of their damaging structure and, specifically, by their Modus Operandi, i.e., methods used in recruiting, retaining members and treating dissidents, “throw-aways” and “walk-aways” s. Though at the beginning there is usually the charismatic abusive founder, such abusive behaviors of the founders or leaders are the sirens that alert outsiders to gather more information and examine more carefully the harmful structures or Modus Operandi, that perpetuates the various forms of abuse.

Conclusions:

As often happens in such cases, “strange” groups do not come to the public’s attention until “something bad” happens or exiting members draw attention to a problem. We also know that nothing draws public attention better than a sex scandal. This is often the case in the Catholic Church because it causes the Catholic Hierarchy to react so as to “avoid scandal.” This very misused phrase means in reality that the official Catholic establishment wants to protect its image, its credibility, its financial health, contain the damage of losing members, and avoid lawsuits. Research has also demonstrated that many exiting members are often so conflicted and confused that they

are incapable of making a coherent report. As a result of this and other factors, abuses are under-reported.

Lennon reiterates that his experience and quality research has found Vatican intervention to be lacking in applying remedies for these groups. He believes that a more trenchant investigations and interventions are carried out by bishops' national conferences, including the Vicariate (diocese) of Rome which, incidentally, stands right beside the cumbersome and well-funded Curia.

Over the course of the last few decades the leadership of the Catholic Church, specifically the Pope and the Roman Curia, has been bludgeoned into taking action to prevent sexual abuse of minors in its bosom. For whatever reasons, the leadership allowed many situations of sexual abuse to run for decades unchecked, causing destruction and suffering in the lives of millions of Catholics. It appears that that Catholic authorities have yet to discover the importance of preventing other kinds of abuse by "cults in its midst" which, besides being hotbeds for sexual abuse of all kinds, also inflict:

- Abuse of conscience:

In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience when necessary speaks to his heart: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God; to obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged. Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths.

(Vatican II Ecumenical Council, dogmatic constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 16, December 7, 1965)

- Mind control. Needs to move beyond the concept and myths regarding "brain-washing" and accept the fact that powerful persons and groups can unduly influence others.
- Realize that some Catholic individuals and organizations have exercised and continue to exercise forms of coercion;
- Commit mental and emotional abuse;
- Cause psychological damage;
- Inflict physical abuse and medical neglect;
- Practice various forms of spiritual abuse; (See article below by Maureen Griffio).

This article pays tribute to all those victims who have come forth to speak up and seek truth and justice and to demand that Catholic pastors be what they should be: Good shepherds of the fold entrusted to them.

I am the good shepherd: the shepherd who is good lays down his life for his sheep. The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and the sheep do not belong to him, abandons the sheep as he sees a wolf coming, and runs away, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep; he runs away because he is only a hired man and has no concern for the sheep.

(Gospel of John, 10,11-13)

1. Jay Dunlop's defense of the Legion of Christ and other prominent Catholic "New Religious Movements".

(We include our critique of Mr. Dunlop's article because it typifies the pious Catholic response to accusations of cult-like groups or tendencies inside the Catholic Church.)

Mr. Dunlop explores a few definitions of cults along traditional Catholic lines which by their nature will lead to the same negative conclusion: "There cannot be a cult inside the Catholic Church."

There is at least one ambiguity/falsehood. Mr. Dunlap states that the Regnum Christi was founded in the 1940s (p.4). He may be following the re-written official story of the Legion of Christ. The *Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of Our Lady of Sorrows*, which later would go through a series of name changes, was founded on January 3, 1940 by then seminarian Marcial Maciel. The religious congregation would gel as Legionaries of Christ in the late 1950s after a Vatican investigation. Maciel began to have his second brainchild, the Regnum Christi lay Movement in the 1960s. Presently the Legion is in the process of another name/identity change/slide, creating an over-arching Federation which is to be called Regnum Christi. This way the order can get away from "Legion of Christ" which has been soiled by association with the founder's disreputable life.

Jay Dunlap minces no words:

- Cults don't allow outside supervision; Catholic movements are supervised by the Vatican
- Cults practice brainwashing; Catholic groups respect free will.
- Mind-control cannot happen because "God's gift of free will is inalienable." (p. 7). It can only happen if "I habitually deform my conscience." (p. 7).
- People don't understand Catholic New Religious Movements because they don't understand Christ and the Church. (p.9.)
- The opening of members' email in these groups is perfectly legitimate. "But the opening of mail is a practice in communal religious life that dates back centuries; it is an expression of the freedom and openness of Christians in community with no secrets from one another." (p.10.) "There cannot be a cult inside the Catholic Church."
- Ex-members' complaints are dismissed summarily in less than one page by alluding to criticism against the maligned Opus Dei (a group strikingly like the Legion and its Regnum Christi lay movement)- There is nothing wrong with the OD because it "has been heavily scrutinized by the Church and found to be of God." (p.10).
- "Bad groups" are those that go against Catholic Church authorities, such as Society of St. Pius X, Fatima Rosary Crusade, Bayside, and some Covenant Communities which "tend to

have a domineering leader who draws the community away from the Church at large, ...” (p. 11). “Not all new movements that call themselves Catholic are good. Only those approved by the Church or seeking Church approval while staying faithful to the magisterium (Catholic Church’s teaching authority) are worthwhile.” (p.11).

- On finding an article that disagrees with his point of view, Mr Dunlap does not hesitate to go ad hominem. “The Tablet is one of many English-language journals by and for dissenters who want to change the Church’s teachings on key matters such as sexual morality and the ordination of women. Perhaps because the new movements represent renewal in concert with the mind of the Church, dissenters (who fancy themselves as progressives) are most ready to dismiss the new movements as cults because their youth, vibrancy, and growth are everything the dissenters’ own movement are not.” (p. 12)

2. Articles regarding the Neo-Catechumenal Way which would appear to show its controversial nature

A Critical Look at the Neocatechumenal Way | The Thoughtful Catholic
http://thoughtfulcatholic.com/?page_id=766

And why is he allowed to teach it? Giuseppe's Islands – Has the opaque Neocatechumenal Way avoided the temptations offered by the compromised banking infrastructure of the Turks and Caicos Islands? Nowhere. A call for post-baptismal catechesis free of the errors and problems endemic to the Neocatechumenal Way. Problems with the Initial Catechesis of the Neocatechumenal Way http://thoughtfulcatholic.com/?%20page_id=36385

The initial phase of catechesis in the Neocatechumenal Way (NCW) consists of fifteen catechetical sessions, followed by a weekend “Convivence” (from the Spanish, “Convivencia”, meaning “living together” or “coexistence”) retreat where a new NCW community will be “born”. These sessions, called “days” in the ...

Clearing up misconceptions about the Neocatechumenal Way

<http://catholicherald.co.uk/clearing-up-misconceptions-about-the-neocatechumenalway>
15 Dec. 2014 - One of the key aspects of the Way is members' sense of mission. Being a Christian, they believe, is never a matter of private, weekly devotion; it is always outgoing, evangelical and bound up with renewal and conversion. Only at the end of the book did I get a glimpse of the problems such a vivid and total ...

Jungle Watch: THE NEOCATECHUMENAL WAY AND THE PROBLEM ...

www.junglewatch.info/.../the-neocatechumenal-way-and-problem ...

16 Jul. 2017 - This is the Introduction to my book TARGET EQUALS PRIEST: THE NEOCATECHUMENAL WAY AND THE MISSION TO DESTROY FR. PAUL GOFIGAN. I am copying it here as it provides a short summary of what the Neocatechumenal Way is and how it led to a big problem for the Archdiocese of Agana.

A Catholic Life: Avoid the Neocatechumenal Way

<https://acatholiclife.blogspot.com/.../avoid-neocatechumenal-way>

Jan. 1., 2007 - Here is some information from that magazine relating to the doctrinal errors of Neocatechumenal Way. And here is an additional source written by Fr. Zoffoli on the problems in the Way. THESE STATEMENTS DO NOT LIE. THE WAY DOES NOT TEACH CATHOLIC DOCTRINE. AVOID THEM AT ALL COST ...

The Problems of the NeoCatechumenal Way - 30 Minute Radio Show ...

Video de Neocatechumenal Way Problems  30:40

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKijl8c-Npk> August 7, 2014 – published by Charles White. Travis Coffman's Big Show on Guam K57 Talk Radio, August 7, 2014. If you have the time (a short and ...

Archbishop seeks help with Neocatechumenal Way 'problems

www.catholicnews.sg/index.php?...neocatechumenal-way-problems

Jan 30, 2011 - TOKYO – The president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan (CBCJ) has called for the cooperation of priests and laypeople to confront “problems” with the Neocatechumenal Way, which he said has had a negative effect in the country.

“In those places touched by the Neocatechumenal Way, there ...

How Legit Is the NeoCatechumenal Way? | Women of Grace

www.womenofgrace.com/blog/?p=12418

February 17, 2012 - So while it does have its problems, the Vatican and leaders of the neocats appear to be working together to resolve their issues. Who are the neocats? The Neocatechumenal Way was founded in 1963 by a talented young Spanish painter named Kiko Arguello who had a conversion experience that led him ...

On the Neocatechumenal Way and “making a mess” | John Allen on ...

<https://johnallenjr.wordpress.com/.../on-the-neocatechumenate-an>

February 2, 2014 - Over the years, few outfits have had a better track record of making messes than the Neocatechumenal Way, a lay movement founded in Spain in 1964 by ... Moreover, the Neocatchumenate also has a reputation for being on the conservative side of most Catholic issues, at a time when Francis seems to be ...

The Remnant Newspaper - Neocatechumenal Leader Met by Angry Mob

<https://remnantnewspaper.com/.../index.php?...neocatechumenal...>

July 12, 2016 - The Remnant, June 15, 2008: “The Catholic lay Neocatechumenal Way has received the Church's final approval of its statutes; the degree of recognition ... from Japan traveled to Rome to resolve a "serious problem" with the methods of the NeoCatechumenal Way and its seminary in a Japanese diocese.

3. Rights of Members of Sect-like Aberrations?

“Victims of sect-like aberrations may in some cases have recourse to civil and penal justice. Thus, French legislature (About Picard law, June 12, 2001, Penal Code article 223-15), followed by the Belgian (law of November 26, 2011, Penal Code article 442) have deemed it right to insert a specific crime, the abuse of vulnerability.

Penal action can be taken against a person who, aware of the vulnerable (physical or mental) condition of the victim has fraudulently abused him to lead him to an action or to abstain from an action gravely endangering his physical, mental integrity or inheritance.

These actions or abstentions may concern the victims’ inheritance, their health, their professional activity, and even their family and affective lives.

It is worth noting that this not only criminally penalizes acts of mental destabilization as in the case of certain sects. It applies to the abuse of vulnerability in general, particularly regarding the elderly, the sick and the handicapped.

Besides the abuse of vulnerability there exist evidently other infractions, especially: swindling, breach of trust, and extortion. Among personal attacks:

- Homicide or involuntary injuries, not assisting a person in danger, deprivation of care;
- Sexual attacks and corruption of minors;
- Violence and threats.

Finally, in the absence of a proven penal infraction, it is still possible to sue in civil court for reparation of moral and or material damages committed by the ecclesiastical institution or one of its members (article 1382, French and Belgian code of civil law).” (Hubert, p.11)

4. Indebted to Judith Tydings

I would venture to say that Tydings is the best study of its kind up to 1999 and is almost the gold standard in so far as research, information gathering and analysis. Besides the considerations posted immediately above, we can find pertinent considerations on a variety of areas that affect how the Catholic Church can best handle the phenomenon of internal, intra-ecclesiastical, questionable groups. Her watershed study which we have used extensively contains a handful of very wise considerations which are still valid today, almost twenty years later.

“How can Catholics engage in criticism of an organization sanctioned by the Church?”

Vatican recognition of a community, movement, or organization does not belong to the category of infallible or ex cathedra pronouncements, which deal with faith and morals. The approval carries weight but does not prohibit Catholics in good faith from bringing concerns about approved groups to the attention of the responsible Church authority, nor does it prohibit discussion of such concerns with others. The Pope declared the founder of Opus Dei as Blessed, the last step but one to canonization. That too does not close debate on any Opus Dei shortcomings. The Society of Jesus, otherwise known as the Jesuits, was founded by a canonized Saint, Ignatius Loyola. Many early Jesuits were declared Saints also: Francis Xavier, Francis Borgia, Robert Bellarmine, Aloysius Gonzaga, and others. The Society of Jesus was canonically established in 1540 by a papal bull of

Pope Paul III. Over the years the Jesuits were much praised and much criticized. In 1773, more than 200 years after the Vatican approved the Jesuits, Pope Clement XIV suppressed them. In 1814 they were again approved and re-established by Pope Pius VII (Livingstone, 1997, p. 871). Thus, groups that receive Vatican approval can have it revoked.

Indeed, threatened revocation is sometimes used to spur reform of a group. A contemporary example of this can be found in Cardinal Hickey's September 23, 1995 address to MOG. The Cardinal said that he would continue his recognition of MOG as a private association of the faithful pending implementation of the changes he had mandated. If his directives had not been carried out in adequate fashion by April 1996, he would withdraw his recognition (Hickey, 1995, p. 9)." (Tydings, p. 43).

“How do the Catholic movements discussed in the above three books respond to complaints and unfavorable criticism?”

My preliminary review of the available literature in English relating to the Catholic movements under consideration reveals that the movements in question have responded or have been said to respond to criticism in various ways. I was able to examine some lengthy responses supportive of three Catholic movements: the Gormally response to the Clifton Report concerning Neocatechumenate (Gormally, 1997), Peter Corbishley's (1997) comment on the Clifton Inquiry, Gordon Read's (1997) article supporting NC, Opus Dei's response to Garvey's Parents' Guide (Office of Communications, Prelature of Opus Dei, 1991), Bohlin's (1991) critique of Garvey, and Fr. George Montague's (1991) reflections on problems in Catholic charismatic communities.

The movements or members of the movements have responded to criticisms or complaints as follows:

1. Attack the integrity of the critic, sometimes through character assassination that may imply sexual misconduct or a mental illness (Walsh, 1992; Hutchison, 1997; Woodward, 1996; Benigni, 1998).
2. Threaten a lawsuit (Steinfelds, 1997).
3. Remind critics that the organization has official Catholic Church approval, thereby implying that one shouldn't criticize what is approved by the Holy Father (McAllister, 1997; Garvey, 1989).
4. Say that the criticism comes from a disgruntled former member (Office of Communication, Prelature of Opus Dei, 1991).
5. Say that the criticism comes from disgruntled parents who selfishly don't want to give their child to God (Riding, 1989; Farrell, 1991).
6. Accuse the critic of not being informed about the group (Garvey, 1989).
7. Say that the action or activity being questioned or criticized was perpetrated by an overzealous member and does not represent official movement policy (Myers 1995; Garvey, 1989; Gormally, 1997).

8. Maintain that criticism shows that the group is on the right track because Satan opposes what is good (Riding, 1989).
9. Use positive testimonies from members in order to distract attention from the criticism (McAllister, 1997; Bowie, 1996).
10. If the critic's family members are movement members, have them respond to critic (Farrell, 1992).
11. Complain that the editor should have submitted the charges or criticisms to the movement before publication (Garvey, 1989).
12. Say that the criticisms come from those who have an anti-Catholic mentality (Benigni, 1998; Myers, 1995).
13. Be silent; don't dignify criticisms with a response (Garvey, 1989).
14. Be silent, but with an explanation. Examples: Declaring that "resorting to the law" or "media confrontations" are "options that are unattractive to those whose stated aim in life is to spread the Christian gospel of mutual love" (Bowie, 1996, p. 107). "A newspaper article is not the proper place to discuss religious differences" (Gillis, 1997a, p. 15).
15. Point out that the problems are common mistakes made by all Church communities in their youth or at some time in their life (Montague 1991); such problems are "childhood illnesses (Urquhart, 1999a, p. 438).
16. Remind us that the early Christians had problems too (Montague 1991).
17. Say that the Devil is the source of criticism (Kamm, 1984).
18. Criticize the methods of inquiry used to gather unfavorable evidence (Gormally, 1997; Corbishley, 1997)." (Tydings, pages 32-33).

How useful are visits by Church hierarchy as a way to assess a community's health and culture?

Tydings summarizes research which shows how controversial groups will often welcome visitors, such as reporters or Church investigators into their communities having prepared the members beforehand with a kind of "impression management."

Past midway in the cited article she states: "Such findings (re problems in American Charismatic Communities: finances, lack of structure, "shepherding", coercive influence, arranged marriages, etc.) underline Gordon Urquhart's insistence that the Church must examine the lived culture of a group and not simply the rules written on paper."

5 Spiritual Abuse

One potential definition of spiritual abuse is "the use of spiritual authority for one's personal gain."

Griffo, M. *Spiritual Abuse across the Spectrum of Christian Environments*. ICSA Today p. 2

“The International Cultic Studies Association’s Spiritual Abuse Resources (SAR) program defines spiritual abuse as follows: Spiritual abuse, sometimes called religious abuse, results when individuals are deceived and or [sic] otherwise manipulated in ways that cause detrimental changes to core elements of the self, including one’s relationship to God, religious/philosophical beliefs, self-determination, and the capacity to think independently. Though often associated with cultic groups, spiritual abuse may also occur in mainstream denominations when pastors or others misuse their authority or when individuals violate the ethical boundaries of proselytizing or other kinds of influence situations. SAR, n.d.)”

“Factors That Affect Abuse: Where and how does spiritual abuse happen? The risk of spiritual abuse increases when (a) pastors lack accountability, (b) intense emotion or dissociative practices lead to suggestible states of mind, (c) leaders and members of the congregation display an attitude of superiority toward those outside the church and develop isolation from them, (d) pastors lack the training that would reduce the risk of abuse, and (e) pastors have inappropriate sexual relationships with congregants.” Page 3

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1l-Z_9Oo9j5hfpUDSscnIEm4szGi1sQQX/view

6 The Vatican’s opaque interventions of problematic Catholic groups

It appears that the Vatican is continually guided by two basic criteria: “Do not wash your dirty linen in public” and “avoid scandal at any cost” (meaning: protect the Catholic Church’s good name no matter what).

Seldom if ever, do “outside” experts, such as psychologists, sociologist or lawyers participate in the investigative, data-gathering, visitation phase carried out by Catholic clergy in good standing.

The content of initial investigation (reports) by visitors is seldom if ever revealed. This demonstrates a tendency to secrecy and lack of transparency.

Based on the secret reports by the visitors, Church departments (dicasteries) examine them (secretly) and deliberate (secretly) on the nature and gravity of the problems. Departments may consult (secretly) among themselves, with the Secretary of State and with the pope before some unknown person or persons will decide what has to be done and the steps to be taken. This phase seems secretive, flexible and unclear.

A Catholic clergyman will be chosen to head the intervention of the group: priest, canon lawyer, monsignor, bishop, etc.

The clergyman will be appointed apostolic delegate, administrator, commissary and given a mandate of varying extension by the deliberating authorities to make the necessary changes.

As he goes about this business he will not be accompanied by an “outside” professional expert in human sciences or otherwise.

To some degree he will use his own judgment about how to exercise his mandate but normally will do so in collaboration with his associates (if any) and with those who have authorized his mandate.

Does he dissolve, reform or renew the organization?

Does he leave the present superior general in power or remove him?

Does he leave in place or remove the present administration/chapter/board of directors?

Does he listen to all the active members? Does he include past or disenfranchised members? Does he include lay persons who are close to the group?

What does Pope Francis personally think of Catholic New Religious Movements? It appears he does not share Pope John Paul II's enthusiasm or Pope Benedict's passiveness. What does Pope Francis think of the Catholic New Religious Movements?

“One episode may shed some light. The pope received 140 superiors of religious orders in the Vatican last September. He said to them: ‘When they tell me that there is a congregation that enjoys so many vocations, I am worried, I admit. The Holy Spirit does not work with the success method. He has other ways. ... Some of [the seminarians] are Pelagians. They want to come back to the asceticism, they make penance, they seem soldiers, ready to fight for the faith and the good morals. ... Then some scandal of the founder or foundress comes to light.’”⁶⁶

Resources:

Below is a short list of some cult monitoring groups and associations. They often have a search button to reach information on questionable groups.

-AVREF, Aide aux Victimes des dérives de mouvements Religieux on Europe et leur Familles:

<https://www.avref.fr/index.html> ; English: <https://www.avref.info/>

-Cult Education Institute: <https://culteducation.com/>

-CultNews 101: <https://www.cultnews101.com/>

-Hassan, S., Freedom of Mind, <https://freedomofmind.com/>

-I.C.S.A., <http://www.icsahome.com/>

-Info Secte/InfoCulte: <https://www.infosecte.org/>

ODAN <http://www.odan.org/> , and Opus Libros <http://www.opuslibros.org/> for the Opus Dei

ReGAIN, <https://regainnetwork.org/>, and

Veritas Liberabit Vos, <https://liberabitveritas.blogspot.com/> for Legion of Christ and Regnum Christi. Disaffected former members have created a blog with over 2,300 members, *Legioleaks*, on Facebook.

¹ <https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/697/editorial/sectarian-catholicism>

² Von Hildebrand, D. (1967), *Trojan Horse in the City of God: The Catholic Crisis Explained*. Chicago, Ill.: Franciscan Herald Press.

³ See abstract of Archbishop Luigi Negri's presentation at the ICSA conference in Trieste, Italy, July 2013 which focuses on doctrinal matters and is blind to psychological and spiritual forms of abuse: "Si parla pertanto di concezioni e credenze quali: esoterismo, gnosticismo, millenarismo, panteismo, reincarnazione, relativismo, sincretismo; di fenomeni quali: divinazione, magia occultismo, spiritismo, guaritori, santoni, veggenti, halloween, New Age, salutismo, satanismo e luciferismo, ufologismo, Wicca; di conseguenze come: confusione antropologica, confusione tra psichico e spirituale, pregiudizio individualistico."

⁴ United States Catholic Conference (1995), *Sects and New Religious Movements, an Anthology of Texts from the Catholic Church 1986-1994*, ed. Working Group on New Religious Movements, Vatican City. Washington DC, pp.27-47

⁵ Pope acknowledges his own grave mistakes in Chile sex abuse crisis: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-chile-abuse/pope-acknowledges-his-grave-mistakes-in-chile-sexabuse-crisis-idUSKBN1HI2YB>

⁶ At least seven US dioceses have banned Legion of Christ and its Regnum Christi Movement: <https://regainnetwork.org/2014/12/18/diocese-ban-legion-of-christ-and-regnum-christi/> The diocese of Miami has also banned the LC/RC: <https://zenit.org/articles/archdiocese-of-miamihttps://www.avref.fr/fichiers/ST%20JEAN%20-%20LE%20LIVRE%20NOIR.pdf> bans-[legionariesof-christ/](https://www.avref.fr/fichiers/ST%20JEAN%20-%20LE%20LIVRE%20NOIR.pdf)

⁷ <https://www.avref.fr/fichiers/ST%20JEAN%20-%20LE%20LIVRE%20NOIR.pdf> ⁸ magazine, No. 174, Mai- Goliath Juin 2017, pp. 2-13 ⁹ Langone, M. ICSA Today, Vol. 6, No. 3, 2015, 10.

¹⁰ *Cultic Studies Journal*, 1999, Volume 16, No. 2, pages 83-179

¹¹ In this context the Tydings is using "The Church" in the sense of the official leadership of the Catholic Church. Catholics use the term "Church" loosely; it can mean The Roman Catholic Church institution, the lay members of said institution, or the Hierarchy/government, leaders, clergy. Suffice it to say, "The Church" is a very complex and ambiguous term, in the spoken and written word, as used by members, lay and clerical, and by the media, as in reporters and editors. In this article Paul Lennon will try to avoid such ambiguity as far as possible.

¹² Baffoy, Thierry, Delestre, Antoine, & Sauzet, Jean-Paul. (1996). *Les naufragés de l'esprit: Des sectes dans l'église catholique*. Paris: Seuil.

Tapia, María Carmen del. (1997). *Beyond the threshold: A life in Opus Dei*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company.

Urquhart, G. (1999.) *The Pope's Armada: Unlocking the Secrets of Mysterious and Powerful New Sects in the Church*. Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books; 2nd edition.

Tapia, Maria del Carmen (1998) *Beyond the Threshold A Life in Opus Dei: The True, Unfinished Story* this title. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, Revised Ed.

¹³ <http://beatitudes.org/presse/en/PressRelease.pdf>

¹⁴ <http://www.catholicworldreport.com/2013/05/18/the-charismatic-renewal-and-the-catholicchurch/>

¹⁵ <https://www.nsc-chariscenter.org/>

¹⁶ http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/index_saints_en.html

¹⁷ <http://www.icsahome.com/articles/opus-dei-moncada-en5-2>, ICSA e-Newsletter, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2006

¹⁸ <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2018-03/chiara-lubich-10-death-anniversary.html>

¹⁹ <http://www.icsahome.com/articles/i-really-believed-that-this-way-of-living-was-right-goudsmit-it-23>

²⁰ http://infosecte.org/Conference_Handbooks/2013%20ICSA%20Conference,%20Trieste,%20Italy.pdf, page 55.

²¹ http://pncds72.free.fr/319_focolari/319_50_moi_focolari_it.pdf

²² <http://www.focolare.net/sect.html>

²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communion_and_Liberation; official site in English:

<http://english.clonline.org/>

²⁴ <https://aleteia.org/2013/05/02/encountering-reality-with-communion-and-liberation/> ²⁵

<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/grace-margins/one-pope-francis-allegiances-might-tell-us-something-about-churchs-future>

²⁶ <http://web.archive.loc.gov/all/20130405032126/http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/communionand-liberation>

²⁷ <http://www2.kokugakuin.ac.jp/ijcc/wp/global/12voye.html>, Voye, V. Religion in Modern Europe: Pertinence of the Globalization Theories?

²⁸ https://www.persee.fr/doc/thlou_0080-2654_1991_num_22_1_2485_t1_0116_0000_1

²⁹ <https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2017/03/19/key-aide-pope-benedict-approaches-90-hes-fine/>

³⁰ http://thoughtfulcatholic.com/?page_id=741

³¹ http://www.csj.org/infoserv_cult101/checklis.htm

³² By Their Fruits... <http://www.icsahome.com/articles/legionlangone>, Reflections on the Legion:

<http://www.icsahome.com/articles/reflections-on-the-legion-langone-en5-2>

³³ <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/are-there-cults-in-the-catholic-church>

³⁴ <http://exlcblog.blogspot.com/2009/02/yes-there-can-be-cults-in-church.htm>

³⁵ <https://catholicexchange.com/sifting-the-wheat-from-the-ares-20-signs-of-trouble-in-a-new-religious-group-2>

³⁶ <https://dialogueireland.wordpress.com/2012/08/02/the-legionaries-of-christ-as-a-cult/#more-7739>

³⁷ <https://regainnetwork.org/2014/11/28/how-did-the-legion-of-christ-and-regnum-christi-become-associated-with-the-term-cult/>

³⁸ <http://www.icsahome.com/articles/aspects-of-concern-legion-lennon-en5-2>

³⁹ http://pncds72.free.fr/300_01_eglise/300_01_6_golias_174.pdf

⁴⁰ http://pncds72.free.fr/311_legion.php

⁴¹ <https://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=17927>

⁴² <https://www.avref.fr/fichiers/ST%20JEAN%20-%20LE%20LIVRE%20NOIR.pdf>

⁴³ www.angelqueen.org/2003/05/20/community-of-st.john-acknowledges-lapses-by-founder/

⁴⁴ www.csjohn.org

⁴⁵ <http://www.catholicerald.co.uk/news/2013/06/12/bishop-mcmahon-praises-community-of-stjohn/>

- ⁴⁶ <http://www.newengelpublishing.com/exploiting-traditionalist-orders-the-society-of-st-john/> ⁴⁷ https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/07/04/pope-francis-carlos-urrutigoity-sexabuse_n_5558357.html
- ⁴⁸ https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/vatican-intervenes-to-remove-a-priest-in-paraguay-accused-of-sex-abuse-in-us/2014/07/30/33996b52-1822-11e4-88f796ed767bb747_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.e3bd1279e6bf
- ⁴⁹ <http://meetingthemets.com/2014/06/14/relevant-once-again-a-special-report-on-the-society-of-saint-john-2000/>
- ⁵⁰ <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/curious-case-carlos-urrutigoity-i-updated> - the associate editor of Commonweal has written an 8 part series on this issue.
- ⁵¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heralds_of_the_Gospel
- ⁵² <http://www.lastampa.it/2017/06/13/vaticaninsider/heralds-of-the-gospel-the-founder-leaves-while-the-vatican-investigates-V8amQicVIP9mJ3hwRa3F2I/pagina.html>
- ⁵³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miles_Jesu
- ⁵⁴ Sullivan, Andrew L. (2006) *Vatican Intervention*. Middletown, DE: Creativa: <https://www.amazon.com/Vatican-Intervention-Andrew-Lee-Sullivan/dp/1530876443>
- ⁵⁵ <https://zenit.org/articles/statement-on-miles-jesu/>
- ⁵⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sodalitium_Christianae_Vitae
- ⁵⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/10/world/americas/peru-vatican-sexual-abuse.html> ⁵⁸ <https://dialogueireland.wordpress.com/2009/08/14/the-palmarian-church-palma-de-troya-nearseville-spain/>
- ⁵⁹ <https://dialogueireland.wordpress.com/2017/12/06/so-afraid-are-family-members-connected-to-the-palmarians-that-we-have-to-heavily-edit-this-short-report/>
- ⁶⁰ <https://www.ewtn.com/library/NEWAGE/VATREPRT.TXT>
- ⁶¹ LeBar, J.J (1989), *Cults, Sects and the New Age*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press.
- ⁶² http://www.cesnur.org/2004/arinze_en.htm
- ⁶³ Concilium (2003) "Movements" in the Church, Ed., Melloni, A. London: SCM Press. ⁶⁴ Magister, S. (2004) Church or Little Churches? The Sectarian Threat of Catholic Movements, www.Chiesa, pp 1-5: <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/6954%26eng%3Dy.html> ⁶⁵ <https://www.cultnews101.com/2014/02/sifting-wheat-from-tares-20-signs-of.html>
- ⁶⁶ <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2017/08/return-of-the-vocations-crisis>