USE OF THESES

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BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE IS CHASTITY

A Study of Spanish Nuns

By
Mary P. Edmunds

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the Australian National University.

February 1986
Alice: The question is whether you can make words mean so many different things.

Humpty Dumpty: The question is [who] is to be the master.

Hombres necios que acusáis
a la mujer sin razón,
sin ver que sois la ocasión
de lo mismo que culpáis.

Lewis Carroll 1960:269.

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.
Declaration

Except where otherwise indicated
this thesis is my own work.

Mary P. Edmunds
February 1986
Acknowledgements

I would like this thesis to stand as a tribute to the women of the Centre-South Spanish Province of the Society of the Sacred Heart, and also to other remarkable women of the Society I have known in Australia and elsewhere. The study has been for me in many ways a resolution of the past as well as an attempt to tackle broader issues. In this sense, I have worked on it as an expression of the thanks that I would like to give to so many of the women of the Society whose affection and support has been constant over the years and through many stages. It is an affection and support that has given me an ineradicable sense of the fineness of altruistic values and of the great potential of goodness. Some of these women also provided me from earliest days with a model of women’s work that indicated, in however constrained and fugitive a way, the joy of professional fulfilment. That this was as much in spite of, rather than because of, their membership in the official Church perhaps enhances the personal quality of their influence.

In the context of this study, my thanks go especially to the nuns in Spain who offered me not only their willing help but also their friendship. Of these I can mention only a few, but they represent the many others who allowed me to impinge on that most precious of commodities, their time. Our first months as a family in Madrid were made a delight by Paz Martínez, Mari Carmen Zerolo, and Ludo Alberdi. Paz also spent long hours that were boring for her but invaluable for me in drilling me in the complexities of Spanish verbs.

Ludo Alberdi and Victoria Lugo, as the Principals of two of the schools in Madrid, most generously made it possible for me to have open and continuing access to these schools. Without this basic contact, where I got to know and be known by nuns from other communities, the rest of my study would have been impossible. My contact with the secular teachers in both schools was also good, and opened up another network of possibilities both professional and personal.

Of other friends in Madrid, I would like to mention Ana María López Aguado who helped me so much with my Spanish; Pilar and Puri Pardo whose magnificent practical help was the basis of a deepening companionship; and our neighbours who so enriched our Spanish experience. My initial administrative difficulties in making
contact with people in the University of Complutense were facilitated by Dr María Catedra from the Department of Social Anthropology who continued to provide support throughout my research. Carolina Guerra from the national newsagency EFE offered me documents and explanations. And mention must be made of the friends from Santa María del Parque who became so important a part of our life as a family.

In Australia, I have always received help and active support from Professor Anthony Forge of the Department of Prehistory and Anthropology and one of my supervisors. His support has been practical as well as academic, and has been generously offered on an ongoing basis as well as in times of crisis. Dr Caroline Ifeka has given me time and penetrating advice. Her acute analyses and criticisms have constantly forced me to rethink my own understandings more rigorously and have resulted in what I hope is a tighter and more coherent argument. Dr Dámaso de Lario has given me the benefit of an historian's perspective. Sister Mary Shanahan has read an early draft of the thesis and achieved the difficult objective of commenting from a point of view both academically detached and personally involved. My fellow post-graduate students and other members of the Department of Prehistory and Anthropology in this university have been a constant source of stimulating discussion, helpful comment, constructive criticism, and practical advice on the intricacies of computer competence. Kevin Cowan produced the maps for the thesis, and Brigid Richards and Mandy Mottram the diagrams. My thanks go to all three.

My father-in-law, Ray Doran, unhesitatingly gave up the enjoyment of his first weeks of retirement in order to give me necessary time to finish my work. Without his involvement in the children's complicated timetable, I would not have had the peace of mind necessary to concentrate on the critical task of rewriting. Harriet, Ben, and Louisa deserve my very special thanks for their patience and understanding through a stressful year, when they have willingly accepted second place in my time and attention. To my husband, Brendan Doran, I can only say that, without the emotional and immensely practical support he has given me over the whole period of my research, it would have been impossible to carry out or complete this project.

With regard to the overall argument I have developed in the thesis, some of the women of the Spanish Province will agree with what I have said. Many will not. For those who will find something positive in the study, I offer my analysis as a contribution towards their continuing interpretive practice. For those who may find what I have said hurtful, I can only ask their forgiveness, and give the assurance that the only repayment I could make for all the welcoming kindness and the friendship
shown to me by individuals and communities was to present the truth as I, with my own preconceptions and limitations, came to see it. I hope they will accept it in this spirit.
Abstract

This study is about a group of Spanish nuns who belong to an international teaching Congregation. The lives of these women have been shaped by their position in two distinct but related social formations. One of these is the Roman Catholic Church; the other is Spanish society. The position of the nuns in each instance has been determined by historically produced social relations, particularly relations of power, and has been essentially influenced by the place of the Church in Spanish society. The result has been a duality of experience for these women that their present interpretation and practice incorporates and reflects.

Fundamental to this dual experience for the nuns has been the historical and structural effects of their implicit choice of the religious life as an option for autonomy. The option for autonomy, however, was situated within social relations based on hierarchical and patriarchal interpretation that had developed in the Church. In this context, their option for chastity was an implicit attempt, based on a control over their own sexuality and its related rejection of a socially defined domestic role, for control over their own lives. Because of women’s structural subordination within the Church, however, the dynamic of the choice of chastity was generally thwarted and subverted in the institution of religious life to which these women belonged, and the generative relation produced for their practice by patriarchal domination was that of obedience. The structural opposition for these nuns in their experience of traditional religious life, therefore, was an historically constructed contradiction between chastity and obedience. Within the social relations generated by this contradiction, an ideological definition of the symbolic order made orthodox interpretation in the symbolic mode a principal means of control.

For the nuns in the Centre-South Province of the Congregation in Spain, the experience of these general relations was mediated through the particular historical conditions of Spanish society. These acted in their earlier experiences to reinforce traditional relations by isolating the nuns from the effects of their particular involvement in the historical process. At the same time, the nuns’ official position within the Church eventually embroiled them in the bitter social and political
conflicts that provoked the outbreak of Civil War in 1936. After 1939, and particularly in the forties and fifties, the same position in the Church insulated them, as happened with the rest of Spanish society, from the pressures for change that developed in other parts of the world. The nuns who experienced these events form one clear group in the Province. Only when the Church itself moved to change official interpretation, which it did in the Second Vatican Council, did the nuns themselves become aware of their isolation and of the need for change. This awareness coincided with fundamental economic and social transformations in Spanish society itself.

The creative acceptance of change by the nuns was based on a shift from symbolic (mythical) to historical interpretation after the Vatican Council and, as a result, their emergence from the dominance of ideology and the symbolic order. Their capacity to change was based on previous experience, limited though it may have been, of spaces of autonomy created by practices based on the expression of their choice of chastity in professional work, particularly in education.

Nevertheless, the practices developed by the nuns in the Centre-South Province in their reinterpretation of their religious commitment constitute what is seen as a possibly intolerable threat to the Congregation as an institution within the Church. As a result, these women are experiencing attempts by the Provincial government to reimpose constraints generated by interpretations and practices rooted in their past. These attempts are based on an ideological reinterpretation of the symbolic order, and central to them is the reinstitution of obedience.

Note on Spanish Spellings

Because of the almost complete inconsistency in English publications with regard to Spanish place names and proper names, I have retained the original spellings throughout the thesis. The two exceptions I have made for places are Catalonia (Cataluña) and the Basque Country (País Vasco or Euskadi); for propernames, I have used the English forms for some of the monarchs. In these few cases there does appear to be general agreement on the use of an anglicized form.

Note on translations from Spanish texts

The translations throughout the thesis from original Spanish documents and texts are my own.
Preface

SPAIN: GENERAL CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE

8th century: Conquest by the Moors.  
Beginning of the Reconquest.

1474-1515: Isabel and Fernando, the Catholic Monarchs.  
1478: Institution of the Spanish Inquisition.  
1492: Conquest of Granada by the Catholic Monarchs.  
Expulsion of the Jews.  
Expulsion of the Jews.  
European discovery of the New World.

1516-1700: HAPSBURGS.  
1516-1556: Charles V.  
1556-1598: Philip II.  
1568: Revolt of the Protestants in the Low Countries.  
Death of Philip's son, Don Carlos.  
1571: Battle of Lepanto; Don John half-brother of Philip II.  
1588: Defeat of the Spanish Armada.  
1702-1714: War of the Spanish Succession.  
Loss of Gibraltar to England.

1759: ACCESSION OF THE BOURBONS.  
Philip V, grandson of Louis XIV of France and  
Maria Teresa, daughter of Philip IV.

1808-1812: WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AGAINST THE FRENCH.  
1809: First disentailment laws (desamortización).  
1812: The Cortes of Cádiz; first liberal constitution.  
1814: Fernando VII returns to Spain.  
1820-1823: Liberal triennium.  
Disentailment laws.  
1823: Restoration of absolute powers to Fernando VII.  
1833: Isabel II.  
1833-1839)  
1847-1849)  
1872-1876)  
1834-1837)  
1851: Concordat with the Vatican.  
1854: Disentailment laws of Madoz.  
1868: Revolution.  
Constitution.

1873: DECLARATION OF THE FIRST REPUBLIC.  
1874: THE RESTORATION (Alfonso XII).  
1898: The Disaster: Loss of Spain's last colonies, Cuba and the Philippines  
1909: Tragic Week in Barcelona.  
1923-1930: Dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera, father of José Antonio, founder of the Falange.  
1931: DECLARATION OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC.
Constitution.

1934: Revolt and repression of the miners in Asturias.
Feb. 1936: Landslide victory of the Popular Front.
July 1936: Assassination of Calvo Sotelo.
17-18 July: Rising of the garrison at Melilla in Morocco.

1936:
Francisco Franco made Supreme Military Commander of the Nationalist forces.
The legal Government in Madrid.
José Antonio Primo de Rivera captured and executed in Valencia.

November:
Government moved to Valencia.

1937:
Bombing of Guernica.
Government moved to Barcelona.

1939:
Fall of Barcelona.
Government moved back to Valencia.
Fall of Valencia, and then of Madrid.
End of Civil War.

1939-1975: DICTATORSHIP OF FRANCISCO FRANCO BAHAMONDE.
1939-1945: The hungry years.
1945-1953: The noche negra.
1948: Prince Juan Carlos brought to Spain.
1953: Treaty with the U.S.A.
American bases in Spain.
Concordat with the Vatican.
1963-1969: Beginnings of the economic 'miracle'.
Growth of tourism.
1969: Prince Juan Carlos named as successor to Franco.
1970s: 'Pre-post-Francoism'.
Nov. 20, 1975: Death of Franco.
1976: Referendum on political reform.
1977: General elections.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

'It seems to me that chastity is a dynamism and a source of life, while obedience basically tends to create dependence rather than freedom.'

This comment, made by a nun in Madrid in 1983, articulates a number of the central elements of an ancient way of life for women that is named and sanctioned in the Roman Catholic Church as the monastic or religious life. The words were spoken out of a woman's experience of a period of rapid and far-reaching change, at a time when the institution, on the basis of this ancient way, is beginning to reassert control over the individual initiatives of members. In this context, they suggest both the spiritual and social principles fundamental in the choice by women of the religious life, and the radical distortion of these principles by their practical realization within particular formations of social relations and a structurally unequal distribution of power.

The context of the study

This thesis is about a group of Spanish nuns who belong to a teaching Congregation\(^1\) that was founded in France in 1800. These women are part of an international Congregation, the Society of the Sacred Heart, which numbers some five to six thousand members (CONFER 1980:601) and whose central administration is in Rome. In Spain in 1981-82, the number of nuns was just under one thousand (Catalogue de la Société du Sacré Cœur de Jésus). They are divided into two administrative Provinces\(^2\): the North, and the Centre-South, although the division runs not so much north-south as diagonally (see Figure 2).

The North, which has about 450 members, includes the geographical provinces

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\(^1\)The terms 'congregation', 'order', 'association', and others had, until the promulgation of a new Code of Canon Law in 1984, strict canonical definitions within the Roman Catholic Church. The differences, however, are of more interest to canon lawyers than to the general reader, and I use the terms throughout the thesis, as do most people both within and without the Roman Church loosely and interchangeably.

\(^2\)I use a capital letter here, and throughout the thesis, to distinguish the administrative Provinces of the Congregation from the geographical provinces of Spain.
Fig. 2 The Congregation's Spanish Provinces and Their Principal Centres, 1982.

(Based on the Catalogue de la Société des Sacrés Chemins, 1982 ed.)
or regions of Catalonia, the Basque Country, Navarra, Aragón, Valencia, Almería, and Mallorca. The Northern Province, like its units of Catalonia and the Basque Country in relation to the rest of Spain, has the reputation of progressiveness in relation to its sister Province of the Centre-South. This latter Province, centred in Madrid, numbers around 500 members, and unites the geographical provinces or regions of Madrid, Soria, Eastern Andalucía, Western Andalucía, Galicia, the Canary Islands, and Portugal. It is the Centre-South Province, particularly the communities in Madrid itself, that form the basis of this study.

The nuns who make up these communities fall into two distinct, though partially overlapping, categories. These I will call the Civil War generation - those with personal memories, whether as adults or children, of events of the Republic (1931-36) and Civil War (1936-39) - and the post-Civil War generation. They also incorporate in their own living experience two strikingly different kinds of religious life. These can be clearly distinguished from each other on the basis of the changes that took place in the Roman Church after the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and in the Society as a result of this after 1967. The two kinds of religious life to some extent parallel the generation categories. The women of the Civil War generation were profoundly formed not only by the social and political events of their time, but also by a strongly ideological tradition that incorporated them, as members of a religious order, within a particular set of social relations. These defined their position as women in the Church as subordinate, and their role in Spanish society - as Catholic educators of the middle class - as dominant.

The other group of women, those of the post-Civil War generation, were also part of this tradition both through their families and through their own experiences in their earlier years in the Society. Their novitiate and early training was as stern as that of the older women, their patriarchally interpreted position as women in the Church and their alignment as Catholic educators with the dominant middle class in Spanish society equal. But most of this group at the time of Vatican II were still in the period regarded in the Society as probationary and had not made the final commitment of permanent vows. Most of them were still studying, in one way or another, many with university degrees still to come. They had grown up in a period in which Spain was finally beginning to emerge from its entrapment in an anachronistic system of social relations that had been the determinative influence in

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2 All these numbers relating to the Congregation are approximate because of the relative fluidity of membership.
the country for a century and a half. Their experience of the traditional forms of religious life was therefore direct and significant, but not in general as deep as that of the older nuns. Their experience of Spanish society was structured more by the radical transformations in economic and social relations beginning to take place than by the ideological battles and historical contradictions left over from the past.

Both of these groups of women were affected by the changes that followed Vatican II. Their responses were rooted in their earlier experiences, and it is these experiences that have largely determined the direction of change in the Centre-South Province since 1967. It is not just, therefore, that the contemporary situation can be understood only with reference to the past. Rather, the experience of these women in the ideology and practices of traditional religious life constructed them as social agents in terms of clear and specific dispositions (Bourdieu 1979:15, 72). This occurred on the basis of two operative principles, both fundamentally derived from the nuns’ work of education. One was the commitment through their schools to the reproduction, before 1967, of a particular social formation and distribution of power in Spanish society. The other was the opportunity for limited autonomy offered to them in their professional work as educators for experiences of autonomy, even within the rigid traditional forms. This, I will suggest, was the implicit dynamic of their vow of chastity, thus realized in fragmentary fashion in their commitment to education. I will argue that these were the experiences that provided a necessary satisfaction for many women in traditional religious life and an essential basis for their response to change. Their work in education, therefore, and the ways in which different women carried this out, provided the continuity between their lives before 1967 and the vast changes that have taken place since then.

My data on the lives of these women was actively collected over a three-and-a-half year period in Madrid (1981-84). My knowledge of the Society, however, goes back much further than this, to my eight years as a pupil in one of their boarding-schools, and then a further eight years as a member of the Congregation. Most of this earlier experience was in Australia, although it also included a year spent in the Society’s House of Studies in England, some months at the central house in Rome (the Mother House), and a short visit to one of the communities in Bombay. This

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4 Bourdieu’s comment on the question of generation conflict is here particularly apt, I think: Generation conflicts oppose not age-classes separated by natural properties, but habitus which have been produced by different modes of generation, that is, by conditions of existence which, in imposing different definitions of the impossible, the possible, and the probable, cause one group to experience as natural or reasonable practices or aspirations which another group finds unthinkable or scandalous, and vice versa (Bourdieu 1979:78).
previous and intimate knowledge of the Order formed an essential and taken-for-granted background to my relationship with the nuns in Madrid: a knowledge that could be, and was, taken for granted by all of us, despite geographical distances and distinct cultures, because of the unchallenged universality and uniformity of structures and practices in the Order before 1967.

This uniformity was not unique to the Society of the Sacred Heart. It was common to virtually all women's religious Congregations up until the Second Vatican Council, and was part of an historical process that situated these Congregations within a particular ideological system. The comprehensive nature of this uniformity and its impact on the women who lived it in their everyday lives has been noted by other writers (Fuchs Ebaugh 1977; Campbell-Jones 1979). It would indeed be difficult to write about nuns and not take this aspect into account, since it was the context of the institutional definition of nuns in the Church. The principles that had developed historically as structuring religious life for women also determined the organization of the Society from the time of its foundation in a way that distorted the very initiative of the foundresses. It meant that the nuns in the communities in Madrid internalized their earliest experiences of religious life in a way, based on their embodiment through constant practices (Bourdieu 1979:94), that makes them still generative of attitudes and actions and an essential aspect of their present structuring activity. Some of the nuns, those who have responded more negatively or selectively to change, continue to base their practices in the past; they do this through a principle of nostalgia that is not necessarily so much a sentimental yearning as a mental and bodily memory 'beyond the reach of consciousness' (Bourdieu 1979:94). For the women who have responded more creatively to change - and these include women of the Civil War generation, although these are a minority - the past also remains in many ways the measure of the present, often in what they see as a resurgence of principles derived from what is for them a largely rejected tradition.

For these reasons, the women of the Centre-South Province continue to be caught between principles developed on the basis of traditional religious life, and those derived from the changes initiated by the Vatican Council. These changes are certainly the most striking aspect of the life of the nuns today, and their effects are impossible to ignore. Their context, however, because of the earlier experiences of

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5Unless, perhaps, one were writing about an enclosed order, such as Williams (1981); although it seems to me that one of the problems of what is in general a fine paper is precisely that she does ignore the impact of Vatican II. The result of this is a static picture of a group which, even though part of an older tradition that was to some extent insulated from the more radical changes, nevertheless felt some ripples.
most of the nuns and the paucity of recruits over the past fifteen years, remains the
principles of traditional religious life, and there was a largely tacit acknowledgement
in my contact with the nuns that this past was always referentially present for all of
us. In describing it therefore (Part I), I have drawn on my own as well as my
informants' experience in a way that was validated by the latters' general acceptance
of my informal analyses of this period.\(^6\)

My relations with the nuns operated on a number of different levels because of
my general situation in Madrid that included family and other commitments.
Although I announced to them from the beginning my intention of carrying out a
study of the Province, the first eighteen months of my stay involved mainly informal,
though constant contacts with a number of different groups. These included three
women from one particular community; a friend from Rome who had since left the
Congregation; one of the schools where my daughter was warmly accepted as a
student; a nun from the English Province; and an Australian nun whom I had known
for a long time and who visited Madrid several times from Rome as a representative
of the central governing team of the Order.

I began formally and consistently gathering data at the beginning of the school
year in September, 1982, and continued this (remorselessly) till Christmas, 1983, that
is, over a period of a full school year, a summer, and another term. Over this time, I
attended all the meetings in two different schools of the Management Committee
(\textit{Equipo Directivo}) and many staff meetings and classes. I visited all the
communities and other schools in Madrid several times, some with regularity, others
once or twice; and I made trips to Granada, Barcelona, and Bilbao. The trips to the
Northern Province were made in order to get some idea of the extent of the often-
mentioned differences between this Province and that of the Centre-South, and in
Barcelona and Bilbao I visited several schools and communities with this in mind. I
also had an extended interview with a previous Superior General of the Society.\(^7\) In
Granada, I visited the school and several communities, spent a working day at the

\(^6\) This comment does not presume to expect complete acceptance of my formal analysis of
the past.

I should point out, moreover, the entire contingency of this knowledge and experience that I
shared with my informants to my actual choice of topic. I was in Madrid rather than, say,
Dacca, because I had accompanied my husband there on a posting, and the only people I knew
who might rescue me from becoming an incorporated wife within the diplomatic community
(see Callan & Ardener 1984) were the Spanish friends I had made ten years previously among
the nuns in Rome. My choice of topic and fieldwork venue, then, did not arise at all from a
wish to go back to my own roots, though in many ways it turned out like this.

\(^7\) I had met her in Rome where she had, in fact, presided at a distance, with support and
love, over my decision to leave Congregation.
novitate, and had long conversations with another friend from Rome who had also since left the Order. My closer contacts over this whole period included women of the Civil War as well as the post-Civil War generations.

In the last seven months of my stay, I spent most of my time gathering statistical and library data, and following up such contacts as the EFE journalist in charge of press releases on education. My contact with the nuns also continued, of course, over this period, though once again at a more relaxed and informal - though greatly enriched - level.

The contrast between the lifestyle of the nuns whom I worked with in Madrid and that of their earlier days was remarkable. In these earlier experiences, the nuns had embraced the Christian injunction to leave all and follow the man-God Jesus in the form in which this injunction had been increasingly institutionalized within the Church since more or less the fifth century. The religious life was consequently defined in terms of a lifelong commitment to the three vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. The women then lived in large, enclosed convents in hierarchically structured communities. They wore a religious habit, and were addressed as ‘Mother’ or ‘Sister’. Their days were centred on the chapel and were permeated, even for those engaged in teaching, by a sense of the primacy of prayer. Silence was the norm, to be broken only when really necessary. Every moment of their day was accounted for, and their use of it formally sanctioned by the local Superior. Order and regularity defined the way in which the nuns lived.

In Madrid in 1981, on the contrary, the majority of the nuns wore ordinary clothes and were known, in community and outside it, including by the students in the schools, by their given names. All lived in small to medium-sized communities, many in flats, where they shared the cooking and household chores. Prayer was a matter of individual responsibility and each person organized her own time in relation to her particular commitments. People were coming and going all through the day and often the night as well. Many evenings were spent chatting informally and watching television.

These two contrasting experiences of religious life by the nuns I knew in Madrid form the material for this thesis, which thus falls clearly into two parts that reflect

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8 This was very relevant to developments concerning the educational bill introduced by the Socialist government in 1983 (the LODE) which will be looked at in Chapter 10. EFE is the national newsagency, established in 1939 (Graham 1984:233).

9 Where there was a difference between the names used by community and friends and by, for example, students, it was normally in the use of the familiar family name by the more intimate group, and the full given name by others. A MaríaVi, for example, might be known to students (though not necessarily so) as María Victoria.
the duality they have themselves lived. It is, moreover, this very duality that provides the context for their present action.

**Aspects of the argument**

It is the contention of this thesis that, for the women of the Centre-South Province in Spain, the choice of religious life was fundamentally an option for chastity, and that chastity in this context acted for them, as it has acted historically for other women,\(^{10}\) as an option for autonomy.\(^{11}\) This was based on a move by them that involved taking control over their own sexuality and reproductive potential, and therefore included a rejection of their socially defined domestic role. The practical expression of this choice of chastity as autonomy for the women in this study was their professional work in education.

Opposed to the principle of autonomy in the institution of religious life, however, was, I shall argue, the principle of obedience; I suggest that the contradiction between chastity and obedience has been the central contradiction in the nuns' lives. This was radically so in their living of the traditional forms of religious life, as I shall demonstrate. In their contemporary situation in Madrid, it is re-emerging as an essential structuring element acting to reassert many of those traditional principles.

Fundamental to this process has been and is the nuns' position within particular sets of social relations. One such system of relations belongs to their membership as part of an international Congregation in the Roman Church. The other, and closely related, is based on their position within Spanish society. Both systems include contradictions that have been central for the nuns, both before and after the Council. The contradiction that has arisen from their position in the Church is that between chastity and obedience. In acting within the institution of the Church, the nuns situated themselves within a distribution of power that is radically located in an interpretation of social relations both hierarchical and patriarchal. By becoming part of a formal institution within the Church, especially

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\(^{10}\) This is supported if one looks at the historical periods when there was an upsurge and assertion in women's orders, e.g., in the 10th, 13th, 17th, 19th centuries. These were all periods when the prevailing power relations came under threat or began to break down.

\(^{11}\) I am not suggesting that this option was a conscious or, in general, a recognized motive by women themselves. Skinner's distinction between *intention* and *motive* is useful here, I think. He suggests that motive operates at a level of awareness, and may be seen as the reason why a person does something. Intention concerns what they actually do by a particular action. He goes on to say that 'it is these intentions, not the agent's motives, which we need to recover in order to decode the meaning of a social action' (1972:117). The option for chastity, in this sense, acts at the level of intention rather than of motive.
before Vatican II, the nuns accepted this interpretation as fixed and inevitable. Their very option for autonomy, therefore, placed them in a situation in the Church to which gender relations were fundamental. The Church, as it has developed historically through Rome, determines access to power in a number of ways and operates within complex sets of social relations. Two of these have directly affected the nuns. One is the principle of hierarchy that organizes the formal ministry and bestows the right of correct interpretation solely on those with a recognized position in this hierarchy. The second is the fundamentally patriarchal legitimation of the hierarchical principle. Within this set of relations determining the distribution of power in the Church, women, for no other reason than their gender, have no right of access at all. They are therefore, by a definition based on gender, subordinate.

This context of patriarchal domination in the Church - which has survived the challenges of Vatican II - displaced chastity as the central determinant of practice for these women in their traditional religious life, and produced obedience as a main generative principle. Acting through the institution of religious life to take control back from these women, obedience has constituted for the nuns a contradiction between freedom and unfreedom, autonomy and dependence.

For the nuns in Madrid, this historically produced contradiction ensured that gender relations in traditional religious life remained the principal determinant of their position despite the potential challenge of chastity. At the same time, their Church affiliation was determinative, too, for their position in Spanish society, and led to a contradiction in their work of education itself between what may be called its public and its private aspects. In its private aspect, the nuns' educational work was, I have suggested, the practical realization of chastity as autonomy. This was so for the women both because of the avenue it provided of greater access to knowledge, an important element in the practice of interpretation, and in the scope it gave them for personal action. In its public aspect, education has been, since the foundation of the Congregation, the principal medium through which the nuns have entered into the social relations prevailing in the broader society. In Spain, particularly for the women of the Civil War generation, the Church’s relation with the State, and its battles since 1874 for the ideological control of education, meant that the nuns incorporated in their schools interpretations and practices that acted effectively to reproduce existing social relations.

The changes brought about by the nuns after the Vatican Council have to some extent altered this emphasis on social reproduction, but their efforts in the schools are being again partially distorted by structures firmly based in tradition. I will show that, as obedience has acted to subvert chastity for these women, and to reproduce
their position of subordination in the Church, so their commitment to education as a generative process was transformed for a long time into connivance with the prevailing relations of power in Spanish society. This situation has now become for them a dilemma.

The situation that the nuns in Madrid experienced before Vatican II, therefore, was one in which their scope for action as 'knowledgeable, capable agents' (Giddens 1982:199) was strictly limited both by their position of subordination in the Church and their reproductive practice in education. Since the Council, much of their activity has been concerned with attempting through education to transform, not reproduce, existing social relations, and has resulted in a far greater realization for them of the potential of chastity as autonomy. This notable change raises the question of the extent to which these women were at any stage in practice free to determine the terms of their choice: that is, the question of their action as part of the more general issue of the possibility and limits, within asymmetrical power relations and subject to ideology, of positive action by individuals and groups in society.

I shall maintain that there are two aspects to this question. One is that human action has certain effects, not always dependent on the immediate intention of the actors, because it is carried out within particular sets of social relations that have been historically - and therefore structurally (see Giddens 1979:5) - developed. At the same time, these effects, and the social relations on which they are based, are mediated for individuals and groups, at the level both of personal understanding and of practice, by interpretation. This question of interpretation and its relation to practice raises the issue of ideology. I shall argue that both the action of the nuns, and their own and others' interpretation of their action, was ideologically determined for the Civil War generation in two ways. This was on the basis, first, of gender relations by their position within the overall relations of power in the Church, and, second, of class relations on the basis of their alignment with the Spanish middle class. Such ideological determination was based on the way in which they as individuals and their perceptions were constructed through the social groups in which they lived. This process of construction developed within a complex set of relations of power, both in the Church and in Spanish society, that affected them as individuals and as a group in ways that depended on where they were situated within the overall social formation. One of the principal effects of this for the nuns of that generation and for the younger women in the traditional period resulted from the promotion of interests based on the patriarchal relations in the Church. In this, as I shall demonstrate, the main ideological means of control became the symbolic order. It was the use of the symbolic order as the fundamental principle of interpretation.
that made it possible to subsume into obedience both the spiritual (the sense of transcendence, of the ineffable, the sacred, the unpredictable, the holy - the noumen) and the social ideals that led women into religious life. Obedience as instituted in practice belonged, therefore, to the processes of ideology that act to reduce and limit interpretation and to fix it in the interests of dominant social groups.

The essential change for the nuns brought about by the Vatican Council, therefore, was a change in interpretation, and the challenge by some groups in the Church to power based on the hierarchical monopoly of correct interpretation. The experience of the nuns since 1967 has been to work out new interpretations in practice. In so doing, they have gradually extended the limits of their own interpretation in a way that has expanded their possibilities of action. Again, central to this process has been, as I will show, access to knowledge and information and the work of education which, in some cases, has itself become a challenge to existing relations of power, both in the Church and in Spanish society.

Knowledge and the work of education, then, have been central in the experience of the nuns in both forms of religious life and provide the continuity between the two experiences. They have also been the basis of the shift since Vatican II in the nuns' alignment with other groups in the Church and in Spanish society that situates them within other sets of relations of power and makes gender relations, though still important, no longer totally definitive of their position as it was in traditional religious life. Nevertheless, although in both periods education provided some opportunities for the nuns to act as autonomous agents, the difference in the quality of these two experiences is more important to their present action than any sense of continuity. I wish to look, therefore, at some of the theoretical issues raised by this situation.

The most demanding of these issues is an explanation of how it was possible for these women - who had willingly, at least at one level, chosen and submitted to the highly structured, traditional life of the convent - to change. One nun, now in her fifties, commented in relation to the effects of change, 'As a person, I am totally different from what I was twenty years ago - in every respect'. Yet she, like virtually everyone else in the Centre-South Province, had not pushed for change, or even recognized any need or desire for it. Nevertheless, when change was offered from within the Church itself, many of the women not merely accepted but enthusiastically and creatively embraced it. This is important, not because it is a unique phenomenon, but because, given the encompassing nature of religious belief and practice for a committed elite such as the nuns, it raises questions that are central to current anthropological debate.
The theoretical context of the study

Basic to these issues is, as Giddens defines it, ‘an understanding of human behaviour as action’. He goes on to suggest that such an understanding has to be made compatible with a focus upon the structural components of social institutions or societies; and that notions of power and domination are logically, not just contingently, associated with the concepts of action and structure (1982:197).

In view of what I shall be saying later in Chapter 6, about the totalizing effect of the symbolic order in traditional religious life, it is worth quoting Giddens’ argument at greater length.

Anyone who participates in a social relationship, forming part of a social system produced and reproduced by its constituent actors over time, necessarily sustains some control over the character of that relationship or system. Power relations in social systems can be regarded as relations of autonomy and dependence; but no matter how imbalanced they may be in terms of power, actors in subordinate positions are never wholly dependent, and are often very adept at converting whatever resources they possess into some degree of control over the conditions of reproduction of the system. In all social systems there is a dialectic of control, such that there are normally continually shifting balances of resources, altering the overall distribution of power. While it is always an empirical question just what power relations pertain within a social system, the agency/power connection, as a connection of logical entailment, means that an agent who does not participate in the dialectic of control ipso facto ceases to be an agent (1982:198-99).

This discussion relates to the theme I raised earlier, that is, the question of the possibilities and limits of action by individuals and groups within the constraints - structural and otherwise - determined by society. These constraints derive ultimately from historically produced relations of power. And, as Foucault points out, power itself produces (1977:194). What it produces is ‘reality’, that is, the relations within which the members of a society must operate. In the case of Roman Church there are three different, but related, sets of power relations that have affected the nuns at different times. Fundamental to them all have been, as I have suggested, gender relations. But because in the Church access to the formal ministry confers hierarchically differentiated rights to correct interpretation, gender relations in this context also incorporate this second set of relations based on access to knowledge and interpretation. For the nuns in traditional religious life, these two sets were determinative, and operated in collusion with, although they are not the same as, those based on the material mode of production. These relations therefore remained constant even while the material mode of production was changing in the 19th and
early 20th centuries.\textsuperscript{12}

There is, however, a third set of relations of power that have been important historically for the Church. These are the relations of power based on the ownership of property and accumulation of wealth.\textsuperscript{13} These are linked to the distribution of power based on class in society itself. It is only in the new forms of religious life that the nuns have developed since 1967 that they have been faced with these relations as an issue. At the same time, their class affiliation is central, as it was in the Province in the traditional period. The effects of class alignment on the action taken by the nuns has, however, changed. Class membership has become in many ways not the context of acquiescent practice committed to social reproduction. Rather, it has become the basis for challenge by the nuns to different aspects of the relations of power in the Church, and to some extent in Spanish society. It is largely their work in education as professional women that determines their membership in the dominant middle class, and this membership gives them access to greater knowledge and, with it, greater freedom of interpretation and action.

For the nuns of the Centre-South Province, these developments over both periods of their lives have been experienced in terms of the contradiction between chastity and obedience. This contradiction encoded whole sets of historical transformations, cultural systems, and organizations of socio-economic relationships. Central to its operation in both periods has been the extent to which the nuns themselves have been in control of the processes of interpretation. I will argue that, in the traditional period, they were not, and that the essential change brought about by Vatican II was precisely to open up this question of control. The definitions that I will use in the discussion are therefore important, and I wish here to clarify some of the theoretical concepts I will be using.

\textsuperscript{12} This comment refers also more generally to the historical development of religious life for women, in which the forms remained based in many ways in the feudal mode from which they originated even after the transformation of this mode into a capitalist one. Godelier (1982) deals with the problems raised by this kind of issue in talking about the place of what he calls the \textit{idéal} element of reality.

\textsuperscript{13} This, rather than gender relations, has been central to men's historical experience in religious life. While men have also had the two vows of chastity and obedience, their effects for them have been different from those for women, since men at least have access to power on the basis of hierarchy in the Church. Fundamental for them in the process of challenge to relations of power in the Church has been the interpretation and practice of the third vow, that of poverty. This has acted historically as a challenge to the relations of power based on property. The question of the right to interpretation for those not sanctioned by their position in the hierarchy has also been a fundamental issue, as it has for women, but in quite different ways.
Central theoretical issues

There are six principal theoretical constructs that I will use throughout my analysis that seem to me to require a statement of position. These can be briefly named, if not as briefly disposed of, as history, ideology, meaning and interpretation, the symbolic order, gender role, and contradiction. What I wish to do here is not to defend particular positions within the discussion surrounding each of these concepts, but to indicate some of the fundamental ways in which they relate to and therefore help to define each other, and consequently their analytical value - for the interpretations are mine, not necessarily those of the nuns - for this study.

The fundamental relations between history, ideology, and interpretation have already been sketched. It was Marx who, in his early works and with Engels, identified the radically productive nature of history in relation to social organization.

In [history] at each stage there is found a material result: a sum of productive forces, a historically created relation of individuals to nature and to one another, which is handed down to each generation from its predecessor; a mass of productive forces, capital funds and conditions, which, on the one hand, is indeed modified by the new generation, but also on the other prescribes for it its conditions of life and gives it a definite development, a special character. It shows that circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances (1973:44).

Social organization, social relations (including and especially those of domination and subordination), and, perhaps more importantly, social institutions and structures are, as Giddens (1979) stresses, the product of historical, not logical, practices carried out by human agents. This is done within a set of concrete circumstances that act, principally through institutions of which religious life is one, to produce and to reproduce the social conditions of further practice.14

This is the context also of the practice of interpretation and signification. I have a semiotic perspective on these practices in which I see human agents constructing signifieds - that is, attributing meaning - on the basis of a signifier; in this process, signifiers are themselves constantly socially invented through the framework of social relations and practices. The practice of interpretation (signification) is therefore 'an integral element of social practices in general' (Giddens 1979:39) and, with them, constitutes the process of discourse.

These social relations and practices are based not exclusively but radically on the distribution of power. That is, they are carried out within institutionally supported asymmetrical power relations, and define the meaning of words or other

14 An important gloss on this view is that things could have been different.
symbols ‘according to the positions held by those who employ them’ (Thompson 1984:234). Meaning, therefore, like the relations that define it, is historically contingent, and depends not only on ideologically legitimated symbolic systems but also on individual and collective practices and representations. These practices, developed within a world taken-for-granted, and therefore defined both by social structures and by ideology, nevertheless operate also as strategies for action. Combining as they do people's whole past experience and the dispositions produced by this (the \textit{habitus}), such practices are both reproductive and generative (Bourdieu 1980:88-92). They are also necessarily inconsistent, since they reflect not only the individual’s partial grasp of the complexities of society but also its contradictions. Practices are, in other words, based on the individual’s interpretation of the network of messages proffered by their social experience.

The relevance of this is clear for explaining both the stability for so long of the forms of traditional religious life, and the changes for and by its members after the Second Vatican Council. Fundamental to both situations was the practice of interpretation by the nuns themselves. In traditional religious life, this process was dominated by an unchallenged ideological promotion of symbolic interpretation. Vatican II changed the \textit{official} representations of the religious message, without changing the patriarchal relations which helped to define interpretation. Nevertheless, the Council opened up the possibility of alternative interpretations and thus shattered the hold of an ideology that had acted to fix meanings for the nuns.

Ideology, in my understanding, is the interpretive practice that mobilizes meaning for the maintenance of relations of domination (Thompson 1984:5). It is therefore an interpretation based on interests, whether of class, gender, age, estate, or any other sectional group in which membership assures greater access to resources, whether material or symbolic. Hence it acts in a number of analytically distinct but practically unified ways. Both Giddens (1979:93-4) and Thompson (1984:131) list three of these as central. The first is the construction of legitimacy: the representation of sectional interests as universal ones. The second is the denial or transmutation of contradictions. The third goes to the heart of the action of ideology in the lives of the nuns particularly in the traditional period, that is, the process of reification,

by representing a transitory, historical state of affairs as if it were permanent, natural, outside of time. ‘To re-establish the dimension of society ‘without history’ at the heart of historical society’: that, argues Lefort in a remarkable essay, is the role of ideology (Thompson 1984:131).

This is done, it must not be forgotten, in the interests of dominant groups in order to sustain such interests (Giddens 1979:195).
It was Barthes (1972) who defined this process of reification as that of myth. The very principle of myth, he says, is that it transforms history into nature (129).

Myth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal... In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences (142-3).

For Barthes, myth reduces and fixes meaning, thus absolutizing what is not absolute. It is therefore not to be distinguished from ideology. Both act in the same way to impose not just false interpretations but false interpretations that claim to be absolute. Naturalizing myth is the ideological process; it is belief as it relates to social - and political - structures, and results, through mystification, in legitimation. Mythical interpretation as I shall use it throughout the study, therefore, is ideological, and works on the basis of dehistoricizing social relations and events. I shall oppose it to what I shall call historical interpretation, a signifying practice that recognizes the essentially contingent character of social relations and events and accepts that they are produced in and through time. In this interpretation, therefore, social relations and events are subject to transforming action in which the protagonist is the human agent acting as producer (Barthes 1972:146). Historical interpretation therefore recognizes multiplicity of meanings and places human action and the possibility of transformation at the centre of social life.

It was this kind of interpretation, I shall argue, that emerged for the nuns as a result of Vatican II. In their previous experience, their interpretation had been essentially mythical and had been mediated through the symbolic order. Symbolic interpretation had therefore become mythical for them through the ideological appropriation of the symbols used in their religious life into a total and fixed system. The result had been the specific framework of Catholic practice, that acted at the levels of explanation, sublimation, and legitimation. The symbolic system developed on this basis had become for the nuns in the traditional period the overriding context of their practice of interpretation. Through institutionalizing particularly the monastic forms, Catholic practice translated all its elements into symbols and subjected them to mythical interpretation.

Leaving aside the classical analytical discussion of the differences between icon, index, sign, symbol, and other related concepts, I would suggest that Eco situates the symbol in a context that illuminates the relation between mythical interpretation and the social relations embodied in traditional religious life. He argues, based on an understanding of 'text' as 'a network of different messages depending on different codes' (1976:141), that the symbol is
a textual modality, a way of producing and of interpreting the aspects of a text... There is an actualization of the symbolic mode when, through a process of invention, a textual element which could be interpreted as a mere imprint, or a replica, or a stylization is produced. But it can also be identified, by a sudden process of recognition, as the projection ... of a content nebula (1976:162).

Symbols, Eco suggests, do not just 'stand for' something else in an indirect and arbitrary way. On the contrary, he says,

with symbols and by symbols one indicates what is always beyond one's reach (130).

The genuine instances of a symbolic mode seem to be those where neither the sender nor the addressee really wants or is able to outline a definite interpretation (137).

A symbol [therefore] has to be textually produced (157).

Symbols in this understanding are produced, and the symbolic mode is a productivity or practice within, let me repeat, the historically produced forms of social life. The particular susceptibility of symbols to ideological use within these forms depends on the nebulous character of their referent which may in fact be explicit at the level of explanation (for example, the kingdom of heaven) and implicit at the level of practical effect (for example, the prevailing system of social relations) (see Thompson 1984:36). To talk about the symbolic order, therefore, seems to me to go beyond the related question of belief. Symbols, and their common expression in symbolic or ritual action, provide the possibility for beliefs to be expressed in practice. Symbols can be seen as active, both in producing dispositions and in modifying the process of interpretation or signification.

The importance of symbol and the symbolic mode in relation to religious belief is clear and, in this context, it is interesting to return to what has become one of the classic definitions of religion, that of Geertz (although Geertz himself might not approve of such a reinterpretation). He begins not, as might have been expected, with a definition of religion as a system of beliefs but as

a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (1975:90; emphases mine).

This definition must be seen in relation to what has been said earlier about the situation of interpretation within existing forms of domination and legitimation, and about the role of myth. Geertz's symbolic system, although not at all as he himself saw it, is as much about the production and reproduction of social relations through drawing individuals and groups into connivance with this social order (Bourdieu's
'misrecognition') as it is about insight into the transcendent. I will try to demonstrate later that this was precisely what happened in traditional religious life. Through its incorporation into an ideologically defined symbolic order, the forms of traditional religious life both embodied and reproduced particular sets of social relations that were absolutized and reified by reference to the spiritual world. This incorporation into the symbolic order was achieved, I shall argue, by the transformation of the historical and practical elements of religious life - dress, food, space, time - into codes. Because of the systematic relation of these elements of religious life and the way in which they were used, both by the nuns themselves and by others, to create a significant (meaningful) whole, the concept of code, vexed though it may be, seems to me a useful explanatory tool. Seen within the practice of signification in traditional religious life, these codes also reinforced its incorporation into ideology, since codes act essentially to fix meaning, and their interpretation relies, as it did for the nuns, on meaning being so fixed.

Eco provides perhaps the most detailed discussion of the nature of codes in the context of interpretation, seeing it, together with a theory of sign production, as fundamental to the semiotic enterprise (1976:3). Extrapolating from his analysis, one may say that codes form part of the practice of signification by combining, in a systematic way, the elements of one system (for example, a semantic system) with the elements of another (for example, a set of behavioural responses). In so doing, it is not, claims Eco, that they organize signs.

It is more correct to say that codes provide the rules which generate signs as concrete occurrences in communicative discourse. Therefore the classical notion of 'sign' dissolves itself into a highly complex network of changing relationships (1976:49).

This 'highly complex network of changing relationships' is precisely the network of social relations produced by historical practice. Not only the sign, therefore, but also the Saussurean signified become, in this analysis, 'multi-layered and fluctuating,... constituted as much by the conditions of production as by the conditions of reception' (Thompson 1984:65).

These conditions of production also, of course, produce the signifier, which is therefore also continually constructed. Fundamental to the historically produced relations within which the signifier is invented are those that determine domination and subordination. One of the central themes in the study is what I think is a key descriptor of this signifier, that is the monastic regime, which was itself the basis of a particular symbolic interpretation and constituted the symbolic order for the nuns in traditional religious life. The structural framework of their everyday life, based on
the organization of their practical experience into the various codes that made it meaningful, constructed the pattern of their everyday life as a signifier.

This was done on the basis of an opposition that was central for the nuns, as for all other members of religious orders and in fact for many Christians. This was the opposition between the world and the spiritual. This was more often phrased by the nuns themselves as an opposition between the worldly and the religious, and included all aspects not only of their own lives, but of society. The opposition was expressed practically for them in the traditional period by their physical separation from the world through enclosure. It was expressed morally as a constant judgement on actions and intentions. This practice of moral judgement also bound the nuns therefore into the system of symbolic domination. The opposition between the worldly and the religious became for them an unstable opposition, in which an individual was constantly in transition between one state and the other. On the one hand, an effective transformation of the worldly into the religious could be achieved with the help of divine grace. On the other hand, a slipping back from the religious state into the worldly - generally identified by the nuns at the level of motive (what they themselves referred to as ‘intention’) rather than of practice - placed a person in the realm of sin. The constant surveillance that the nuns placed on themselves and their actions and intentions subjected this question of sin to a process of infinite and subtle graduation that indicates another of the ways in which the symbolic order and practices of traditional religious life acted to subvert the nuns’ option for chastity as autonomy. Through an interpretation of individual perfection as belonging to the religious sphere, which might be called the ideology of autonomy, the practices of this monastic regime acted to make autonomy itself subject to symbolic control.

In my analysis I see all this as an attempt to fix the meaning of religious life when in fact the process of interpretation is much more open-ended. For these reasons I will talk about religious life, particularly in the traditional period, as a signifier rather than the way the nuns’ themselves refer to it, in the light of Vatican II, as a sign. Moreover, as a result of the Council and the changes in the forms of religious life that followed, this overriding codification of the traditional organization has been largely suppressed. I will suggest, however, that it remains as a powerful latent principle for the nuns of the Province.

The question of traditional religious life as a signifier raises the further issue of the vast difference between the nuns’ own understanding of their life, particularly in their traditional period, and what might be called the ‘objective’ meaning of their actions. Giddens explains this disjunction:
One of the main tasks of the study of the text, or indeed cultural products of any kind, must be precisely to examine the divergencies which can become instituted between the circumstances of their production, and the meanings sustained by their subsequent escape from the horizons of their creator or creators. These meanings are never 'contained' in the text as such, but are enmeshed in the flux of social life in the same way as its initial production was... In the enactment of social practices more generally, the consequences of actions chronically escape their initiators' intentions in processes of objectification (1979:44).

Fundamental to this process of objectification is, as we have seen, ideology; and part of ideology, as of myth, is the process of fixing of meaning, of reification, through which 'the difference of institution' is transformed into 'a natural distinction' (Bourdieu 1980:96). For these women in the period of traditional religious life, as I have suggested, the definitive naturalized difference was that based on gender, and this remains as an operative principle even today. It is therefore in relation to the unequal access to power institutionalized in the patriarchal Church that the nuns' practice of interpretation in both periods of their lives must be seen.

The fact that gender relations have become less central for these women since 1967 does not indicate a transformation of these relations in the Church but rather the nuns' own affirmation of alternative interpretations and their realignment with other groups that gives them a broader basis from which to act. Nevertheless, I shall show that the determinative contradiction between chastity and obedience, developed on the basis of gender relations and central for their experience in traditional religious life, remains an essential aspect of the present situation in the Province.

This contradiction has affected the nuns in a number of different ways. One of the most effective in their traditional period was the structural transformation of their option of chastity as autonomy into chastity as reinforcing their subordination. By a paradox constructed through interpretation, chastity became for the nuns in this period, not a rejection but an acceptance of their socially defined gender role. Within the total symbolic order imposed on them through the forms of traditional religious life, chastity became in practice an assertion not of autonomy but of femininity and submission. This was brought about again by the process of reducing and fixing meaning. Orthodox interpretation rejected the notion of chastity as control by these women over their own sexuality. Such a notion violates the order of social relations established by society for the control of the processes of reproduction. It also comes dangerously close to the alternative of the whore. Instead, chastity as embodied in the nuns was translated into the concept of virginity, a concept whose semantic load is, as Hastrup (1978:50) points out, defined by its position within the larger field of female sexuality, and thus maintained their definition as women in the Church as one
of sexual relation by omission. In the same process of affirming sexuality as central for the definition of the nuns while at the same time denying its physical fulfilment, orthodox interpretation also transferred the reproductive potential of the nuns into the symbolic order. Although virgins, they became spiritual mothers, a status constantly affirmed for one group of nuns in the Province by their formal title of 'Mother'.

Nevertheless, as I shall show, the choice of chastity did provide some experience of autonomy for the nuns in the traditional period, acting as a practical as well as a structural contradiction for them. And, in the very dialectic of contradiction, and in the experiences of autonomy through which these women glimpsed the possibility of alternatives, lay for them the impetus for change. I will show in Part II that the process of change undertaken by the nuns in the Centre-South Province after 1967 has been largely the working out in practice of the dynamic of chastity as control over their own lives. This they have tried to achieve through an initial rejection of mythical and symbolic interpretation, and a reappropriation of historical meaning in their lives. They have done this both in their creation of new forms of living and in their work of education. Insofar, however, as the contradiction between chastity and obedience remains generative for them, it has been transformed into conflict which, as Giddens suggests in contrast to contradiction, is the 'struggle [in time and space] between actors or collectivities expressed as definite social practices' (1979:131).

These, then, are the theoretical issues that I will address in my analysis. It remains only to outline the way in which I will apply them before beginning on the actual study.

Outline of the argument

The thesis is divided into two parts, reflecting the duality experienced by the nuns in the two distinct forms of religious life that they have lived. Part I (Chapters 2 to 6) deals with the traditional forms, that is, the life of the nuns before 1967. Part II (Chapters 7 to 11) looks at the processes of change, and the way in which these are related to, and continue to be influenced by, traditional practices and interpretations. The continuity between the two experiences, and therefore the link between the two parts of the thesis, is the work of education, through its effects both in the personal lives of the women and in situating them in particular positions in relation to the Spanish social formation.

15 The presence of contradiction is identified by Marx and Engels, it should be noted, as arising out of the division of labour that, in its first form, subjects wife and children to the husband (1973:35-36). In other words, they imply the reification of gender distinction as existing at the heart of the dialectic.
Chapters 2 to 6 examine the context of the nuns' experience in the traditional forms of religious life. One aspect of this is their place within historically developed sets of social relations both in the Church and in Spanish society. The Centre-South Province from this point of view is a product of an historical process that has included three essential strands. These strands are analytically distinguishable but acted in general harmony to define the life of the nuns. Chapter 2 looks at two of the strands that together form the international dimension of the Province, and provide the basic framework of practice for these women. The first is their membership in the Society of the Sacred Heart, an international Congregation founded at the beginning of the 19th century as part of a burgeoning of women's active religious orders in Europe. I shall argue that this striking growth represented one of the periods for women in which the vow of chastity in its generative sense as an option for independence struggled for realization in practice; that, as a result of the Industrial Revolution and its attendant radical changes in European society, the state of flux in social conditions and the challenge to existing power relations offered women an opportunity to seek fulfilment outside their domestic role. For women in the Society of the Sacred Heart, the choice of action was in education.

Nevertheless, these women, because of their incorporation into the unchallenged patriarchal relations of the Roman Catholic Church, and their acceptance of its ideology, only partially fulfilled the initial impetus to action. While education did provide a context for social action, the lives of the women in the traditional period were defined far more radically by the conditions produced by the second aspect of their international character: that of the Society as part of the tradition of women's religious orders in the Church as a whole. The development of these conditions will be looked at in the second part of the chapter.

Chapter 3 is concerned with the specifically Spanish character of the Province, and the conditions in Spanish society that were critical in determining the limits of action for the nuns. Basic to these elements were, up to the middle of the 20th century, the subsidiary role of capitalism, a situation that linked Spain with other Mediterranean countries. What this meant was the lack of a dominant middle class, and consequently, among other results, of a prevailing bourgeois ideology. The 19th century in Spain, with its see-saw politics, may be seen as the struggle of the forces of capitalism and of the middle class to achieve dominance. Secondly, and not unrelated to the first aspect, was the power of the Church in Spain and its historical association with the State, an association that will be examined in some detail because of its fundamental influence on both the general course of events in Spain and in fixing the nuns within a particular set of social relations.
Chapter 4 situates the nuns' work in education as the essential activity that has related them, both in the past and in the present, to the general social formation. It has done this through its fundamentally confessional character, that is, through the identification of the nuns with the positions and orientation of the Church. This identification in the traditional period meant the increasing importance of the political dimension of the nuns' educational practice, particularly in the period of the Second Republic, the Civil War, and the first two decades of the Franco years, and equated their membership in the Church with support for the Franco regime. Such historically produced circumstances helped to rigidify attitudes and dispositions among those women with personal experience of these events and to ensure for so long their promotion of an ideological education that was in so many ways at odds with their own personal realization of professional autonomy.

Chapter 5 looks at the other side of this situation and deals with the way in which the nuns actually experienced their lives in the traditional period. It looks at the daily lives of the women and the way in which this was mediated for different groups by their position within the internal ordering of social relations in the Society itself. I will argue that these relations reflected the distribution of power of the wider society, in terms of the public and domestic spheres, and that central to the place of individual women in this was their role in education. I will suggest at the same time that, particularly through their involvement in education, the nuns did have possibilities of limited access to responsibility and were able to create small spaces of autonomy. This was in spite of the all-encompassing control of an ideologically defined symbolic order that was central to the nuns' experience. I deal with this in Chapter 6 and suggest that the symbolic order dominated the personal as well as the public lives of the nuns, through the development of totalizing codes and the subsuming of all practice into obedience.

The contradiction generated by the subversion of the option of chastity for autonomy by obedience formed the context of the nuns' experience in the traditional period of their religious life and provided the indispensible basis for their later acceptance of change. This, I shall argue, was essentially a change in interpretation and that, given the nuns' acceptance of their position of subordination in the Church, it was only through a change in official interpretation that changes in practice could be brought about for the nuns.

Chapter 7 is in a sense the fulcrum of the thesis, and looks at the way in which this change in official interpretation was brought about by the Second Vatican Council and implemented at the international level of the Society of the Sacred Heart through a series of definitive General Chapters. The chapter examines the situation in
Spain and the concordance of pressures for change in Spanish society itself in the 1960s in the economic and political, as well as religious spheres. The combination of effects from these various spheres was crucial in providing the possibility of alternative interpretations for the women of both generations of the Centre-South Province, and demonstrate the essentially historical character of their social relations and practice.

Chapters 8 and 9 deal with the changes as they were experienced and then creatively developed by these women after 1967. Chapter 8 demonstrates the central importance of the nuns' change from mythical to historical interpretation, and as a result, their emergence from the dominance of the symbolic order. In the process, their experience of autonomy has meant the fulfilment of the dynamic of chastity. At the same time, as I will try to show, it has also constituted a possibly intolerable threat to the Society as an institution. Chapter 9 deals with the way in which the present action of the nuns continues to be constrained by structures and generative principles rooted in the traditional past and in the basic dispositions of many of the members of the Province who were radically formed by that past. One fundamental aspect of this is that the women in positions of authority in the institution are attempting, in what they see as a struggle for survival, to reimpose constraints on their members, since the realization of the potential of chastity by the nuns constitutes in practice a threat to the structure of relationships in the institution. This is being done within unaltered hierarchical and patriarchal relations within the Roman Catholic Church, and hence through an ideological reinterpretation of the symbolic order. Central to the reinterpretation in the Centre-South Province is the reinstitution of obedience. At the same time, because gender relations are no longer solely definitive for the nuns of the Province, the interpretation of poverty has become for them a central issue, as it has historically been for men's orders.

The contradictions in religious life have not, therefore, disappeared, and Chapters 10 and 11 deal with the ways in which these contradictions, as well as the interpretive practices of the nuns, are being worked out in relation to the contemporary world. I look at two different schools, and the ways in which the women's work there embodies their choices within the constraints of the Spanish educational and social systems. I will suggest (Chapter 10) that the nuns in the school in Aluche are developing choices based on historical interpretation and, as part of this, have attempted to move away from ideology and the dominance of the symbolic. The second school, Chamartín, is because of its historical development, I argue in Chapter 11, more directly caught up in the relations of power institutionalized in contemporary Spanish society and in the Province. It is therefore
still vulnerable to the dominance of ideology and the symbolic, despite ongoing attempts by the nuns to ground their practice in historical interpretation.

This, then, is the schematic and theoretical outline of the study. The analysis that it embodies was arrived at only after the extended contact with the nuns in Madrid, the process of gathering information and the ongoing discussion amongst us that it stimulated, and months of subsequent reading and reflection in which new theoretical insights had to be constantly checked against the lived experience of these women. It is a function of analysis to go beyond the perceptions of subjects as they engage in practice in their particular social environment, but the truth of explanation is assessable to the extent that these same people experience, on hearing or reading it, the satisfaction of recognition. In having been as faithful as possible to both their experience and my own, I hope that this recognition will be there. I offer the study in that hope.
PART I

TRADITION
CHAPTER 2
The International Context: The Congregation within Catholic Tradition.

Foundation of the Society as part of the new social order of the 19th century

The origins of the Society of the Sacred Heart are to be found in the social upheavals experienced in western Europe at the end of the 18th century. Madeleine Sophie Barat, the woman who is given the title of foundress of the Society, was born in Burgundy, in the village of Joigny, on December 12th 1779, just ten years before the final outbreak of the French Revolution.¹ Her father was a skilled artisan, a wine-cooper, and also owned a small vineyard. Her mother had had some formal education, more than her husband, and found an outlet for her dissatisfactions in an emotional dependence on her youngest child, Sophie. This is as far as these two people figure in the folk lore that grew up in the Congregation: the hard-working, inarticulate father; the better educated but highly emotional and unpredictable mother. Sophie herself emerges from this tradition as a gentle, perceptive, very spiritual girl whose lapses from duty were always speedily recognized and repented. Nor is it ever forgotten in the Society’s collective memory that this repentance was usually achieved under the stern guidance of her formidable brother Louis. Louis, a candidate for the priesthood, was eleven years Sophie’s senior. His self-appointed responsibility for his sister was formulated in the grimmest tradition of Christian penance and self-mortification. It was also he who was credited with the development - generally, in the folk history, in spite of her own happier and more carefree nature - of her intellectual gifts. In this accepted interpretation, without Louis, no Saint Madeleine Sophie.

Certainly his influence - whether positive or not - was profound. Certainly also he valued his sister’s remarkable ability, and demanded from her a dedication to

¹Most of this information on the early days of the Society is based on my own recollections of the folk history that surrounded us as students in the Congregation’s schools. I have relied for verification largely on Williams (1965 & 1978).
study that gave her an exceptional opportunity for realizing her talents. From the age of ten, while a new social order was emerging from the violent disintegration of the old, Sophie was led by Louis through a curriculum based on ‘the best educational traditions of the ancien régime’ (Williams 1965:13). This curriculum included Greek, Latin, modern languages, history and literature and even the more masculine disciplines of botany and astronomy. Louis gave her the same examinations in mathematics that he gave to his college classes, and would announce to them the next day: ‘I’m sorry, boys, but Mademoiselle Sophie has come out first again’. Literature was her best subject. She knew Corneille and Racine by heart, and as a reward Louis allowed her to learn Italian and Spanish. So she followed Dante through the Divine Comedy, and ‘That crazy Don Quijote gave me some gay moments. One day my mother and sister caught me in such a fit of laughter that they wondered if I had lost my mind. Translations haven’t the same spice or charm’ (Williams 1965:13; emphasis mine).^2

Such an education was more than unusual for the daughter of an artisan and small landholder, and was predictably labelled as outrageous by the neighbours. Sophie herself remembered later:

My poor parents had to bear a lot of blame from the neighbourhood for what my brother taught me. ‘What foolishness,’ they said, ‘to teach a frail girl studies so far above her condition! That little Sophie, with her head in her books and a pen in her hand, is getting useless ideas stuffed into her memory’ (1965:12).

It is clear that the woman who, in 1800, made her religious vows with three others in a simple ceremony marking the beginning of the Society of the Sacred Heart was in many ways remarkable. So, too, were many of the companions who joined her in those early days in Paris and Amiens, and later in other cities. Some of these had undertaken various hazardous enterprises during the Revolution, such as sheltering priests, ‘with a courage that had nothing feminine about it’ (Williams 1965:60). Others were women of considerable gifts and unconventional behaviour. Perhaps the most memorable, because the most vividly presented in the Society’s oral traditions, was Philippine Duchesne who, as a young girl,

followed a course of masculine studies with her cousins: history, mathematics, Dante. She learned painting with mediocre success and music with none; she undertook dancing ‘as though it were a problem in algebra’. When plans were made for her marriage she got a sympathetic aunt to take her up the hill for a visit to [the convent of] Sainte-Marie; once there, she

^n2It was not part of the Society’s folk history that Sophie, at the age of 15, also read the French translation of Clarissa Harlowe. She later ‘felt disproportionate remorse for this folly’ (Williams 1965:24).
went behind the grille. Her father recognized the Duchesne willpower and let her stay (1965:77).

It was these women and others like them who were caught up in the events that marked a radical shift in the relations of power in French society. But they were also women who showed in their lives the enormous importance in constructing them as agents of an access to knowledge outside the generally accepted norm for women. Their response to social change was to attempt to create a new way of life, seeking the possibility of realizing their potential as social agents and of finding a place that allowed them to act. They also sought a place that allowed them to choose the terms of their action. This action they interpreted in terms of a religious commitment that the accepted traditional forms of religious life for women did not allow.

Such a search was strong in the early years of the Society, and survived initial problems and tensions. Difficulties were created by those, both women and men, who still saw the traditional monastic life, particularly in its aspect of cloister, as essential to the definition of religious commitment. A number of those who joined the Society at the beginning had either already had experience of enclosed convent life, or had that as their desire. No other model of approved religious life for women had been generally available. Even Sophie's original goal, already formulated when she made a private promise of chastity at the age of fourteen, was to be a Carmelite. But her own broad intellectual interests and her recognition of the need for education for girls in the post-Revolutionary society was fundamental to the direction taken by the new Congregation. She said later, 'It was the void caused by the absence of Christian education after the Revolution, and the sight of the attendant evils, that determined our foundation' (Williams 1978:15).

Commitment to this work shaped the life of members. Unlike the ordered routine of traditional convents, the way of life was simple and improvised. The first lodgings had been a boarding-house in Paris. The first educational enterprise was a failing boarding-school for girls in Amiens. Here,

the children ate heartily and the community lived, as the poor do, on remnants. They had to take in sewing, despite their classwork, to make ends meet. People in town raised their eyebrows at the sight of these novel religious taking their files of pupils to solemn mass, for they wore haphazard black dresses and a round white cap devised by Mademoiselle Loquet [the oldest member of the group] on the model of those worn by the girls in her workroom (Williams 1965:59).

The choice by these women to commit themselves to the work of education was clearly central to the way in which they attempted to redefine religious life. When the question of cloister or, as it was more commonly called in English, enclosure, was
raised as a characteristic of religious life that had been considered essential for women since the 12th century, Sophie's response was, 'Don't talk to me of grilles! Our intentions, our actions, cannot be shut up in grilles' (Williams 1978:45). She came to recognize that new forms were needed for 'a new type of apostolate which had not been seen before', as she wrote (56).

This initiative by the women who founded the Society was an attempt to work out their personal religious commitment within the demands of the social relations of their broader society. It was also a modest part of a broader movement by European women in the 19th century to establish - or reestablish - social and personal autonomy. The context of this informal movement was the foundering, in the wake of the twin processes of industrialization and urbanization, of the traditional social relations that had prevailed up until the end of the 18th century. In the resulting shifts in social relations of domination and subordination, there was also a reinterpretation, in both theory and practice, of the position of women. One of the aspects of this reinterpretation was the place of women in the public sphere which, as a result of the industrial revolution, was becoming increasingly identified for most people with work. The identification was based on a change in people's conceptualization of work from its essentially undifferentiated character in pre-industrial society (Godelier 1982). The effect of industrialization and urbanization in the 19th century was to bring about an effective separation of home and workplace that was also a part of the alteration in relations between people and 'nature' resulting from a mechanized appropriation of nature.

Involvement in the public sphere, therefore, increasingly required involvement in public 'work'. From the early part of the century, women tended to be excluded from both. Robertson, analyzing the history of the 19th century, suggests that the women's movement must be situated in this very specific context:

In all the continental countries, men were theorizing about new, 'liberal' laws and constitutions; when these came into being, women, so recently praised for their devotion, found they were left out of the privileges of citizenship, much to their surprise. All three of the French republics (1792, 1848, 1871) set them back on their heels, and likewise the Civil Codes of the emergent unified nations of Italy (1866) and Germany (1896). It was largely in response to such maneuvers that the women's movement was organized, not just against age-old repressions(1982:4-5).

As women themselves essayed new ways of realizing autonomy in this situation, one of their most important strategies was a reestablishment of positions in the public sphere through public work. For some, this was done through nursing. For others, such as the members of the Society of the Sacred Heart, it was through education. It
is no small tribute of the success of the nuns of the Society that Florence Nightingale, who had herself engaged in the struggle in similar terms, reflected some half a century after their foundation on the contrast between the opportunities offered to nuns and those open to other women and wrote:

What training is there compared to that of the Catholic nun?... I have seen something of different kinds of nuns, am no longer young, and do not speak from enthusiasm but from experience. There is nothing like the training (in these days) which the Sacred Heart or the Order of St Vincent gives to women (quoted in Ruether & McLaughlin 1979:259).

It is clear that the work of redefining the forms of religious life in terms of their entry into the public sphere through the work of education fulfilled for the early members of the Congregation that impetus to independence implicit in their choice of chastity. In this process of redefinition, they were part of an extraordinary 19th century growth of women's religious orders in a way that reinforces the suggestion that nuns are to be placed along a spectrum of alternative life-styles for women (S. Ardener 1984: personal communication).

It was secular society rather than the Church that supported this process of reinterpretation. In France itself,

while Napoleon considered monks as 'unprofitable creatures' he recognized that there were religious of both sexes who were extremely useful and whose services the government would be foolish to reject. By virtue of this criterion the female congregations received better treatment. There was need of teaching and nursing sisters; they were already at hand, prepared to resume their work in the full light of day... By 1808 the daughters of M. Vincent had 260 houses in France... Teaching nuns followed. First came the Ursulines: in 1789 they had 350 houses; in 1808 they had 500, with 7000 religious... In 1814 there was a total of 1800 houses of female religious in France alone (Daniel-Rops 1965:86-87).

Of new Congregations of women in general, a few figures will suffice. Between 1850 and 1860, the Holy See gave official approval to 48. From 1862 to 1868, it approved 74 (Aubert 1978:113). These were the Congregations that came to be known as the 'active' orders, in contrast to the traditional 'contemplative' orders: and many of them, including the Society, embodied what they called the 'mixed life'. It is this curious compromise between the older forms of women's religious life, based so strongly on enclosure, and the social needs that now demanded attention that perhaps best indicates the way in which the 19th century impetus by women to change the meaning of religious life was distorted by the Church, and their initiative

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3 In England, where the 19th century also saw the foundation of Anglican religious orders of women, there was an additional factor in the population surplus of women (Hill 1973:300).
reincorporated within a particular set of relations of power. These, because they depended on an interpretation of social position that was both patriarchal as well as hierarchical, remained central for women in the Church.

There was an interesting and equally striking development that parallels the 19th century growth of women's religious orders that suggests that the definitive character of these relations of power in the Church had been shaken, and a shift in the distribution of power along class lines was beginning to take place. This was the growth of brotherhoods for non-ordained men who were generally of lower socio-economic status. They were, for example, the Christian brothers, the Marist brothers, the Salesians. The organization of these Congregations is very similar to that of the women’s active orders, with one critical exception: that of the provision of enclosure. Its reimposition on women’s orders, albeit in the officially modified form of the mixed life, indicates the continuing vigour of the Church’s patriarchal domination over women.

The women of the Society of the Sacred Heart were themselves constructed within the social relations prevailing in the Church as well as in French society. Their access to knowledge and the changing conditions in society gave them a basis from which to reject their socially approved role in that society. It did not avail them to free themselves from the ideology and structures of the Church. Their action involved them not just with the changing relations of secular society, which offered them greater opportunity, but with the one organization of that society that had institutionalized resistance to change: the Roman Church. In many - indeed, the most important - ways, it was the Society’s official incorporation into the Roman Church, rather than its place within the movement by 19th century women for independence, that structured its own relations, and determined practice for its members. The Congregation’s development can only be understood within this perspective, and in terms of the long tradition of monastic life that had helped to define the structural subordination of women in the Church.

The Society as part of the organization of women's religious orders in the Church

Raymond Hostie (1973) points out that, with remarkably few exceptions, all Catholic religious orders, both of men and of women, owe their existence to men, and that almost all women's orders are organized and structured according to models

4The only order of men founded by a woman was that set up by Brigid of Sweden in 1346 (Hostie 1973:21).
created by and for men; that is, within a set of relations that gave the official power of interpretation to men. This has been so, with a number of notable exceptions in times of profound social change, throughout the history of Western monasticism. This historical development led to the emergence of the principal features that came to define monastic life: the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience; the common life; and the Rule. Added to these for women was papal enclosure, which began to be systematically imposed from the 13th century, and resulted in large convents with high walls that remained long after their protective function had disappeared (Raymond 1971:79). All four features were to be critical for the structuring of the Society of the Sacred Heart, in terms of the historical meaning that the women of the Society developed. It is this meaning and the social relations from which it emerged that are crucial for understanding what happened to the orientation of the early women of the Society towards providing an alternative form of religious life.

The basis of this developing meaning is to be found in the very first centuries of Christianity, when the desert hermits began to come together into communities. The father of these first monks of the common life was Pachomius (286-346), and it was he who set up for monastic life not only the material, spatial framework - church, refectory, assembly room, cells, enclosure wall - and the temporal ordering of daily life with its arrangement of work and prayer, but also the fundamental ‘spiritual discipline’ (Knowles 1966:3) of the three vows: chastity, poverty, and obedience. All this was knit together by an administrative framework in which authority, and its concomitant obedience, were central organizing principles. This process of defining obedience as a virtue must be understood in the light of Pachomius’ own background in the Roman Army, and the fact that his rule, the first formal monastic rule, was actually based on the code of military discipline (Hill 1973:25). The parallel with the later Ignatian emphasis on ‘the virtue of obedience’, central to the Jesuit rule on which so many later orders, including the Society, are based is not accidental, and is clearly related to a tendency that has been overriding in Western Christianity, to institutionalize in order to control.

It is not the Pachomian system, however - which, at its height, numbered some 5,000 monks - that provided the basis for the later organization of Western monasticism into different religious orders. This honour must be given to the Rule of St Benedict, written about 535, the key points of which were

the monarchical abbot, elected for life by his monks, and himself appointing his officials, [question of authority and obedience], the general gathering of all the brethren to council on all matters of grave common interest, and the smaller council of seniors to advise the abbot on matters of lesser importance [basis of institutionalization of community and of
hierarchy]; and the vow of stability binding the monk to life-long residence in the monastery of his profession [a logical but extreme extension of enclosure] (Knowles 1966:6).

The potential of the Rule of St Benedict for uniting the European monasteries was not realized, however, for another four centuries, until the establishment of Cluny in 909. With Cluny came a number of fundamental innovations. One was the direct attachment of the foundation to the Holy See which, though hardly more than a formal attachment in the 10th century, removed the monastery from the control of both the secular lord of the land and the bishop. The second was that the abbot of Cluny became the immediate Superior of all the monks of the order, whether they resided in Cluny or not, and that the Superiors of all other monasteries were appointed by him. In other words, the model of monastic organization that became the basis of organization for the nuns of the Society was derived, not from a federation of equal foundations, but from the same feudal hierarchy as was being developed in the rest of Europe.

As a result, the meaning given to monastic life over this critical formative period was determined by its incorporation into social relations based on the feudal mode of production. It was this context that led to authority being interpreted as institutionally central, and obedience as the fundamental response of religious subjects. Obedience, that is, was interpreted as a virtue, and was institutionalized within monastic orders as the definitive relation between subjects and superiors, thus becoming part of the ideological armoury of feudalism.

It was over this high period of feudalism in Europe, and afterwards in the 12th and 13th centuries, that the religious order as lived in its traditional forms by the nuns of the Centre-South Province of Spain - what Knowles (1966:1) describes as ‘one of the most remarkable achievements of the medieval genius’ - came finally into being. It was then that the principles were laid down that have provided the generic basis for almost all subsequent orders down to the present day. This was also a period that was marked by one of those vigorous expansions of women’s alternative religious organizations that occurred as well in the 19th century. Southern (1982) points out that not only was this movement in its inception largely organizationally independent of the established men’s orders but was in fact in many ways in opposition to it. One kind of development was demonstrated by women’s persistence in demanding recognition from such established orders as the ‘thoroughly masculine’ Cistercians (Southern 1982:314). This was a movement that was largely aristocratic and rural, and gave the women involved great - and resented - independence. Another was centred on the rapidly growing medieval towns. These were the
Beguines, who flourished in the 13th century. The development of this loosely organized movement by women has interesting parallels with that of the new religious Congregations of the 19th century and is dealt with in Appendix A. The formal suppression of the Beguines as an independent group at the beginning of the 14th century was the result of the challenge the way of life of these women represented for the centralization of authority and interpretation in the Church. This was not because they attempted control over other groups of organizations, but because, by their very way of life, they denied the principle of control to the Roman hierarchy.

As the Roman Church extended greater and greater control over its members, the question of official recognition within the formal structures of the Church was made the only avenue for religious organizations, a development that was to have a profound effect on the Society of the Sacred Heart. Hill points out the tension between monasticism and the authority of the Church inherent even in the organization of the early monks. The goal of these monks was a personal perfection not only not necessarily dependent on the external forms and rituals of the Church, but often, indeed, antithetical to it. Indeed,

the incumbents of authority positions in the church (bishops in particular) were notably distrusted, and several studies of Egyptian monasticism have noted its original anti-sacerdotal character. One of the most widely quoted expressions of this attitude is that of the contemporary Cassian: 'Wherefore this is an old maxim of the Fathers that is still current... that a monk ought by all means to fly from women and bishops' (1973:23).

Nevertheless, bishops (unlike women) had an increasingly legitimized base from which to assert authority, and Hill highlights yet again the role played by the notion of obedience as virtue in establishing the lines of control. It was, from the time of Benedict on, the Rule that embodied this notion, and it was the Rule that ultimately became 'the crucial link between the church and the religious order' (Hill 1973:24). The Rule not only laid down the internal organization of the group and determined the effectiveness of particular interpretations, but, even more importantly, it derived its legitimacy externally from an increasingly centralized Church. This function as legitimating agent came to provide the Church, therefore, with the critical power of approving new Rules, and of modifying them where it was felt necessary. The resulting dependence by religious orders on formal Church sanction has been the key to their incorporation into the mainstream of Church organization, and to the official Church's concern to maintain strict orthodoxy at the micro level of organization as well as the macro level of doctrinal belief. It also helps to explain the importance for the early women of the Society of the development of the Rule, and its later centrality to the experience of the nuns in Spain.
For women religious in general, this elevation of the Rule to final arbiter of the legitimacy of religious organizations meant the formal institutionalization of their subordination in the Church. Their dependence on Rome’s official approval meant a ruthless restructuring of any initiatives that attempted to interpret religious commitment in terms other than those defined by the Church as essential to the religious life. A number of women’s organizations, notably those begun by Angela de Merici and Mary Ward in the dangerous days of the 16th and 17th century battles over religious definitions, suffered this fate.5

A later, and very important exception, were the Daughters of Charity, founded by Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac in 1633. In this case, the founders managed to avoid the fate of earlier similar projects by not designating their members as ‘religious’. This lack of verbal specificity illustrates nicely the point that, up until the end of the 18th century, the official definition of religious women inalterably included the concept of enclosure.

The modification of strict enclosure that occurred in the 19th century would therefore appear to mark a radical break between the newer active orders and those of earlier centuries whose organization was, whether willingly or not, monastic. In fact, this proved not to be so, and one of the reasons for this was that so many of the Congregations, including the Society of the Sacred Heart, accepted the need for a Rule, and based it on the Rule of the Jesuits. It was the Jesuits who provided the link between the medieval world, which saw the definitive organization and development of the monastic life, and its transition to the modern world (Knowles

5Angela de Merici began a religious association of women in Italy who adopted the name of Ursulines after the Roman martyr Ursula. This group was, in its inception, a radical departure from the then accepted norms of religious life for women, and would now - four and a half centuries later - probably be categorized as a secular institute (as perhaps would the Beguines). Its original members took no vows, although like the Beguines - and this is critical - they voluntarily accepted a counsel of virginity. They wore no distinctive religious habit, and did not live in communities. This flexibility of formal organization was meant to allow them to respond to an apostolate that included any form of neediness, whether of poverty, illness, or lack of education. This departure from the established norm was allowed to continue in its original form for less than fifty years.

By 1580, the Congregation had been stripped of its dangerous pretensions to originality, and incorporated into the well-ordered patriarchal structure of the official Church, with the women living in enclosed communities, and armed (the word reflects accurately the post-Reformation mentality of the official Church) with enclosure, a common religious habit, and the three sanctioned vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. It should be noted that the main agent in transforming the order and reducing it to the accepted norm was Charles Borromeo, a Jesuit, and one of the leading influences in the Council of Trent (Hostie 1973:47-49). His diminution of the Ursuline initiative was undoubtedly not unconnected with his zeal in eradicating heresies (and heretics) from a purged and purified Catholicism.

The same attitude was undoubtedly also at the basis of the Church’s treatment of Mary Ward, who was actually imprisoned. Her congregation was dissolved by Pope Urban VIII in 1631, and only in 1703 did it receive papal approval (Fraser 1984:127).
In the 16th century, they wrested what they saw as the essential elements of religious life from the threat of decay, division, or heresy (St Thomas More was already in the Tower when the first group of novices took their first vows in 1534). From them, almost all the orders of active life founded since the Reformation, including the Society of the Sacred Heart, have taken their shape.

Certain elements of Jesuit formation are, therefore, essential to an understanding of the Sacred Heart Order. One of these was the incorporation of such earlier features of the monastic life as were not incompatible with an active apostolate, and quite a lot that, in fact, were. Another was the dominance assumed by the military model of organization, a dominance determined by an ideological definition by Rome of the ideas of Luther and others as heresy, and hence to be fought. This model is to be found both in the constitution of the Jesuit order, which is strictly authoritarian and monarchical, and in Ignatius's further refinement of the concept of obedience. The modification was to be found in

his transference to his institution and its manifold external works and organization of the claim to reverence and acceptance with which earlier spiritual writers had endowed their Rule and the precepts which implemented its execution... The teaching of St Ignatius differs widely in spirit from that of his predecessors... While they demand no more than a willing, unmurmuring action, he requires a positive suppression of critical thought and a positive effort of self-persuasion (Knowles 1966:91; emphasis mine).

Finally, their definition of the upheaval of the Reformation as primarily a question of theological and intellectual battles led the Jesuits to place a premium upon education both as method, in training minds to right thinking, and as weapon, in combatting the spread of false doctrine. The notion of education as principally an ideological force is therefore central. Combined with another concept that they developed - what Knowles calls the idea of 'an oligarchy of talents' (1966:67) - their use of education to define the place of individuals and groups in society became a potent social force.

It was this concept of education, as well as the Jesuit model of an active religious life contained within the traditional monastic forms and defined by obedience, that was inherited by Madeleine Sophie Barat. She, despite her own exceptional gifts (and possibly because of the dominance of her brother Louis throughout her formative years) fits readily into the second, and far more numerous, of the two categories of foundresses suggested by Hostie: that of 'women devoutly submitted to another's will' (1973:46). Williams, in the Society's official English biography, says of her:

One reason for Madeleine Sophie Barat's lifelong protest against the title
of Foundress of the Society of the Sacred Heart was the fact that she never thought of founding it. God gave the idea to other people; she cooperated and the project was placed in her hands to be carried out (1965:36).

One of the 'other people' who thought of this new Congregation, the original source of the idea, was Léonor de Tournely, a member of the Jesuits before that order's papal suppression in 1773, and subsequently part of a group known as the Fathers of the Faith who continued to live, as far as possible, by the Jesuit rule. De Tournely had as his inspiration a devotion to the Sacred Heart and, as his vision, a programme of Christian education for the post-Revolution generation. This programme was in the Jesuit tradition of education as an ideological weapon, and not based on a revitalized understanding of the nature of the new society that had emerged from the French Revolution. Instead it was produced by zeal to 'restore' the preeminence of traditional Christian belief, and its social and political concomitants of an ordered, hierarchical society, after the radical attacks on it by liberals and atheists. The education of boys for this objective would be entrusted to the Jesuits when (the question of 'if' was not taken into account) they were canonically reconstituted. For the education of girls in this context, de Tournely saw the need for a new religious order of women who would be entrusted with the work. He died in 1797 before his dream could be realized, and the task of making it concrete was left to another of the Fathers of the Faith, Joseph Varin. It was he who saw in Sophie Barat the instrument of his purpose, and she who accepted the interpretation both of the forms of religious commitment and of education that his authority offered her. Only on the question of enclosure did she retain some right of definition, and even this was ultimately restricted by its incorporation into the total system that constituted religious life. The resulting compromise was as we saw that of the 'mixed life'. This was spelt out in the Society's Rule and Constitutions of 1815-16 as a combination of the active and the contemplative. The Congregation's work of education was made central, but this was seen to be at the expense of physical withdrawal from the world and total devotion to a life of prayer. In other words, the monastic life retained its status as an ideal for the members of the Congregation. Nevertheless, the practical primacy of work was acknowledged as a raison d'être for the new order. What this meant in theory - and the Society had to fight opposition in its early stages both from within its own ranks and from the hierarchy - was that the nuns, while following a daily schedule of formal prayer, would be free to respond to whatever outside activities their work of education demanded of them. What it came to mean in practice, after the first formative years, was that enclosure was in fact observed except when some unavoidable foray into the outside world was
demanded (and then the women always went shielded by at least one companion). The weight of seven centuries of increasingly fixed interpretation was hard to escape. And indeed, the question of the psychological enclosure that the Society came to impose on itself had even more important consequences than the physical separation from the outside world experienced by its members (Lannon 1979:196-99), a situation that will be broached in Chapter 5 and 6.

The Society’s official interpretation of the vows was that accepted by the nuns of the Centre-South Province in their earlier experiences of traditional religious life. It reflected the determinative influence of the traditional interpretation of monastic life as mediated by the Jesuits. The Rule, the formal document containing this official interpretation, was read aloud every month in the refectory. The understanding of the nuns of the Province was shaped by the Rule, which gave central importance to the three primary vows, and the way in which they were to be understood and applied by ‘the spouses of the Sacred Heart’ (Rule 1934:32, 39, 40, etc.). Fundamental to both interpretation and practice was to be obedience.

With respect to obedience, they shall never forget that, in every religious body, this virtue is the bond that unites the members among themselves, and these to the head; and that if this bond were to be broken, it would not be possible to expect anything other than the total dissolution of the body (Rule 1934:34).

The Rule thus established the critical importance of obedience to the Congregation, using a symbolism, although with some mixing of metaphors, derived from a strongly hierarchical reading of Paul’s analogy of the body in the letter to the Corinthians (1Cor.12:12-27). It then went on to elicit the total conformity of members by translating the perceived practical function of obedience in an entirely spiritual dimension. This was achieved by invoking the dearest values of its members.

In order to embrace obedience more closely, even unto death, let them listen to their divine Spouse who tells them that He came down from heaven to earth, not to do His own will, but that of His Father; that the fulfilment of this holy will is their nourishment; and let them contemplate Him in the practice of obedience from His birth to His death, death on the Cross. After all that, it will not be difficult for them to discover in His Divine Heart the love that He had, and that they themselves must have, for this virtue (Rule 1934:35-36).

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6 There are two editions of the Rule used throughout this thesis. One is the 1934 Spanish version of the Summary of the Rules and Constitutions published in Roehampton (England). The other is a fuller version published in Madrid in 1978 as a basis for members in developing new Constitutions. The translations into English are my own.
The imitation by members of the model provided by Jesus in his earthly life, a model that was itself a closed and specific interpretation, was to be expressed in one clear way:

The practice of obedience will be made very sweet to them, if they see in every Superior, as they ought, the very person of Jesus Christ. In this way they will have no difficulty in conforming their will entirely with hers in all things in which there is no manifest sin: and by the conformity of their judgement with that of their Superiors, by the promptness and joy which shall accompany their obedience, they shall make every effort to omit nothing that may belong to the perfection of this virtue, whose model is Jesus Christ (35-36).

The global character of obedience was clear, and was a constant theme throughout the entire Rule and Constitutions. Moreover, it was an interpretation of obedience derived directly from the Jesuit model and every month, when the Rule was read in the Refectory, it ended with a reading of the letter of St Ignatius On the Virtue of Obedience. Obedience was seen as the quintessential means of personal sanctification, embracing every aspect, from the smallest to the greatest, of the nuns’ lives. In theory, it could embrace even the nonsensical; and every month the women listened to St Ignatius’s examples of the monk, under direction of his Superior, watering a dry stick, and another planting cabbages upside down.

Obedience was indeed a powerful organizing principle for the nuns in the traditional period, and it operated to ensure conformity at every level. By placing total emphasis on the group at the expense of the individual, it acted in a number of very important ways. It subsumed poverty, eliminating that radical element found in the Beguines and in the early Franciscans by defining it wholly in terms of the common life. And it subverted chastity and its impetus towards autonomy in a number of fundamental ways. Relying as it did on a patriarchal interpretation of the concept of God, it offered as goals the achievement of those virtues deemed suitable for women - submission, modesty, receptivity - so important to the idea of ‘vocation’ that was essential to this form of religious life. In the same symbolic mode, its invocation of the parent image of God, specifically as father, acted ‘to prolong spiritual infantilism as virtue and to make autonomy and assertion of free will a sin’ (Radford Ruether 1983:69). Any movement to autonomy in this scheme was interpreted by the nuns as pride, the sin of the angels and therefore even more original than the disobedience of Adam and Eve.7

7It is not just in Christianity that the explanation of dissidence as pride is seen to be a successful ideological ploy as Rodinson (1973:302) points out in relation to the early development of Islam.
It might be argued that this emphasis on obedience was largely theoretical, a systematic exposition of an ideal that bore little relation to everyday life. This, however, was clearly not so and, as we shall see in Chapter 5, the members of the Society experienced their lives very immediately in terms of obedience, an experiencing that, like enclosure, produced the very attitudes necessary to its maintenance. While no one was asked to water dry sticks, or plant cabbages upside down - at least not in the recent past as recollected by the nuns - what they did every day was designated under obedience. Indeed, the most effective means used to ensure the predominance of obedience was precisely in the allocation of work, an area that, in terms of any possibility for autonomous action, provided some opportunity for personal initiative and fulfilment:

The religious of the Society, as has been said and can never be said sufficiently, must maintain themselves always in a holy indifference with respect to their employment, since they aspire only to glorify the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and all their tasks could never be pleasing to Him if they were not directed by obedience (Constituciones 1978:Art.224; emphasis mine).

This attempt to include even the work of education under the influence of obedience had a number of important consequences for the nuns. The most significant was to make it the central place of those contradictions that I have suggested underlay religious life for these women. Education belonged in the public sphere, and was the point of entry into this arena. The attempt to define even this work in terms of obedience acted in practice to withdraw the possibility of action from individuals and thus frustrate the dynamic implicit in their choice of chastity as autonomy.

Obedience as it was officially presented in the Rule, then, may without qualification be said to be the fundamental expression of the relations of power that prevailed in the Society and reflected those of the Church. It therefore acted to define the other areas of action for the nuns. One of these areas was that designated as the common life, and it is within this projection that poverty was situated. Although the 'true spirit of poverty' was seen in the Rule as

so essential to the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus..., that if it were to lose it, Jesus Christ would no longer recognize it as His own, and would abandon it to itself, that is to say, to its immanent ruin (Rule 1934:33),

nevertheless, the practice of poverty was bland in contrast with its potential radicality, and firmly within the sphere of obedience. The 'strict obligation of the vow of poverty' was defined as prohibiting members from 'giving, lending, or receiving anything without permission, and does not permit them to use any thing without this dependence' (Rule 1934:31; emphasis mine).
The focus of poverty was the simplicity of the common life where, again, individuality was entirely subordinate to the identity of the group. Within this, the extraordinary of any kind was unacceptable. Emphasis was therefore very much less on material need than on 'poverty of spirit', a phrase that was in common use among the members of the Society and that was another invocation of that emptying of oneself required by obedience. In many, if not all, ways, therefore, poverty was simply another name for obedience. It certainly required the renunciation of legal ownership of property when members pronounced their final vows, a step that normally took place some seven to eight years after first entering. However, in practical terms, this renunciation took place at the moment of entering, since members had no use or benefit of their property after this time, unless they left the Congregation.

The inconveniences of poverty, therefore - and they were generally in the Society's practice no more - were those associated with living in community, but a community which, while it made every effort to guard against luxurious living, was nevertheless well sheltered from the experience of material necessity.

We come then to the vow of chastity, the vow whose historical dynamic was, I have argued, to make religious life a positive alternative for women even within prevailing relations of power based on patriarchal interpretation. Curiously, from this point of view, the Rule's treatment of chastity is brief:

For what concerns the virtue of chastity, let it suffice to say that, with the continual guarding of the senses, and their purity of mind and heart, the spouses of Jesus Christ shall endeavour to imitate the purity of angels, and even the purity of the Heart of Jesus, insofar as, with the help of grace, it is possible to mortal creatures (1934:33).

This brevity is, however, curious only if one takes chastity in isolation. Looked at within the whole historical development of religious life for women, and the social relations by which it came to be defined, the brevity of the Rule merely reflects the extent to which the initial impetus of chastity had been distorted. What was implicit in the choice by the nuns of chastity, and therefore at least part of their intention in their entry into the Society, had been the removal of themselves from the terms of

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Formal initiation into the Society was in four stages. The first, postulancy, was for about six months. In this period, the candidates lived in the noviate and gradually began to live the same routine as the novices. At the end of this period, they asked permission to receive the religious habit. The reception of the habit marked the second period, that of the novitiate, generally lasting two years. During this period, the novices wore the same religious habit as the other nuns, but with a white instead of black veil. The third period for the nuns was that of 'Aspirant', the five or six years from their first, temporary, vows to their final vows or Profession. Final Profession constituted the last stage of initiation.
male authority in the domestic sphere. Through their rejection of their traditional sexual role, these women were in effect also rejecting the traditional patriarchal relations of power as embodied in the family. What happened to them, however, was that the women had moved from one set of patriarchal authority structures: the family, to another: the Church.

Fundamental in achieving this distortion of their option for chastity was the vow of obedience, derived as we saw from military and feudal systems. In accepting the vow of obedience, and with it the whole framework of traditional religious life, the nuns themselves had come to interpret their vow of chastity not as a rejection, through control over their sexuality, but as an acceptance of their gender role as femininity rather than as femineity (Ardener 1981:46). In this, they affirmed a femininity that was in practice divorced from their sexuality and expressed in behaviours defined as acceptable for women by patriarchal interpretation. In so doing, the nuns entered into and reinforced, despite their own implicit rejection of it, women's structural subordination within the Church and in Spanish society. It is the behaviour defined by its society as appropriate to women that is constantly invoked by the Congregation's Rule.

The triumph of this interpretation over other interpretations of women's action, even by the nuns themselves, is part of a broader development in Western Christianity that had attempted to control interpretation of the spiritual by placing it within a framework of opposition between the flesh and the spirit, an opposition that was also expressed, as I have mentioned, as that between the world and the spiritual or religious. In the long Church tradition that ranged woman on the side of the world and the flesh is to be found a powerful rationalization for maintaining women in their position of subordination. It is this tradition, and the challenge offered to it by the alternative tradition based on honour of the Virgin Mary, that added to the ambivalence of the position of the nuns, and gives Catholicism its particular place in the more general question of women and religion. In the tradition of Catholicism lived by the nuns of the Centre-South Province of Spain, prestige accrued to them as women on the basis of the honour given to Mary, adding to their possibilities for autonomous action.9

The cult of Mary however has never fitted easily into the official interpretation of the Church, since the elements which give it its vigour in the popular mind are precisely those that patriarchal orthodoxy has attempted to eliminate. In view of the incorporation of the Society of the Sacred Heart into the official Church, therefore, it

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9 These issues are more fully dealt with in Appendix B.
is not surprising to find that Mary, instead of being used by the nuns themselves to support and reinforce the fundamental orientation of chastity as autonomy, was instead accepted by them in the terms defined as acceptable within official interpretation. She was interpreted ideologically, that is, in a way that masked the wide multiplicity of meanings in order to affirm her - and their - subordination. By defining the nuns as virgins, as Mary was Virgin, and converting their potential physical motherhood to spiritual motherhood, the nuns transformed the possibility of control over them selves into self control. This was promoted by a social organization of convent life that prevented sexuality from becoming an issue at all. Further, the reproductive powers of the nuns, pertaining to the flesh and the world, were transformed through symbolic interpretation into spiritual powers. Called 'Mother' by their students, they were the mothers of souls.

It is clear that the devotion to Mary which acted as a liberating alternative for other groups in the Church became for the nuns yet another ideological tool locking them into their position of subordination. The Rule presented Mary - although her overall presence there is minimal - as model of the 'womanly' virtues and wholly defined by her relationship to her son:

The end of this Society is, then, to glorify the Sacred Heart of Jesus, working for the salvation and perfection of its members by the imitation of the virtues of which this Divine Heart is the centre and model, and consecrating itself, insofar as it is possible to woman, to the sanctification of others as the work most loved by the Heart of Jesus. It will also honour with particular devotion the most Holy Heart of Mary, so perfectly conformable in all things to the adorable Heart of her divine Son Jesus (Rule 1934:9.10).

The practical consequences for the nuns of Catholic tradition

There is no doubt that Catholic tradition had developed formidable resistance to the practical attempts by women in the 19th century to use religious life as a means of autonomy. The very practices that it imposed by its organization of religious life successfully militated against the realization of this goal. Added to this towards the end of the century was an increasing formalization of juridical control over the new Congregations, finally published in 1917 as the Code of Canon Law. This Code is mediated for all religious women by the Vatican body known as the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, and both the Code and this administering body reflect the intensification of patriarchal relations in the Church that followed on the First Vatican Council (1870-71). It was this Council that carried out what may be seen as the supreme hierarchical and patriarchal act in the Roman Church - the final arrogation of the right to correct interpretation by a Pope officially defined as infallible.
One of the consequences of this was the enshrinement of women in Canon Law as inferior and dispensible to the organization of the Church in its ministerial functions. The rules that the Code laid down concerning women’s religious orders were a formal extension of these consequences. The most important of these contributed directly to structuring the nuns’ experiences of their life in the traditional period by giving them as an overall point of reference their position within the formal organization of the Roman Church. The provisions that operated most effectively for the nuns at this level of personal experience are given in Appendix C.

The juridical framework for the religious life contained many regulatory minutiae that constantly reinforced their sense of belonging to an hierarchical institution, so that the locus of their own organization and decisions was outside their immediate control. For the members of the Society of the Sacred Heart, most of these provisions were experienced through the particular interpretation offered by the Rule. The Rule - which, as we saw, had to be submitted to and approved by the Holy See through the powerful Sacred Congregation for Religious - acted both as medium, translating canonical requirements into particular practices, and as authority, regulating the life of members in additional detail that accorded with its own goals. The Rule thus formed a secondary framework mediating external structures to the members of the Congregation. The result of this was to create a double chronology, in which events, time, space, and history itself affected the nuns, both directly and at one - or more - removes. This will be seen to be very important in a number of different areas.

The effects of this double chronology on the women of the Society will be examined in Chapter 6. But the historical developments already outlined had provided a framework of practice which directed the initiative of the first members of the Congregation into already well defined structures. By 1825 the Society had established its basic position. The Fourth General Chapter held by the nuns in 1826 was crucial for the future of the nuns. It was this Chapter which redefined the original inspiration of the foundresses by laying down lines of fundamental organization that were in conformity with the Roman Church’s model of religious life for women. Williams outlines the importance of this General Chapter:

The work of the Fourth General [Chapter] consisted in making the Society conform fully to the ideal of it recognized by Rome. Mother Barat first explained two important modifications made by the Commission of

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10 The references used throughout this thesis are taken from Bouscaren & Ellis's 1955 edition of the Code, an edition that does not include the whole text, but sections of the Code with commentaries (in English). This Code was superceded in 1984 by a new Code of Canon Law.
Cardinals. The first concerned its relation to the hierarchy and to the Holy See: instead of ecclesiastical superiors appointed by the bishops in each diocese, a cardinal protector appointed by the Pope and resident in Rome would watch over the common interest of a worldwide society having central government. The second concerned its internal status: as solemn vows could only be made by religious having papal enclosure, incompatible with the work of teaching, the vow of stability would be made at profession. This vow, from which only the Holy See could dispense, would compensate for the lack of complete cloister and thus of solemn vows, and give to the Society the canonical standing of a true religious order (1965:222; emphases mine).

For the Spanish successors of these nuns, the two most important results of this General Chapter at the level of their everyday experience were the introduction of their vow of stability, which became synonymous with the practice of enclosure, and the formal approval by the Holy See of the Society’s Constitutions on December 22nd of the same year. These Constitutions also laid down the general forms of the internal government of the Society which operated up until the Second Vatican Council. Their regulations provided for a Superior General, assisted by a Council of Assistants General, a treasurer, a secretary, and an ‘admonitrix’. This governing body was to operate under a Cardinal Protector. The houses of the Order were divided into Vicariates, a form of administration resisted by Madeleine Sophie Barat herself because of the resulting concentration of powers in the central government. Her preference was for Provinces, which would have given greater local autonomy to the Provincials. However, the Holy See insisted on Vicariates, and the Society accepted the decision. The cumbersomeness of such an administrative system is obvious, especially for an international order in the days of slow communication (the first houses were founded in North and South America in the early decades, in New Zealand in 1880, and in Australia (Sydney) in 1882 (Barlow 1982)).

The Vicars of each area were named by the Superior General in consultation with her council, as were the local Superiors of each house. Candidates for admission to final vows had to apply for permission to the Superior General. While the powers of local Superiors were limited by the hierarchical structure of the Order, and individual members had direct access to higher Superiors if they wanted it, nevertheless within each house these powers were extensive. At the level of Vicariates, the Vicars had similar but more extensive powers that subsumed those of the local Superiors.

This was the general framework for the organization of the life of the nuns set down by 1826. By then, the Society had already begun to spread beyond France, having opened houses in North America (Louisiana, 1818) and Italy (Turin, 1823). Ripples - sometimes strong - were felt from the revolutionary movements of 1830 and
1848, but, by the death of Madeleine Sophie Barat in 1865, the Society had schools not only in France, North America, and Italy (although the nuns had been expelled from there in 1848), but also in England and Ireland. The first foundations in Spain had also been made. More importantly, the character of the Society as situated clearly within the monastic tradition was firmly established. It was to remain basically unchanged, despite nationalist movements, revolutions, the crumbling of old societies and the emergence of new, and wars, both civil and worldwide, until the advent of the second Vatican Council (1962-65) opened it, along with all other religious orders, and indeed the whole Catholic Church, to a radical revision of its definition and its purposes. It was these developments that provided the international context for the experience of the present nuns in Spain in their period of traditional religious life. Their lives in this earlier period were structured also, and profoundly, by the specifically Spanish context that likewise determined meaning and action for them.
CHAPTER 3
The National Context: The Society within Spanish Social Relations

The historical terms of the nuns’ position

Members of the Society date its arrival in Spain from 1846 when the first permanent house was established in Sarriá, near Barcelona. In fact, the first nuns had arrived in 1830, at the invitation of the bishop of Gerona, who had offered them a house and whatever they needed (Cien años 1946:8).1 The timing of such a venture could not, from the point of view of the nuns themselves, have been worse. Their arrival came towards the end of what Carr (1983:146) calls ‘the ominous decade’, and of a long period of economic depression that had followed the War of Independence (1808-14) (Fontana 1974:46). The time of their stay, 1830-36, coincided with one of the periods of crisis in a century defined by crisis.

In 1833, Fernando VII died and the first Carlist war broke out consequent upon the accession to the throne of his daughter, Isabel II. In July the following year,

there was a cholera plague in Madrid and a rumour spread that the monks and the Jesuits had poisoned the springs. A mob collected and burned convents and Jesuit churches and killed any monks it could find. Next year (1835), as if on a sudden signal, churches and convents were burned in all the large towns of Spain (Brenan 1978:43).

In September 1835, the liberal Mendizábal was made prime minister. Within a year he had enacted radical legislation that brought a basically effective end to the system of entailment of land that had been a major basis of land tenure in the past, and had operated as a fundamental principle in maintaining the social relations of the Ancien Régime (Clavero 1974). As part of the same series of laws (the desamortización), monasteries and convents were suppressed and their religious either exclaustrated or expelled.

In the wake of these events, the nuns returned to France, and it was not for

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1Cien años de educación cristiana, a semi-official history of the Society in Spain published for the first centenary of the Spanish Provinces. It will be referred to from now on as Cien años.
another ten years that they judged it prudent to reestablish themselves in Spain. By 1846, when they opened their school in Sarriá, a Moderate government led by General Narváez was in the ascendancy, under a monarchy whose powers had been constitutionally limited. The Constitution of the time, that of 1845, had declared:

The Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion is that of the Spanish nation. The State is obliged to maintain its worship and its ministers. (Art.11; García Villoslada 1979:151).

This declaration was an official recognition of a long-standing alliance that was to be confirmed a few years later (1851) when Pope Pius IX and the Spanish government signed a Concordat. By 1846, too, when the nuns arrived, the country was just beginning to recover from the long economic depression that had been based on the painful disintegration of absolutism and that had been prolonged by the first Carlist war (Fontana 1974:46). The results of the industrial revolution were beginning to be felt in Spain in a number of different areas. Nadal summarizes the decade of the thirties as

the decade in which a number of new enterprises coincided: the work of disentailment of the land, the mechanization of the cotton industry, the iron foundaries, and machinery construction (1977:24).

To this basic industrialization and mechanization was added the introduction of the railroad, based largely on the investment of foreign (mainly French and some English) capital.

Nevertheless, the reinforcement of a system of relations based on contractual arrangements that already existed in Spanish society (Artola 1978), and the greater orientation towards a purely market economy that accompanied the consolidation of a capitalist system in the 19th century, did not achieve, as it did in Britain, a definitive change in the relations of power. Not only did the industrial revolution in 19th century Spain fail (Nadal 1977), but so too did the liberal revolution that accompanied it. This at least was so in the short term. In the longer term, certain systems of relations, such as that between government and business, were institutionalized in this century in a way that reflected the growing importance of the middle class. These relations were to survive the Civil War (1936-39) and the following Francoist policies of autarky of the forties, providing a basis for economic recovery in the fifties and the final consolidation of capitalism in the sixties.

The issues related to the period when the nuns arrived in Spain, therefore, are complex and difficult. Nevertheless, they are fundamental to developments in the country and in the Centre-South Province of the Society in the 20th century. A number of very perceptive studies of the nexus of economic and social relations of the
period have been published - Fontana (1974), Nadal (1977), Artola (1978) to name but three - suggesting the multiplicity of causes and diversity of effects. A few of these must be singled out since they are of particular relevance to the nuns of the Society in Spain. It was such causes and effects that produced the specifically Spanish character of the Centre-South Province and shaped the social and ideological structures that determined the direction and limits of action for its members.

The principal developments that situated the nuns firmly within a particular set of social relations were in three areas. The first was based on a radical disjunction between the relations of power and the forces of production that had its roots in the 18th century (Artola 1978) and resulted in the subsidiary role of capitalism in Spain in the 19th century. The corollary of this was the absence, not of a middle class, but of one that was dominant. The members of this middle class, moreover, were split into two quite distinct groups, reflecting the ongoing contradiction between the different modes of production that continued in Spain into the 20th century. These I have called the Catholic bourgeoisie and the liberal bourgeoisie (see below).

The second derived from the Society’s integration into the Roman Church and its consequent dependence on the position of that Church in the Spanish system of social relations. This integration was based on the Congregation’s official status within the Church, and therefore involved the nuns, along with all other religious and clerics both male and female, as inevitably identified with the Church and its positions in relation to both State and people. At the same time, the nuns as women within the Church had a distinctive status from that of the monks and clerics. This was indicated, for example, by the much less drastic effects of the Mendizábal legislation on women’s convents than on monasteries of men.

The third development that determined the situation of the nuns of the Society of the Sacred Heart within general social relations in Spain was largely a result of the second, and concerned the incorporation of the system of formal education to which they were committed into a set of ideological representations that both reinforced the conservative definition of education that the nuns had inherited from their founders, and locked them into a set of interpretations of their place and role in society so inflexible that no challenge to its validity emerged from within their own ranks.

Social relations of the nineteenth century

The failure of the middle class from which many of the nuns came to achieve dominance in 19th century Spain, while dependent on historical developments specific to Spain itself, is also part of a more general process throughout the Mediterranean. Looked at from this perspective, it becomes clear that it is related at least as much to
the question of cultural values and historically developed prestige structures (Ortner & Whitehead 1981) as it is to immediate changes in the organization of production. This is not to suggest that prestige structures developed independently of the relations of production. It is to say, rather, that there was a lag of such proportions between the two in the 19th century (as there had been in the 16th)\(^2\) that the bourgeoisie used their greater access to material goods and power in ways determined by social relations that were already in the process of being transformed. Of relevance here is an observation made by Crump in the context of a general discussion concerning the possibility of a Mediterranean anthropology. He suggests that perhaps the most important sociocultural factor giving the Mediterranean its distinctive character is that

almost every region of the Mediterranean has at some time in the past... been very much more important than it is now. What Schnapper (1971) says of the Italians - that they live in the décor of the past - is both true generally and highly relevant to the present state of the various Mediterranean societies (1979:86).

In Spain this was certainly so - and perhaps more acutely in the decades following the independence of the American colonies (1820-22) - and served to reinforce those values attached to noble status that had resulted in earlier times in the proliferation of the class of *hidalgos* (Braudel 1972:727). In seeing the earlier part of the 19th century, therefore, as a struggle between absolutism and liberalism (Fontana 1974), it is important to add another process. This was the effect of the decisions made by the bourgeoisie, who, accepting a prestige structure based on aristocratic values, themselves reinforced by their actions the very system of social relations that they were trying to overthrow.

This becomes clear if one examines what happened to the lands released by the various disentailment laws (1811-13, 1820-22, 1834-37, 1855), all enacted under liberal governments in order to made land available to 'honourable and hardworking citizens', to the 'thrifty peasant', and even to the 'day labourer with certain hopes or the protection of some beneficent person' (Tomás y Valiente 1972:79). Of these laws, the most crucial were undoubtedly those of 1834-37 under Mendizábal, which marked the end of the first foundation by the nuns of the Society of the Sacred Heart, and

\(^2\)Braudel, discussing the virtual disappearance of the vigorous bourgeois of the Italian Renaissance, says:

If the social order seems to have been modified, the change was sometimes more apparent than real. The bourgeoisie was not always pushed out, brutally liquidated. It turned class traitor... Everywhere, rich bourgeois of every origin were irresistibly drawn towards the aristocracy as if towards the sun (1972:729).
that of Madoz (1855), by which time the nuns were well established. That of Mendizábal was not only the most extensive, but its effect on the economic structure of the country was the most radical, though quite different from that envisaged by the liberal reformers. The method of payment was chosen by the government to achieve a speedy increase in government finance (the public debt was a major consideration over this whole period). This meant that in fact there was no benefit at all to landless peasants or day labourers (braceros or jornaleros). Instead, the land went to middle-income farmers and to members of the growing urban middle class. These - the new class of caciques (local landed bosses), 'stockbrokers', and speculators of what Tomás y Valiente damns as 'the great disentailment farce' (1972:81) - chose to use the land in basically the same way as those who had owned it by entailment: the nobility, the Church, and local councils. That is to say that, while there was a certain capitalization of the land, and some short-term improvement in agricultural production (Nadal 1977:24), the new owners were absenteeees who saw land as a fixed rather than speculative investment and depended on it not for increased production but for rent.

The results of accepting the value of land ownership in these terms was not only to prolong the effective life of the set of social relations and prestige structures based on a transformed system of land tenure and of production. It was also to prevent the full realization of this transformation. The absolute monarchy might have died with Fernando VII in 1833, but the relations of power that it had enshrined, though to some extent curtailed, remained. Nadal suggests that, for Spain,

the 19th century agrarian reform does not fit the French model (effective access of the peasant to the land) but, rather, the so-called 'Prussian way' of transition from feudalism to capitalism. This is characterized by a compromise solution in which the latifundista aristocracy and the state controlled by it permitted, from above, a reform that allowed agriculture to be adapted to the requirements of a modern economy. This was done without any substantial alteration in the position of the old dominant classes (1977:81).

At the same time, and as a result of the same process, the position of the small landholder in various parts of the country worsened. The system of latifundio - that system of landholdings that concentrated the ownership of the vast proportion of land in the hands of a small minority of the population - was consolidated in some parts of the country, particularly in Andalucía and Extremadura. Nadal speaks of the resulting 'process of proletarianization of the Andalucian countryside' (1977:84) and, especially after 1855 and the opening up of what had been common lands, of a general
deterioration in the rural situation. A further result was a polarization of types of land tenure between the latifundios and, in the north and northwest, particularly Galicia, the mini fundios. This system of landholding, at the opposite extreme from the latifundios, was the result of a constant subdivision of land through the system of inheritance as well as sub-leases, and has led to a different kind of rural poverty (Vicens Vives 1969:639).

What did not change through the process of disentailment, then, was the notorious 'agrarian problem'. It was, if anything, worsened. The question of the latifundios has long been identified as the source of one of the major social problems in Spain, up to and including the present day. The first reliable figures date from 1930 and are based on the survey of Pascual Carrió. He found that 74% of all rural holdings was in estates of more than 250 hectares, and was owned by 2.9% of the whole population (Malefakis 1982:49). A breakdown of these overall figures showed the greatest concentration (50.7% of these large holdings) in the South (see Figure 3).

Amongst this group of large landholders, family ties reduced the number of actual aristocratic families in the province of Badajoz (Extremadura) in 1933 to 153, and this group held 72% of the entire registered land in the province (Malefakis 1982:99-100). It is clear that it is possible to talk about the continuance throughout the 19th century and into the 20th, of relations of production based in a feudal, not a capitalist, economy. Moreover, the survival of these relations was brought about, as we have seen, as much by the action of the middle class itself, from whom the majority of the nuns of the Society of the Sacred Heart came, as by the other groups with whom it saw itself in opposition.

One of the principle results of the disentailment laws was therefore to reinforce the structures of poverty, whether of small landholders or of the landless braceros (day labourers), and to concentrate this poverty in particular areas. The attempts at land redistribution also encouraged the persistence of a pernicious system of land use, based on little investment in or improvement of the land, together with a reliance on the income from rents where the absentee latifundistas leased land to tenant farmers. Figures giving the breakdown of the agricultural workers - some 4,500,000 or 68% of the total population in 1900 (Vicens Vives 1969:624) - indicate the

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3 Arlacchi notes a similar situation in Italy as a result of 19th century changes in land tenure in that country, particularly of the loss of traditional common rights to land.

The new bourgeois class, often installed by the abolition of what early 19th century liberals condemned as 'feudalism', claimed to own land which had, in the bourgeois sense, never been owned before. Peasant communities were atomised. Competition for the remaining scraps of land, forest and pasturage, destroyed immemorial customary agreements, the so-called usi civici (1983:16).
Fig. 3 Large Rural Landholdings, 1930.
(From Vicens Vives 1969:641.)
importance of this group. Some idea of the conditions that resulted in certain regions are given by Gerald Brenan with reference to a village in the province of Sevilla:

From eight to twelve hundred families, mostly poor, who own or rent a small property or have some settled employment. And then the landless proletariat. Three-quarters of the population consists in these men and their families, who are hired by the day, by the month, by the season - rarely for longer than that - by the overseers of the large estates or by the tenant farmers who rent them. For more than half the year they are unemployed (1978:118).

Paralleling the growth of the rural proletariat was an urban one. Despite the overall failure of industrialization in establishing the dominance of capitalism in 19th century Spain, there was considerable growth in this sector. The textile cotton industry in particular became the basis for the formation of an industrial proletariat, and, in the latter part of the century, the cities saw the appearance of the first organized labour. This occurred mainly in the two areas of the country, Catalonia and the Basque country, that had maintained a tradition of industry and saw in the 19th century the final emergence of a truly capitalist economy.

It was here that capitalism did become successfully established, and the oscillations between governments throughout the 19th century may be seen as symptomatic of the associated struggle to make this capitalism dominant in the whole country. Some of the underlying reasons for the failure of this process in the 19th century have already been outlined. Another is related to the administrative dominance of Madrid.

This dominance, first projected by Philip II (1558-98), had been gradually achieved under later rulers, especially by the Bourbon kings in the 18th century. Disrupted by the War of Independence, and weakened by the collapse of the absolute monarchy, the central bureaucracy remained a constant feature even as the shift of power from the aristocracy to the middle class began, falteringly, to occur. Nevertheless, the failure of those involved in this bureaucratic system in the 19th century to maintain control over the management and distribution of resources, especially those from the capitalist periphery, was part of a slow and painful structural shift. Madrid's attempts to maintain its position through the imposition of economic control, when its own base was so tenuous, is another of the central features of the volatile political developments from 1814 to 1936.

These were the principal structuring features of Spanish society in 1846, when the nuns of the Society of the Sacred Heart arrived definitively in the country. It was a time of great social upheaval, in which the social relations that had developed out of a feudal system were under threat and appeared to be collapsing. The social
problems associated with such massive change were already evident, in both city and
countryside, and might have been the focus of the nuns' commitment to education.
This focus, however, was to be determined by their acceptance of the social relations
prevailing in the Church, and the Church in Spain had chosen a path that allied it
firmly with particular groups in this changing society. The nuns were to become part
of this overall process, and, in so doing, to help to perpetuate anachronistic relations
of power.

The Church and social relations: the terms of ideology

In looking at the failure in the 19th century of industrialization and capitalism,
and therefore of the bourgeois revolution, certain analysts such as Artola give
insufficient weight to the influence of cultural values in determining not only the use
of land and of other resources, but of the profits derived from them (1978:46, 102). I
have suggested that part of the reason why the liberal revolution, begun in 1812 with
the Cortes of Cádiz, did not succeed for another century and a half was ideological as
well as economic. The power of this ideology rested on the institutionalization of
certain values and prestige structures and took place largely through the agency of
the Church. In the absence of a dominant middle class in the 19th century, and
therefore of a prevailing bourgeois ideology, the ideological positions defined by the
Church, though challenged, remained central. These positions had developed
alongside the development of the Spanish State and had acquired thereby certain
powerful characteristics. One was the strongly and specifically ideological bias given
to the development of the State by the wars against the Moors (8th-15th centuries).
While the actual impulse for these wars was undoubtedly economic (Vicens Vives
1969:5), the invocation of religious rationale and terminology provided a powerful
means of mobilizing people and offering them ideological justification. This was well
understood by the Catholic Monarchs, Isabel and Fernando (1474-1516), who made
full use of this set of legitimizing meanings that lay ready to their hands in order to
promote the political unification of the country. In so doing, they established (or
reinforced) a pattern of systematic mutual support and reinforcement between
political and religious structures and bequeathed to their successors a set of political
relations that were articulated in terms of orthodox religious beliefs.

4 Discussing the use of wealth by landowners in the 18th century, for example, he says:
Given the limited possibilities of buying lands and accumulating grain, so that
there was no possibility of absorbing the totality of rents and profits of the
landowners, these had no other alternative for the use of the surplus that they
received but that of the sumptuous consumption that characterized the behaviour of
clergy and nobility when to this condition is added that of being great landholders
(1978:46; emphasis mine).
This association of Church and State was not, of course, peculiar to Spain, but it was institutionally reinforced by the establishment - by the State, not under papal jurisdiction - of the Inquisition (1476), feared and fearsome arbiter of orthodoxy for the next four centuries. This appropriation by the State of what had been set up by the papacy as an instrument of papal policy was critical in Spain. It meant that there was no appeal from the Spanish Inquisition to the Pope - it became indeed a weapon used by the State against the Pope in such conflicts as those between Philip II and Paul IV - and that a principal basis for religious orthodoxy was its relation to the interests of the State (Kamen 1965:35-41). While the influence of the Inquisition was not uniformly sustained over the whole period of its existence (it was only finally abolished under Fernando VII in 1820 (García Villoslada 1979:85)); nor did it affect in any direct way the vast majority of the population, except perhaps to stimulate or reinforce prejudice against Jews and Moriscos - nevertheless its effect in fixing interpretation and in defining the position of the Church in Spain was profound and long-lasting. The Inquisition became the principal agent in making questions of national identity and orthodox Catholicism not just mutually useful but inseparable. In the process, it provided an ideological model, based firmly in nostalgia, of Church-State relations that could be and was invoked by apologists to defend the interests of powerful groups when these interests came under threat. Such an apologist was Menéndez y Pelayo, whose defence of Catholic orthodoxy in the late 19th century was based on an idealized model of the 16th and a commitment to maintaining the same terms of national definition (Lannon 1982:567). His position might be of only academic interest, if it were not that it was precisely this kind of understanding that aligned the Church - and with it the nuns of the Society of the Sacred Heart - so irrevocably in the 19th and early 20th centuries with those groups who were struggling to maintain the existing distribution of power.

The other factor that fixed the Church in this alliance in the 19th century was its identification, through its position as a great landholder up till 1835, with the señorial class. Estimates vary as to the amount of land held by the Church at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but it was probably between 8.2% and 16.4% of

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5 I would like to stress, however, that a distinction must be made between the higher clergy and mainly men's religious orders, who shared, by a system of mortmain, in the aristocratic monopoly of land and other riches, and the parish clergy, especially in rural areas, who often lived nearly as wretchedly as their parishioners. Women's religious orders, because of the ways in which their life had been structured in terms of monastic organization, tended to belong to the former group before the middle of the century. After that time, they were more defined by their works, particularly in education and welfare. It is normally the first group to whom I refer when talking about 'the Church' though, by the beginning of the 20th century, the others had become largely identified with the Church's general ideology.
the total proportion of inalienable land (Castells 1973:19). The extent and value of holdings, however, varied from province to province and may be grouped into three main areas: the old kingdom of León (with maximum concentration in Salamanca); Andalucía (maximum concentration in Sevilla); and the Castilian-Extremaduran area (maximum concentration in Toledo) (Vicens Vives 1969:636-37). The Church in this first phase was, therefore, structurally identifiable - and identified by the people - with the *latifundistas*, and was involved in the same system of land use. It is not difficult to relate this economic position with the Church's support of a State political ideology committed to reproduction of the system. Earlier, there had been important distinctions among different religious orders in this domain. In Catalonia in the 16th century, for example,

the Dominicans and Franciscans aligned themselves with the common people against the nobility, while the latter could usually count on the support of the Benedictines who were themselves great land-owners (Lynch 1964:111).

But such distinctions had, by the beginning of the 19th century, virtually disappeared.

It was this position as landowner that made the Church very much a target in the disentailment laws, especially those of 1834-37. Its associated identification with the interests of the dominant group of the Ancien Régime, the nobles, and its alienation from both rural and urban poor, made it the focus of virulent anticlericalism. This anticlericalism, an endemic feature of Spanish life in the period under discussion, flared up from time to time in such popular outbursts as the murder of monks in Madrid in 1834. It was formalized and rationalized in the legislation of Mendizábal, which not only freed the land from the system of mortmain, but confiscated Church lands and suppressed the monasteries.

The dimensions of the impact of the disentailment laws on the Church may be gauged from figures on the suppression of the monasteries and the exclaustration of members of the regular clergy (Tables 3-1 and 3-2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Religious Orders</th>
<th>No. of monasteries &amp; convents</th>
<th>No. of religious (including novices and attached laymen)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1768</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2,280</td>
<td>46,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2,280</td>
<td>33,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1,340</td>
<td>31,279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>719</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-1: Presence of men religious, 1768-1859. 
(Based on Guía de la Iglesia 1956.)
Year | No. of convents | No. of religious  
--- | --- | ---  
1700 | 38,700 | 
1768 | 27,665 | 
1787 | 25,365 | 
1796 | 24,007 | 
1826 | 23,552 | 
1833 | 2,193 | 25,614 
1859 | 866 | 12,990 

Table 3-2: Presence of women religious, 1700-1859.  
(Based on Guía de la Iglesia 1956 and Castells 1973.)

These confiscations, especially those of 1833, not only destroyed the material base of the Church in Spain, but also marked the end of the Church of the Ancien Régime far more effectively than it destroyed the power of the señorial class. This was achieved by the liberal governments of the day through the dismantling of the network of monastic orders, especially of men. At the same time, the exclusion of the Church from the dominant class within the relations of power shattered the economic base that had structured its social relations. Without denying their aristocratic links, the formal representatives of the Church, including later the nuns of the Society, were forced to seek new alliances. This they did with the emerging bourgeoisie, which was henceforth to be the Church’s principal social base.

It must be remembered, however, that the bourgeoisie that emerged from the 19th century was a group with far from homogeneous interests. Looking at the bitter struggles between conservatives and liberals that marked the history of that and the early 20th century, it is possible to identify the presence of a double ideology based on the economic dualism; this prevented the full realization of the implications of the industrial revolution. The definitive alteration in the relations of power that might have occurred in the 19th century did not do so, and the bourgeoisie were as much involved in prolonging traditional relations as were the aristocracy and the Church. For certain sections of the bourgeoisie, therefore, those for example actively associated with the nuns of the Society, commitment to a traditional ideology, interpreted and expressed in religious terms and continuing to reproduce the social relations of the past, was part of their own struggle for power. I shall refer to them, therefore, as the Catholic bourgeoisie. They saw the promotion of their own interests as resting as much on a sharing of the symbolic power invested in the Church as on the material power gained through changes in the organization of production. It is the historical eminence and influence of the Church and its related prestige that helps to explain the effectiveness of this ideology, and the otherwise extraordinary extent of its acceptance by the new middle class.

Opposed to this group were those members of the bourgeoisie committed to a
clear change in the relations of power that favoured what they saw as interests unmistakably distinct from those of the traditionally dominant class. I shall refer to them as the liberal bourgeoisie. And outside both were the urban and rural proletariat, in whose name this group so often professed to act.

The social context and experience of the nuns of the Civil War generation

Of the particular characteristics that the Church in Spain had developed by the mid-19th century, those that most affected the nuns of the Society of the Sacred Heart as they established their work there were probably two. Perhaps the most striking from the time of their early foundations was their alignment with the Catholic bourgeoisie and, by extension, with the aristocracy. The first house in Sarriá was opened at the urging of the daughters of such Catholics, convinced and wealthy enough to send their children to a Sacred Heart convent in France for their education.

The second house - Chamartín de la Rosa on the then outskirts of Madrid - was a gift of the Duke and Duchess of Pastrana in 1859. These patrons had already made a similar endowment to the Jesuits of a property opposite the nuns, and were also later responsible for the gift to the Society of their own palace in Madrid (Leganitos 1886. The school was named St Dionysius after the Duchess, Doña Dionisia.) The school had in fact opened two years earlier in a smaller house, also bestowed by the Duke and Duchess. On the death of the Duke, however, the nuns moved to the ducal palace, and the Jesuits were invited by the Duchess to take over the previous house for their pastoral activities.

The Countess of Villanueva was the benefactress of the third house, a former monastery in Sevilla, with a miraculous statue of Our Lady of the Valley. The building had been converted into numerous small flats for families after the disentailments of 1834-37, and a revealing comment indicating the greater importance to the nuns of their service to the rich rather than to the poor is made in the history of the foundation:

The cholera epidemic and the resistance of the ninety tenants, who were in no hurry at all to remove from the site, delayed until January, 1866, the definitive installation of the Mothers in Sevilla (Cien años 1946:27).

Other houses - Zaragoza (1875), Bilbao(1876), Madrid (Caballero de Gracia,

6 These two terms of identification, ‘Catholic’ and ‘liberal’, are clearly loose and not mutually exclusive. They do, however, reflect what was the most distinctive feature of each group in the political struggles of the period, and may therefore be used, as long as the limitations of each term in defining a fixed category are not forgotten.
1877), Barcelona (Diputación, 1888), Valencia (Godella, 1898), San Sebastián (1903), Palma de Mallorca (Son Español, 1902), Las Palmas, the provincial capital of the Canary Islands (1903), and so on - were purchased by the nuns. The emphasis was always on 'suitable', that is, usually excellent, sites, and the pupils were drawn from families of the emerging wealthy middle class (gente acomodada) or the aristocracy. Poor schools were also opened in association with each new foundation.7

The second characteristic of the Church's position that directly shaped the work of the nuns was the commitment to a system of social relations that maintained a traditional distribution of power. This support, in the changing circumstances initiated after the War of Independence, committed the Church to direct political action. It also reinforced an interpretation of political events in religious terms. The nuns, clearly, did not see themselves as in any way influencing or influenced by political relations. Nor were they, unlike the Jesuits, a major protagonist in this sphere. Nevertheless, the very terms of the Society's foundation - to help reestablish through the education of girls the system of social relations that had been demolished by the French Revolution - made it more vulnerable to ideological manipulation.

The indirect but profound effect of this is demonstrated if we look at the very symbol that the nuns chose to define themselves, that of the Sacred Heart. The implications of this devotion were already political in the early years of the Society. This is indicated by the active encouragement and support given to the foundress in the 1830s and 1840s by the then Pope, Gregory XVI. The environment from within which the papal support came is suggestive. On the one hand, there was Gregory XVI's committed hostility to the Italian patriots and to the so-called 'liberal heresies', specifically the doctrines of the separation of Church and State, liberty of conscience, and liberty of the press, all of which were condemned in his encyclical Mirari vos (Tuñón de Lara 1968:82). On the other hand, and undoubtedly related, was his declared devotion to the Sacred Heart, which was the immediate basis of his support for the Society. The politicization of this devotion, almost from its inception, was significant in a number of ways, but played a particularly important role in Spain. There its identification with the militant Catholic right was apparent in many instances such as a campaign in 1910 against a proposed law to limit the proliferation of religious orders - the Ley del Candado - a campaign that included among its most

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7 At the time of the centenary in 1946, the number of girls who had received instruction in the free schools surpassed that of the fee-paying pupils. Up until the end of the Civil War, in fact, the number of free pupils was often considerably higher than that of fee-paying ones, in one year (1906) being as much as two and a half times as great (3,346 compared with 1,290). The quality of this education will be looked at later.
active promoters a group of women calling themselves the Union of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Castells 1973:360). But even more important in the popular mind was an identification of the devotion with the monarchist right in a way that summarized and manifested an historical link between the Church and the institution of the monarchy.\footnote{The pervasiveness of this association is illustrated in the \textit{Letters from Spain} (1825) of Joseph Blanco White, a Spaniard of part English descent who, having become a priest in Spain, came to the notice of the Inquisition and fled to England. There, he later became a clergyman. His memoirs, written for the British public in the slightly fictionalized form of letters from a traveller, provide a fascinating account of the Church, and particularly of the institution of the religious life, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The following anecdote illustrates the profound traditional association between Church and monarchy:}

This relation had come to be expressed by the early 20th century in terms that professed to set both institutions outside the political sphere but in fact committed both to a political role based on an assumption that their interests were mutual, and could only survive through the exclusion of alternative interpretations (see Lannon 1982:576).

Perhaps the most memorable occasion of the public expression of mutual interests between the two, and of the ideological appropriation of the symbol of the Sacred Heart by groups with clear political interests, was in 1919 when Spain was officially consecrated to the Sacred Heart under Alfonso XIII. The following eyewitness account of the event confirms this.

Later on in that spring of 1919 I went to another Spanish ceremony, this time with my grandfather, [Antonio Maura], then Prime Minister and our entire family. King Alfonso was to dedicate a statue of the Sacred Heart - the occasion was so important that my grandmother appeared in public beside her husband for one of the few times of her life. We all motored to the Cerro de los Angeles where stonemasons had erected the statue in the exact geographical centre of Spain near Madrid. My grandfather made a short speech and then King Alfonso, standing beside him, stepped forward and in his weak voice offered his country to the image of the Sacred Heart, with these words:

\textquote{The pervasiveness of this association is illustrated in the \textit{Letters from Spain} (1825) of Joseph Blanco White, a Spaniard of part English descent who, having become a priest in Spain, came to the notice of the Inquisition and fled to England. There, he later became a clergyman. His memoirs, written for the British public in the slightly fictionalized form of letters from a traveller, provide a fascinating account of the Church, and particularly of the institution of the religious life, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The following anecdote illustrates the profound traditional association between Church and monarchy:}

\textquote{God and the king are so coupled in the language of this country, that the same title of Majesty is applied to both. You hear, from the pulpit, the duties that men owe to both Majesties; and a foreigner is often surprised at the hopes expressed by the Spaniards, that his Majesty will be pleased to grant them life and health for some years more. I must add a very ludicrous circumstance arising from this absurd form of speech. When the priest, attended by the clerk, and surrounded by eight or ten people, bearing lighted flambeaus, has broken into the chamber of the dying person, and gone through a form of prayer, half Latin, half Spanish, which lasts for about twenty minutes, one of the wafers is taken out of a little gold casket, and put into the mouth of the patient as he lies in bed. To swallow the wafer without the loss of any particle - which, according to the Council of Trent, (and I fully agree with the fathers) contains the same Divine person as the whole - is an operation of some difficulty. To obviate, therefore, the impropriety of lodging a sacred atom, as it might easily happen, in a bad tooth, the clerk comes forth with a glass of water, and in a firm and loud voice asks the sick person. 'Is his Majesty gone down?'}

(1825:9-10).
Spain, the country of your inheritance and predilection, prostrates herself reverent before this throne which is raised for you in the centre of the Peninsula. All the races which inhabit Spain, all the regions which form it, have constituted in the succession of centuries, through mutual loyalties, this great nation, strong and constant in love for religion and for the monarchy.

The grave-faced noblemen, the Grandees, and all the other titles and their resplendent wives nodded solemnly as they heard the King of Spain pledge his subjects to the Church and the monarchy.

The King lifted his hand to pull the veil covering the statue. The great crowd watching him stirred restlessly. Workmen bustled forward to assist. The fluttering white cover slipped off the stone to disclose the graven words: 'You will reign in Spain.'

And then the crowd went mad with cheers. And the King and my grandfather and all the noblemen turned pale. For under the huge carved words was another slogan, roughly and hastily scratched on. In Spanish not nearly so elegant as the 'You will reign in Spain', were the words: 'You may think so, but it will not be true' (de la Mora 1940:32-34).

Indeed, when the battle lines were irrevocably drawn during the Civil War, there was no doubt in people's minds as to whose side belonged the Sacred Heart. This was indicated, as one of many similar examples, by the determined destruction of the statue on the Cerro de los Angeles by the Republicans. This destruction took place over several days - from July 28th till August 7th in 1936 - and involved a number of different attempts. The militia tried twice to dynamite the statue and then to topple it with the help of a tractor. They finally smashed it by hand with hammers, a series of events that indicates the symbolic importance for them of this achievement. But the most memorable, and the most remembered, of these events was the first: the shooting of the statue by a firing squad on July 28th (Anibarro Espeso 1975:44-54). An indication of the symbolic significance of this statue of the Sacred Heart in the ideological war won by the Nationalists was their restoration of the sanctuary. This was begun in 1942 with an appeal to the nation to transfigure the site, 'in view of the satanic attempt to convert the Hill of the Angels into the Hill of the Reds', into another Mount Tabor, where the glory of Christ will appear in all the splendour of His Divine Presence, where His chosen disciples, the sons and daughters of Catholic Spain, will find light and strength, blessedness and peace, justice and charity (Anibarro Espeso 1975:131).^9

It is safe to say that the members of the Society of the Sacred Heart were quite

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^9 When enclosure for the nuns was suppressed after the Second Vatican Council, the first outing by one group in Madrid was to the Cerro de los Angeles on the Feast of the Sacred Heart. This pilgrimage was an annual event for other Catholics as an act, as it was designated, of 'reparation'. The nuns' joining of the pilgrimage was an expression of their continuing active acceptance of many of the ideological values involved in the Civil War.
unaware of the implications of this process of politicization of the symbol of the Sacred Heart and in many ways seemed to remain on the outside of the mainstream of national events until the advent of the Second Republic. This state of affairs is illustrated by the fact that, although in the wake of the dissolution of the monasteries in 1834-37, there was no official legislation until 1875 that permitted the profession of novices, the Society in Spain opened its novitiate in Chamartín in 1860. Nevertheless, incorporated as it was in the system of social relations institutionalized in the Church, the political dimension of the nuns' activity is an important factor in the development of their position in Spain. This was activated by their involvement in the work of education, a sphere in which, after the loss of its lands, the Church was to find its principal power base.

The result of the Church's concentration on education, given its opposition to the liberal bourgeoisie, was to become a major area of conflict between the Church and reforming governments from the middle of the 19th century onwards. The use of education as an ideological weapon by both groups was undoubtedly the development that most effectively anchored the nuns to a set of positions that generated for them a series of related and inflexible meanings: association with the bourgeoisie and the upper classes, anti-liberalism and ideological cussedness, psychological as well as physical enclosure (Lannon 1979:196-99), concentration in the cities (and always in the most select areas), and, above all, promotion of a 'feminine' ideal of education, quite divorced from any pressure for qualifications, or indeed subjection to government inspections, that might have generated a stress on academic achievement. The pity is that, within its own limits, the education offered by the Society in the humanities, even with its stress on Thomistic philosophy, was reasonably broad and maintained a fairly high intellectual level (Blajot 1965:13), without challenging any of these assumptions.
CHAPTER 4
The Society’s Work of Education: Autonomy versus Ideology

Conflict and crusade

The experience of the older nuns of the Centre-South Province, those of the Civil War generation, embodies a contrast that is as striking in many ways as that produced by the differences between their life before the Second Vatican Council, and that after it. On the one hand, the ahistorical projection of timelessness and concern with ultimate causes (see Chapter 6) promoted a sense of self-sufficient activity divorced from the concerns of the world. On the other hand, after the declaration of the Republic in 1931, and the educational legislation that followed, the illusion of separation could no longer be maintained. The position of the Society and of the Church and the involvement of the nuns in education forced them into confrontation with political and social events and dictated the terms in which they interpreted these events and chose to act within them. Their interpretations and actions remained within the ideological representations produced by the social relations in the Church and in Spanish society, and brought about for them not change in any personal attitudes but a consolidation of their dispositions and practices. Their recollections of these years, and the experiences they then lived, were deeply formative and kept them aligned with the Catholic bourgeoisie throughout the period of the Civil War itself and during the greater part of the Franco years. Their position in Spanish society, based largely as it was on their work of education, had been determined by the role of the Church in this field. This role was itself based on developments going back to the disentailment laws of 1834-37.

A decree of 8th March, 1836, had ordered the suppression of
all the monasteries, convents, schools, congregations and other community houses or religious institutions of men, including those of the regular clergy and the four military orders and St John of Jerusalem, that exist in the Peninsula, the adjacent islands and the Spanish possessions in Africa (García Villoslada 1979:139).

The situation of women religious - all, except for the Daughters of Charity, of strict enclosure - was less drastically affected, although the nuns of the Society of the Sacred Heart had decided to leave Spain and return to France.
The exclaustration also affected women religious, but only partly. The [pious centres] not dedicated to hospitals or primary schooling were suppressed, but the remaining convents were allowed to remain open if they reached a minimum of 20 religious. In 1836 it is estimated that there were 15,130 nuns (143).

The Church's role in education in the following century, of which the nuns of the Society were an important part, was an effort to recover its position and create new networks of operation. The first step it took was to reestablish its personnel and legitimating ascendency. The stages by which these goals were achieved were three. The preliminary phase began with the signing of a Concordat between the then conservative government and the Vatican in 1851 five years after the arrival of the nuns in Sarriá, and ended with the fall of the First Republic in 1874 when they had already established three schools. The second was a 'glorious' phase under the Restoration, of which the key event was the Constitution of 1876. In this period, the nuns opened another six schools in various cities. The third was a phase of intermittent but bitter struggle following on the Colonial Disaster of 1898 and culminated in the anticlerical legislation of the first biennium (1931-33) of the Second Republic. During this time, the Society continued to expand, and opened another ten schools and a teachers' college.

The major issues in terms of which this struggle was to be defined may be recognized in, and indeed traced directly back to, the preliminary phase. In the first place, there was the legal ambiguity of religious associations, based on the Concordat of 1851. This ambiguity provided a recurring point of departure for attacks on the proliferation of religious orders and of proposed legislation against them. It derived from the fact that article 29 of the Concordat, while allowing for the reintroduction of religious orders to the peninsula, specified by name only two: 'the houses and religious congregations of St Vincent de Paul, St Philip Neri and' (and herein lay the seed of many future battles) 'one other order of those approved by the Holy See.' In article 35, provision was made for direct government support 'by the most appropriate means (los medios más conducentes)...' of the houses and religious congregations mentioned in article 29' (García Villolslada 1979:719-30). Since the identity of the 'other order' was never defined, nor the fact clarified as to whether it meant one other order in the whole country, or one other in each diocese or each pueblo of each diocese as judged fit by the local ordinary, it is plain that Vatican diplomacy, whether with full intention or not, had achieved a brilliant formula for unchecked expansion by religious congregations.

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1The term given to the loss of Spain's last colonies in Cuba and the Philippines
The second issue concerned the primacy of religious interpretation in social life and the place in Spanish society of the Church as sole agent of this official interpretation. This became an issue principally from the years of the Revolution of 1868 and the First Republic that followed in 1873-74. From the legislation of this period, two principles emerged that confronted the Church at a radical level. One was that the reformers of the First Republic projected a real separation of Church and State (Castells 1973:241). The other was an emergence among the liberals who formulated the Constitution of 1869 and the draft legislation for the federal Constitution of the Republic of 1873 (Ministerio de Educacion y Ciencia 1978:325; Castells 1973:232, 241) of an official aspiration for religious liberty that departed from the consistent repression of non-official aspirations that had shaped Spanish society. Even though it was expressed only in terms of a simple tolerance of the freedom of worship, this projection nevertheless represented a significant departure from mere anticlericalism to a conception of plurality of belief and interpretation that, given the primacy of the Church in ideological reproduction, was interpreted by those in the Church as an attack on Catholicism, and on the very institution of the Catholic Church itself. This response of representatives of the Church was one very much in the spirit of Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors* (1938) of 1864, that had locked them into a deeply defensive position. Since the *Syllabus* had condemned, in comprehensive dismissal, not only philosophical naturalism, socialism, and communism, but also liberalism² (Tuñón de Lara 1968:88), it is not surprising that the Spanish Church, and with it the nuns of the Society in Spain, should have proved themselves incapable of coming to any kind of understanding with the spirit behind the 1868 Revolution. The nature of the response by the Spanish nuns, both then and later, was very much in terms of their alignment with the aristocracy and Catholic bourgeoisie who had been instrumental in bringing them to Spain (see Más lejos todavía 1985:13-30). It was determined also, however, by their membership in the wider body of the Society. The attitudes taken by the Society were themselves shaped by their position in the Church, a position that demanded unquestioning obedience. This was demonstrated by the response to the *Syllabus* by Madeleine Sophie Barat herself: 'The Holy See has spoken; let us listen, understand, and obey' (Williams 1965:551). This attitude was wholly representative of the nuns of the Society, and underlay their part in the resurgence of the Church that marked the period after the Restoration of the monarchy under the Bourbons in 1874. This

²The *Syllabus* also included in its sweeping list of isms: pantheism, absolute and moderate rationalism, indifferentism, and even latitudinarism (Pius IX 1958:289-90).
reestablishment of the Church was striking, but its pre-eminence was embattled and subject to constant opposition over the next half century. Castells (1973:243-47) outlines three avenues through which the Church sought to reassert its position within the dominant class of Spanish society in this period. Two are of concern here since they relate to the development of the Society of the Sacred Heart in Spain.

The first -'the fundamental, basic means, from which are derived all the rest' - was the 'quantitative and qualitative rebirth of religious orders and congregations' (1973:243). Since the majority of these were to be dedicated to teaching, the second means was clearly dependent on the first: the strict control of education. This was something that closely involved the nuns of the Society and shaped the experience of the women of the Civil War generation.

The granting of the ideological control of education to the Church was incorporated in a very controversial ministerial decree of 1875, issued under the government of the Bourbon Restoration. It was concerned with the universities, where it was prohibited that

> anything be taught that is contrary to Catholic dogma or to moral health, taking care that the teachers pay strict attention to the explanation of their subjects. In university chairs supported by the State, the Government cannot consent to having teachings contrary to a dogma that is the social truth of our fatherland (quoted in Tuñón de Lara 1968:113).

Although this prohibition referred strictly only to the universities, and was in fact revoked six years later (Lannon 1982:568), its spirit filtered down into lower levels of education as well and was to have important practical and social consequences, both in the short and in the longer term. Among these was the implicit but unambiguous charter given to the Congregations of teaching religious who now flooded into the country to guard and foster the moral (interpreted as civic) integrity of its children and youth.

In other words, by this decree, and even more explicitly by the Constitution of 1876 which declared:

> The Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion is that of the State. The Nation is obliged to maintain this form of worship and its ministers (Article 11),

the government of the Restoration reinstated the Church as public guardian and arbiter of officially acceptable public ideology. Since, in the same article, the Constitution went on to recognize the private practice of other religious beliefs, there was a significant difference between this alliance of Church and State and that of earlier centuries when the Inquisition's task was to ensure homogeneity of belief
systems at all levels. Nevertheless, by officially defining the Church’s position as pertaining to the public sphere, the framers of the Constitution of 1876 helped to further trap the Church, and by the same process, the religious orders including the nuns of the Society, in a rigid loyalty to a status quo that was increasingly removed from the economic and social reality of the people. That is to say, the Constitution made the Church the official exponent of an approved set of beliefs and values that remained rooted in a commitment to maintaining structures that reflected the past. Hence, innovation was placed beyond the ideological pale for those, including the nuns, who supported the position of the Church, and became the prerogative of such private secular organizations as the remarkable Institución Libre de Enseñanza (the Institute for Freedom of Teaching).\(^3\) Innovation came to be opposed to tradition and since tradition was accepted as a positive value by those who supported this scheme of things (and this included the nuns of the Society), innovation at any level - religious, social, or educational - became by definition ‘bad’.

This commitment to a primarily reproductive interpretation of education, and its expression in educational practice, clearly influenced the situation of the Society in Spain. These women were part of the development identified by Castells (1973:246) as the second essential means used by the Church to reestablish ideological hegemony: the control of education. It was through the growth of the religious orders after 1876 that the Church acted to promote its interests - and hence those of the Catholic bourgeoisie - in the following decades.

The growth of religious orders, particularly those of women, in Spain as in the rest of Europe in the 19th century, is striking both in its rapidity and in its clear association with this specific historical period. Figures such as those given in López García and Isusi indicate that around 94% of active religious belong to congregations founded between 1800 and 1950 (1968:355). These figures, while sufficiently impressive, tend to blur the outstanding importance of the twenty years of the post-Restoration period (1874-1890s) in this growth. Nor do they demonstrate the equally remarkable inversion in the relationship between the numbers of male and female religious that took place over this time. From a clear predominance of male religious

\(^3\)This organization, dedicated to a humanist education derived from the philosophical ideas of the German Kraus, was founded in 1867 by Francisco Giner de los Ríos. It was approved by royal decree in August 1876. The educational approach practiced by the Institute was based on such then innovative ideas as the rights of children and the harmonious development of their whole person, coeducation, dialogue, active participation in both management and curriculum by parents and teachers. The work represents the finest tradition of liberal humanism in Spain and its influence, though its numbers of pupils were small, was profound and far-reaching (see Turin 1967).
before the disentailment legislation, their numbers never again recovered the same eminence. The number of women religious, on the contrary, almost trebled. Both these features are evident in the following table (Table 4-1), keeping in mind the period of the disentailment and suppression of monasteries and convents that continued till 1859.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Men's religious orders</th>
<th>Women's religious orders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of orders</td>
<td>No. of houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1797</td>
<td>2,051</td>
<td>53,178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1,834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1,506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>c.43</td>
<td>c.22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>c.39</td>
<td>c.28,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>591</td>
<td>10,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>1,015</td>
<td>10,276</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-1: Presence of religious men and women, 1797-1930.

The spurt, especially by women religious, after 1874 is even further emphasized when one takes account of the added fact that, out of 300 congregations seeking official authorization between 1876 and 1900, 73 were granted by the various governments. Thirty-four of these were men’s orders and thirty-nine were women’s (Castells 1973:244).

The largest proportion of these new congregations were involved in education, an involvement made possible for the women’s orders by the 19th century modification of strict enclosure. By 1901, there were 10,630 men in religious orders in Spain. Of these, half (49.3%) were dedicated to teaching. At the same time, there were 40,030 women religious. A third (34.3%) were involved in teaching, and more than another third (38.7%) in welfare (based on Castells 1973:325-26).

A number of observations may be made on the basis of these figures. One is that, despite the fewer numbers of men religious, the fact that as many as half were involved in teaching indicates that the principal responsibility for ideological reproduction was entrusted to them by the Church. The importance of the

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4 At the end of the 18th century, the number of women in religious life, that is, in convents of strict enclosure, had been some 24,000. By 1904, the number of women choosing this form of the religious life had fallen to 27% of the total number of 40,030 religious.
Marianistas and the Jesuits over this period certainly supports this observation. A second concerns the growth of women's active orders after the Restoration, a growth that suggests that the choice of chastity for women in Spain in the 19th century expressed the same option for autonomy as in other countries in Europe at the same time. The role played in Spain by the Society and other active orders can therefore be seen, not only as a commitment by these women to a particular ideology and its reproduction - though it may have acted this way in practice - but also as a move to seek alternatives to their domestic role.

Nevertheless, by their involvement in education, and by their position within the Church, these women were drawn into the Church's commitment to the reproduction of a particular form of civic (social) order and of its supporting ideology. This meant, first, that the main weight of education was directed towards the bourgeoisie and centred in the cities; that the problem of illiteracy was seen as peripheral to the central issue of educating suitable 'leaders' for society; and that girls

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5The question of a population surplus affecting women that occurred in, for example, England in the 19th century (Hill 1973:300), does not seem to have been the case in Spain (see Durán 1982:30). Nevertheless, the surplus in other countries in Europe may have played an indirect role in Spain. This is indicated by the fact that only five of the 138 indigenous orders (3.63%) founded in Spain between 1800 and 1950 began between 1800 and 1850. Nearly half (49.28%) were founded in the second half of the 19th century. Comparing this with figures for orders entering Spain from other countries, one sees a much more even distribution, even taking into account the effect of the disentailment laws: 28.7% between 1800 and 1850, and 27.77% between 1850 and 1900 (based on CONFER 1980). The figures suggest a filtering of ideas from outside into Spain - the effect of a double chronology that has been evident at other times in the country's history.

6Figures on the geographical origin of membership of women in contemporary religious life - and there is no suggestion that the composition of this group has changed radically in recent years - indicate that the majority of religious recruits are drawn from rural areas (62.6% in 1959) (see Guía de la Iglesia 1960). The strongest support for many women's orders in Spain (this is not true of the Society) has generally come from those rural areas with a population of small agricultural proprietors, that is, families of independent means, not from the poor or the landless. Nor are the cities heavily involved. The areas least productive of recruits have generally been Madrid, Barcelona, Sevilla, and Valencia (López & Isusi 1968:46). In view of the concentration of religious personnel in urban centres, particularly in Madrid and Barcelona, it is impossible not to conclude that religious life has been a very significant avenue of social mobility, at least in geographical terms, for many girls in Spain.

The fact that this continues to be one of the basic social functions of religious life in general is indicated by the fact that, despite an overall world decline in recruits since Vatican II, the areas where religious congregations continue to flourish are almost all exclusively in the newly developing countries of Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, where religious life still offers many girls (and boys, but to a lesser extent) alternatives that are not otherwise open to them.

7This is not to deny the work of individuals such as Padre Manjón, the founder of the Ave María schools (Turin 1967:272). These schools were set up towards the end of the 19th century for the very poor, and their pedagogical principles of open education - produced but not determined by lack of facilities - were certainly a far cry from the normal methods of formal education. Padre Manjón's ends remained, however, the same as those of his religious contemporaries: religious and moral-civic education, designed to promote a stable society and, as regards girls, their preparation for a future role as wife and mother.
were educated - as in the Society's schools and ironically, in view of what has been said about women's search for alternatives - for a purely domestic and supportive role.

The Church was not alone in its preoccupation with the education of the bourgeoisie. Even the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, so innovative in many ways, was similarly focussed. In practice, what this meant for the religious orders was concern with secondary education and a concentration of schools in the bourgeois residential areas of major towns. This was certainly so for the Society of the Sacred Heart.

As a Jesuit commentator writing about the need for more schools for the poor in Madrid in 1925 observed, there was no equivalent shortage for the upper and middle classes who were well supplied with church secondary schools (Lannon 1982:578).

In strictly demographic terms, the concentration of the Society and other active religious in urban centres is perfectly rational. Moreover, that the orders had an important social function was officially recognized as early as the last disentailment law of 1855, in which 'buildings occupied by works of welfare or instruction' were exempted (Castells 1973:201-02). This exemption was to affect the Society of the Sacred Heart, whose first school in Spain had been opened in 1846, but the main congregations the Pascual Madoz government had in mind were undoubtedly the Escolapios, whose *Escuelas Pías* had already played an important role in popular education, and the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, whose work in the country since 1790 had made an important contribution in the almost total absence of Government welfare provisions. Both these orders continued to be granted special status throughout the 19th century, even by hostile governments.

After 1874, the opening up of the country to religious orders was also an acknowledgement by successive governments of the State's inability to cope alone with growing social demands. Nevertheless, by choosing to identify its main interests with those of the bourgeoisie, the Church and the Society failed to come to terms with its alienation from a vast proportion of the people, specifically from those classes - the urban poor and the rural proletariat - whose own interests lay in the radical alteration of social relations. It was with the rural poor that this failure of the Church was most glaring, a situation that becomes clear by examining the relationships between the system of land holding, illiteracy rates, and the distribution of religious personnel. It was in these relationships that the origins of anticlericalism lay.

In looking at these relationships, the following maps (Figures 4-6) are very instructive.
Fig. 4 Large Rural Landholdings, 1930.
(From Vicens Vives 1969:641.)

Fig. 5 Areas of Highest Illiteracy, 1910.
(From figures based on Martínez Cuadrado 1973.)
Fig. 6 Distribution by Provinces of the Women Religious in Active Congregations in Spain, 1967.
(From López and Isusi 1967:45)
Figure 4 has already been referred to (see Figure 3), but is presented again to illustrate the overlay between the latifundio system and the areas where highest illiteracy is to be found. The social extension of illiteracy, and the acuteness of the problem particularly in relation to women, is seen in Table 4-2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (of census)</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>81.0</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>63.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>59.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-2: Illiteracy rates in Spain, 1877-1930; as a percentage of the total population. (Based on Martínez Cuadrado 1973.)

Statistical data on the distribution of religious congregations and their schools in these years is not readily available, but some idea of their absence from these areas is indicated in Figure 6, which is based on figures for 1967, a period when some improvement might, for reasons to be suggested later, have been expected.

Certainly in the ideology that continued to prevail in the 19th century, illiteracy was not defined as a disadvantage for the lower classes, in terms either of the individual or of society. It is for this, among other reasons, that the dramatic increase in the numbers of religious personnel after 1874 in no way served to ameliorate the situation. On the contrary, the concentration of active women’s orders was in the larger cities and in the North. As rural areas and the South had been historically disadvantaged with respect to both land and illiteracy, so they remained when one looks at the question of religious personnel. This was certainly so for the Society. In 1931, all their schools, except for the select Santa María de Huerta in the province of Soria, were in or close to the cities. Madrid had three schools, and Barcelona and Bilbao each had two. Clearly the nuns did not interpret their role as a response to these kinds of problems.

The class alignment of the Church and religious orders, including the Society, is clear. One symptom of the fact that it was equally clear to the excluded classes is the widespread of anticlericalism and the violence of its nature. The most extreme instances of its eruption before 1931 were probably the murder of monks in 1834 in Madrid, at the time of the Society’s first unsuccessful Spanish foundation, and the

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8These figures do not highlight the higher incidence of illiteracy among certain minority groups, such as the gypsies (Puxcón 1980:7-8).

9There had been two other schools in Barcelona at different times, but both had closed for lack of fee-paying pupils, despite the fact that one (open from 1903 to 1912) had 500 students in the poor school, and the other (1904-06) had 300 (Cien Años 1946).
burning of convents and churches in Barcelona in the Tragic Week of 1909. The alienation of the masses was finally recognized by some members of the Church itself but it was already too late.  

The topic of anticlericalism in Spain is a vast one, but some indication of its significance and the extent to which it was structured by the Church’s contribution to the historical development of relations of power is given by Connelly Ullmann in summing up the Tragic Week:

On July 26, 1909, a general strike began in the industrial cities of Catalonia as an antiwar protest and developed into five days of convent burnings. This is the central fact in the Tragic Week. The corollary illustrates the critical issue in Spanish politics: this insurrection led to no political reforms, not even to legislation controlling the fiscal and educational activities of the clergy. The anticlerical uprising had served exclusively to dissipate a potentially revolutionary movement.

Catalan labour leader Joaquín Maurín was... explicit: ‘Lerrouxismo directed the popular protest into the burning of churches and convents in order to leave intact the real foundations of the regime...’

Juan Maragall, the Catalan poet, saw with incisive clarity that the Tragic Week was but a manifestation of the malady that affected not only Catalan society but all Spain... The workers had chosen to attack the Church as a symbol of Spanish social structure (1968:322-23, 329).

The nuns of the Society of the Sacred Heart were not exempt from the general environment of anticlerical feeling. This is demonstrated by the way in which it too, like other groups in the Church, was compromised by adherence to the external forms of authority. Tuñón de Lara comments that

during the whole reign of Alfonso XIII (1902-31), the Church is not only allied with Power, but forms, to a certain extent, a part of that Power... The Church and the Right were the same thing in the eyes of the ordinary Spaniard... The people saw in the Church only another public force, whose processions moved out escorted by the Civil Guard (1968:109, 113).

This comment is irresistibly invoked by the account given in Cien Años of the situation of one of the Barcelona convents during the Tragic Week. This series of events demonstrated all too dramatically the truth of Tuñón de Lara’s claim. During this time, the nuns were forced to disperse, and the house was defended by a number of Civil Guards and soldiers. The return was triumphant, and a potent manifestation both of blindness to causes and of mutuality of interests.

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11 Lerroux was the leader of one of the political parties.
On the 3rd August, Our Blessed Lord could return to his dwelling, and the return of the Chalice in the hands of the Chaplain was thrilling. The six Civil Guards who were protecting the house, presented arms, kneeling, while the Religious, with lighted candles, formed a procession for the King of Kings, chanting a vibrant Te Deum (Cien Años 1946:52).

Such a drastic interruption to the routine of the convent was not to be repeated until the proclamation of the Second Republic in 1931.

In the twenty years after the Restoration, then, the Church reestablished its dominance in education through the vigorous involvement of religious orders, and the nuns of the Society, the predecessors of the Civil War generation, played an active part in this. The first attacks on this preeminence mark the third phase in the question of the Church and education, and were, along with the intellectual ferment that produced the Generation of '98, tied up with Spain's defeat by the United States in 1898. The Colonial Disaster marked the end, not of the monarchy, but certainly of the policies fostered by the Restoration and with them the Church's ambitions for unchallenged control of the national ideology.

The nuns of the Civil War generation and the triumph of ideology

The legislation of the first biennium of the Republic that so profoundly affected the lives of the nuns of the Civil War generation was the culmination of growing hostility towards the Church's work in education that grew out of the shock of 1898. In the atmosphere of growing social unrest that followed the Colonial Disaster, the intellectual bankruptcy of confessional teaching, whose proponents had been officially dispensed in 1892 of the need for formal qualifications (Castells 1973:246-47), made it an obvious scapegoat for those seeking change in Spanish society. Clerical thinking was embodied anew in the religious orders and was blamed by the liberals, because of a neglect of academic and technical excellence in the interests of 'correct' thinking, for the economic backwardness of the country. Battle was joined over the control of education. Till 1913, this largely took the slightly indirect form, in various laws of

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12A famous example of the ideological bent of this kind of 'correct' thinking is quoted by Brenan in the following extract from the complete Church catechism (republished in 1927):

Q. What does Liberalism teach?
A. That the State is independent of the Church.
Q. What kind of sin is Liberalism?
A. It is a most grievous sin against faith.
Q. Why?
A. Because it consists in a collection of heresies condemned by the Church.
Q. What sin is committed by him who votes for a Liberal candidate?
A. Generally a mortal sin (1978:51-52).
association, of an attempt to limit the development of the religious orders, an attempt that was vigorously, and mostly successfully, resisted by the Church. Since it was this period that also saw the Society of the Sacred Heart more than double its schools from nine in 1898 to nineteen and a teachers' college by 1930, it is clear that the nuns were not immediately affected either. The Church's heaviest ideological weaponry was brought out without hesitation in this battle. Against a proposed law limiting religious associations in 1910 (the Ley del Candado), for example, the hierarchy, in a public letter of protest to the king, declared unequivocally that the implementation of the law would imply mortal sin and excommunication (Iribarren 1974:85-86).

The terms in which the struggle was to culminate under the Second Republic were anticipated by the frontline anticlerical and future prime minister, Canalejas, in 1900. He outlined the concept of 'the germ of civil war', originating in the existence of two opposed groups of youth:

- the one inspired by intransigence and fanaticism, the frockcoat brigade (con la espalda de levita); and the other, liberal, progressive, educated in the university with the spirit of the century, a sense of right, a love of liberty and democratic potentialities (Castells 1973:284).

This ominous 'germ of civil war' was to achieve feverish dimensions, after some abeyance between 1913 and 1931, in the culminating hostility of the early (1931-33) and last (1936) governments of the Second Republic that so directly affected the nuns of the Civil War generation.

The legislation of 1931-33 no longer approached the problem of the Church indirectly, but confronted head-on the question of control of education, and hence, as the protagonists of both sides saw it, of ideology. The contentious Article 26 of the Constitution of 1931 specifically prohibited religious orders from teaching. Nevertheless, the prohibition was not instantly enforced, since the government was not in an immediate position to replace the religious schools. These were granted a reprieve until the Law of Confessions and Religious Congregations of 1933, which, among other things, included an absolute, if ineffectual, prohibition of teaching by religious personnel.

This law, and the atmosphere of crisis in the Church that it provoked, finally dragged the nuns of the Society into critical involvement in the events of the period. These were the events that deeply affected the lives of the women of the Civil War generation and their work in the schools. The most dramatic of them took place on the fateful 11th May, 1931, when the buildings at Chamartín, not only the school and the house of novitiate but also the Provincial house, were among the convents burnt
by mobs in an upsurge of anticlerical violence. This event took place at about six in the evening and the nuns remember it very vividly. One of them narrated her experience:

'I was in the novitiate, and on the 11th of May, 1931, they came to burn Chamartín. We all had to leave. Mother Modot, the Provincial, and some of the novices - probably about 30 - went to the house of the Countess of ... But she couldn't take so many - without postulants, we were sixty. That night, I went to three different houses - in two, they refused me. In the end I went to the house of a relative. But there were some funny details. Those who'd got fat [in the novitiate] couldn't fit into their clothes. As for me, I'd always been fat, so they were all asking me for clothes.'

Another woman remembers:

'The afternoon of the fire, the provincial sent the novices to their families. The professed she told to go to the houses of the poor. But not one poor family would let them in.'

In view of the clear class alignment of the Society, this reluctance by 'the poor' is not surprising, as a woman of the post-Civil War generation commented.

As a result of the attack on Chamartín, and in view of the instability of the national situation, the novices, of whom there were fifty-four, were sent to Avigliana, in Italy, and the house of novitiate remained there till after the end of the War. Many of the women of the Civil War generation therefore spent two to three years of this critical period in tranquil exile out of the country. They returned after making their temporary vows to a situation where their activities were a daily reminder of the opposition they had set up between 'the world' and their religious life.

The general position of the Society over this period is intimated in some of the few documents that survived the loss of the provincial archives in the burning of Chamartín in 1931. They are revealingly filed under the title of 'Documents related to the Religious Persecution, 1931-36.' A number of these deal with the Congregation's association with SADEL (Sociedad Anónima de Enseñanza Libre, Limited Company for Freedom of Teaching), an organization set up in 1933 'under the auspices of the Catholic Association of Parents' (report in A.B.C., 4/7/1933). By transferring ownership of school properties to SADEL, the nuns were able to remain within the law and, at the same time, continue teaching.

Eleven other buildings in Madrid were burnt on the same day. In the following days (the main period was a three-day one) the burnings spread to other parts of Spain: Valencia, Alicante, Murcia, Sevilla, Cádiz, and especially Málaga (García Villoslada 1979:348). The headquarters of the monarchist paper A.B.C. were also burnt. No one died in the burnings (Thomas 1977:58-59). With the burning of Chamartín went the Provincial archives, so that written information from the period before the end of the Civil War is fairly sketchy.
That these relations did not always function smoothly is indicated by a letter of the then Vicar of the province to the Director of SADEL (4th October, 1935) protesting against a proposed rise in required contributions. The original figure had apparently been agreed at 1% of the fees received by the nuns, a figure that had already risen to 3%. The reduced economic position of the Society that had resulted from the general situation of unrest made any further rise impossible. Unfortunately, there is no record of the reply. Nevertheless, the schools - by now numbering seventeen - on the whole continued to function, usually with the help of former students. The measures taken by the nuns, as they themselves remember them, were indicative of their strong support for those groups opposing the Republic. They saw the legislation as nothing more than an obstacle to be overcome, and devised strategies to avoid its effects. By changing their title to Academia, doing away with a uniform for the students, and dressing in secular clothes, a fairly smooth normal routine was established. One of the nuns related:

'I returned to Spain [from the temporary novitiate in Italy] in February, 1933. That school year was normal, with the habit and everything, up till the end of the year. At the end of 1933 and the beginning of 1934, they founded SADEL... Under SADEL, they divided the house into two - the convent, that belonged to us, where we wore the habit and gave classes in religion and needlework; and the SADEL, where we wore secular clothes. We were employed by the SADEL, and only those who had qualifications (título) could teach. In the last months before the war, we used to go out every night with the children to sleep in houses outside (del pueblo).

And look at the providence of God. The war broke out on the 17th July. The children had already gone on holidays. And there had been some teachers from the country who had come to make a retreat. They left on the last bus that left Madrid. After that it wouldn't have been possible to have returned to the villages.'

Another woman commented on the situation in Sevilla:

'In Sevilla, we had a secret door. We used to go through it into the school at eight in the morning. In the afternoon, we went back to the convent.'

Even in the case of Chamartín the school was reopened in the ruins within three months in the best tradition of what the nuns saw as valiant defiance of persecution.14

This dual existence lasted for the nuns until the outbreak of the Civil War in

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14The use of the word 'persecution' by people to whom I talked was applied to a variety of examples ranging from the tragic to the trivial. That even the latter were certainly disagreeable is demonstrated from the recollections of contemporary participants in events - pious young girls, for example, who had their mantillas twitched from their heads when they were on the way to Mass.
1936. The war meant the closing of schools in Republican zones and the dispersal of communities. Some of the nuns, a group of forty-one, were detained or imprisoned for varying periods of up to several months, but none was executed, a fate that other religious were not so fortunate to escape. These were older and more senior nuns who are no longer alive. Of those who are still part of the Centre-South Province, most managed to reach nationalist areas, or got to France, or to Italy. The deserted convents were used in a number of different capacities: hospitals, childcare centres, military barracks. The former ducal palace at Leganitos was in the front line of siege in Madrid, and was virtually destroyed. Convents in the Nationalist zones rallied to the war effort, helped look after the wounded, opened their doors to religious from Republican areas, and generally displayed an appropriate patriotic partiality.

With the victory of Franco in 1939 came the initial reinstatement of the traditional order of society that had been so rudely, but so ineffectually, challenged by the inauguration of the Republic. This state of affairs was encapsulated in the reaction to the entrance of the Nationalist troops into Madrid by the family of one of the nuns. Her account summarizes perfectly the factors of nationalism, reactionary Catholicism, and social relations determined by class, that had become inextricably mixed up in Spain in the reproduction of traditional relations of power, and that the Society itself represented.

'We had a maid at home, and when the Republic arrived she went silly. She took off her uniform and left her hair loose. We couldn't do anything - but she did remain loyal. But when Franco arrived in Madrid - my mother had sewn a big flag, and the day that he arrived, she put it out on the balcony - the apartment was near Cibeles - saying 'Welcome'. And she said: 'Long live Spain. Long live Christ the King. And you, Antonia, now you will go and tidy yourself and serve at table as God ordained.'

With the initiation of the post-Civil War period, the Society reaped the benefit of having chosen, almost without exception, to support the winning side. The very few exceptions that there were - whose families, like so many other Republicans, were made to suffer bitterly - remained very silent in the following years. Some of the members of the Northern Province of the Society came from separatist Basque families, and their families were penalized after the war. This happened too to a member of the Centre-South Province. Her father, a highly respected and decorated

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15 The feeling of many members of the Society to this reprieve was that 'we were not worthy to be martyrs', a comment made as recently as 1983 that vividly illustrates the power of the discourse used in the Civil War.

16 This was an illegal and dangerous act with a history of defiance going back to at least the War of Independence.
officer in the army (*Ejercito de Tierra* 1983), happened to be in a garrison that did not rise against the government at the time of Franco’s invasion. Although sympathetic to the rebels’ objectives, he regarded his oath of loyalty to the legally constituted government to be binding even when he did not agree with all its policies. He therefore fought on the Republican side in the Civil War. He was tried by court martial and dismissed from the army after the war, and lived in poverty and disgrace until an official reinstatement, sought by his family, in 1983. The silence of his daughter, and of the other women in the Spanish Provinces in similar circumstances, is a clear indication of their sense of isolation in the Congregation and of the extent to which the events of this decade, so apparently radical, had only reinforced its traditional position and role.

The Society’s schools were very quickly reopened in 1939, in the spirit expressed two decades later on the centenary of the founding of Chamartín:

On Wednesday, 29th March, 1939, Year of the Victory, was liberated Madrid, last bulwark of Marxism. And on the 5th of April, Chamartín renewed the thread of its history after three years of slavery beneath the powers of darkness. The imprint left by the enemy was apocalyptic, an infernal chaos (*Mater Admirabilis* 1959:20). 

By contrast, the print left by the Franco years was a consolidation and growth of the work of the Society. Twelve new schools or residences were opened between 1939 and 1969, all with the same basic religious, political, social, and educational orientations as previously. Chamartín was rebuilt around a statue of the Sacred Heart that had amazingly survived the fire and the war with the loss of only a hand, and the school of St Dionysius was reopened on a new site (now known as Ferraz, or Rosales, from the names of its adjacent streets).

From then on, till 1964, the history of the Congregation is the history of Francoism, undisturbed by even the first ripples of dissent from within the Church itself. The teaching of the nuns too reflected the traditional ideology that was stridently reaffirmed in education as in other areas of life in the very terms that had tied the Church, and the Society, into support not only for the prevailing social...
relations but for the forces of order that maintained them. This effort produced the hybrid National Catholicism, a project which can only be understood in the light of the Civil War and of the trauma that, as Tusell expresses it, ‘lacerated the lives of all those who played a concerned active political part in those years’ (1984:440). Behind its apparent vigour, he comments, ‘was a wound that still bled’.

The effect in schools of the kind of blatant manipulation of Catholic beliefs involved in the concept is demonstrated by a class plan published in the national magazine *Atenas* in 1938 (see Figure 7).

This reestablishment of what the regime interpreted as traditional social relations was particularly relevant to the Society’s schools through its effects in education for girls. These were felt in two ways. One was the reassertion of a ‘feminine’ model in the schools after some undermining of this during the Republic. The other was the presence in all girls’ secondary schools, including those of the Society, of a member of the Feminine Section of the Movement (*Sección Femenina de F.E.T. de las J.O.N.S - Falange Española Tradicionalista de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista*).¹⁸

The efforts that had been made in the field of education for girls under the

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¹⁸ The influence of the *Sección Femenina* in the lives of many women is yet, I think, to be assessed. In many ways, it offered to women an alternative similar to that offered by religious life. It was described to me by two women who had been active members. For neither of them had the ideology been very important. One is a teacher, now in her forties and a single parent. The other was in her late twenties, and a rather punk-looking hair stylist in my local *peluquería*. The older woman described her experience:

‘As José Antonio called us: half nun, half soldier. If you wanted to do something for people, there was no other alternative - to become a nun, or to join the *Sección Femenina*. I did my teacher’s training with them - three years in a castle!... My family comes from a *pueblo*; we’re not so well off. I wouldn’t have been able to study otherwise.’

After her training, this woman did very interesting work in the *pueblos* of Granada, with the ‘mobile classroom’ (*catedra ambulante*). One of her responsibilities was to collect traditional songs and dances of the region that were known only to the old people.

My hairdresser and I passed a most unexpected and fascinating session talking about her experiences with the *Sección Femenina*. For her, it had been a chance to go on fun week-end camps from school, and gave her also an opportunity she would not otherwise have had of studying hairdressing.
### RELIGIOUS LEVEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORDER</th>
<th>MILITARY LEADERS</th>
<th>ORDER</th>
<th>SOCIAL LEVEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOD, FATHER, CREATOR</td>
<td>Ordsains, Orders, obeys, rewards, punishes</td>
<td>MILITARY: H C R A R (civilians, children)</td>
<td>Family, Father (Church)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(SUPREME AUTHORITY)</td>
<td></td>
<td>LEADERS: I O E R P D B (citizens, subordinates)</td>
<td>(mother)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AUTHORITY-TIES: K M N W E U E (subordinates)</td>
<td>Priest, School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Mayor, Governor)</td>
<td>Teacher, Good People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HEAD OF STATE: H D E H</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>FRANCO: K C E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

### EVALUATIVE

- **EVIL**: Eve - then Adam - disobey; DEVIL.
- **PUNISHMENT**: Remorse, effort, misfortunes, calamities.
- **GOOD**: Adam & Eve, before the temptation; PARADISE.
  - **REWARD**: no effort, happiness, immortality.

### RENUNCIATIVE

- **Represent**: God, Father, Creator, Priest; (-Church)
- **ORDER**: PRAY a lot, Venerate the name of the Lord, Attend Mass, Obey Priests, Tell the truth, Resignation. Acceptance of one's own situation as the will of God...
- **ORDER**: Unquestioning OBEDIENCE to the authorities, Acceptance of Hierarchy (Sacred), Not to create discord or dissonance (-acceptance of the political order and its rules), Volunteering, supreme loyalty to the Leader Franco, highest point of the hierarchy (-presented in a meaningful plan parallel to that of God).
- **ORDER**: Unquestioning obedience to parents, to others, persons worthy of respect. Not to quarrel or fight in the family or society. To dress with modesty (only women)... Not to tell lies. Respect (-sacred) for private property. Resignation and acceptance of one's social position. Social conformity.

### SYMBOLIC IDENTIFICATION

- **FRANCO**: (HEAD OF STATE) Authorities, Military Leaders, Heroes.
- **HEAD OF STATE**: Father, Mother (in a subordinate role), Teacher, Priest, Good People.

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Figure 7: Class Plan for a Religion lesson on 'The Commandments', November 1938. (From Camara Villar 1984:341)
Republic had not been specifically an attack on the feminine model, but rather an attempt to meet what they saw as the urgent need to improve access to education by all sectors of the population. In 1927-28, for example, only 48.6% of school-age girls were actually receiving instruction (Capel Martínez 1982:385). The first Republican government, therefore, had brought in legislation that attempted to improve this situation. In 1931, coeducational schooling had been introduced into government schools, in an attempt to improve the situation for girls. This had not affected the Society as their schools were private. It had meant in the country in general, however, a significant increase in the number of girls entering the ranks of students (FOESSA 1975:199-200). This legislation had been frustrated, however, by the change of government in 1934, and only in Catalonia had the project been carried through with any consistency (Millán 1983:228-29).

After the Civil War, coeducation was prohibited as 'contrary to the religious and pedagogical principles of the National Movement' (FOESSA 1975:199-200). Education in these single-sex schools was specifically geared for 'boys' and for 'girls' and, in the girls' schools, oriented once more towards the duties of home and maternity. Not only were students obliged to study 'feminine' subjects such as sewing, cooking, and childcare (Durán Herás 1972:32), but the Sección Femenina was entrusted with the subjects of 'Political and Social Formation'. This was also a compulsory subject (for those girls who reached that level) in secondary school and was part of a group of subjects - physical education, music, and domestic science - that came under the same responsibility.

The tenor of these classes is demonstrated by typical selections from the scheduled texts:

_The mission of woman is to serve._ Through the whole of life, the mission of woman is to serve. When God made the first man, He thought, 'It is not good that man should be alone'. And He made woman to help and accompany him, and that she should serve as mother. The first idea of God was 'man'. He thought of woman afterwards, as a necessary complement,

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19 Even among many of those liberals who professed commitment to a radical restructuring of society (however hollow such a commitment might in fact have finally proved to be), no other model was envisaged. The anticlerical Lerroux, for example, had this to say in a speech generally regarded as attacking the fundamental structures of society:

Young barbarians of today, pillage the decadent civilization of this wretched country, destroy its temples, trample its gods underfoot, tear aside the veils of novices and _elevate them to the category of mother_ (quoted in Carr 1983:555; emphasis mine).

20 The Sección Femenina also had representatives on the committees for the public service examinations (oposiciones) that teachers had to pass before being admitted to the government education system.
that is, as something useful. **This is the principal service of woman: motherhood...** It is, then, through this service to the family that woman serves her country, serves history (*Formación político-social 10 Curso, Sección Femenina* 1968:9).

**Gallantry.** Gallantry is an attentive and courteous action or expression. Gallantry is the attitude of attention or of protection and care that a man normally adopts towards a woman, because she is weaker, because she is the mother, a mission so lofty in itself, that was dignified by the most Holy Virgin, and further, because to woman is attributed beauty, sweetness, abnegation... The social function of woman is, precisely, that of serving in her home in those functions that man cannot carry out because of other duties (*Formación familiar y social 3o Curso, Werner Bolin* 1955:103).

Only with the General Law of Education of 1970 did the compulsory presence of the *Sección Femenina* in schools cease, although the woman who taught in this capacity in the Province's school in Pío XII is still on the staff.

It is clear from all that has been said that the first hundred years of the Society's presence in Spain had made it part of an extraordinarily complex set of social relations that had shaped the early lives of the nuns of the Civil War generation and had deeply affected all the nuns in the traditional period because of their work of education. The effect was mediated through the Society's position in the Church, and the social context of the nuns' action throughout this earlier period was almost wholly provided by those aspects of the Spanish Church that had determined its own political and ideological relation to the State. It was the historically produced reactionary character of the Church before the Second Vatican Council that structured the nuns into a particular set of social relations in Spain. The most important for them were their alignment with the bourgeoisie and the promotion of the interests of this middle class; their geographical concentration in major cities and affluent residential areas; and their failure to recognize or confront the chronic social problems that kept bursting forth over the whole century into a violence that impinged even on their own lives.

Fundamental to this whole process was the vigour of the Church's ideological representations that fixed meaning for these women and reduced their own public role to reinforcement of the Church's positions. Nevertheless there was, I have suggested, another aspect of their educational work that was effective in a different way at the private, or personal, level. This was the activity of the nuns as social agents within their own schools, where they were able to realize to some extent, limited though it may have been, the potential inherent in their basic option for chastity. It was their experience of personal autonomy and the resulting extension of their limits of interpretation that provided the essential groundwork for these women to accept change when the Church itself moved to reject ideology in the Second Vatican Council.
CHAPTER 5

The Traditional Ordering of Social Relations as Experience: The Nuns within the Congregation.

The monastic model as daily routine

Drid Williams, in her study of a community of Carmelite nuns in England, calculated that

a nun who spends sixty years in a Carmelite enclosure, if she is in the chapel choir for Mass and Readings at 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. every day, is in the same place at the same time exactly 42,800 times during those years (1981:115).

Such consistency is important both in the practical consequences that Williams analyses and as a desirable model accepted by the nuns as ideal. The women of the Centre-South Spanish Province of the Society of the Sacred Heart lived up until 1967 an experience of religious life that was fundamentally shaped by the monastic tradition (see Chapter 2). They were subject to the effects of this ideal model, and the routine of their daily lives during this period reflected its all-pervasive influence.

In some tension with the monastic model, however, was their commitment to the work of education and the demands that this made was also a fundamental element in organizing their general experience. Madeleine Sophie Barat, in setting down the rules for her nuns, was well aware of the different needs and possibilities of an active Congregation compared with an enclosed one devoted primarily to prayer and contemplation. It was laid down in the Rule and Constitutions, therefore, that

It appears more suitable to the end that this Society proposes for itself to establish a way of life that is simple and common. There will not be, therefore, any extraordinary austerity or penance prescribed by rule, nor any fasts other than those laid down by the Church, except for the eve of the feasts of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Most Holy Heart of Mary (Rule 1934:24).

The periods of prayer, except for those in the novitiate, were also laid down so as to leave time free for work. They were to be one hour of private prayer (Meditation) in the morning and half an hour (Adoration) in the afternoon, Mass, spiritual reading, and a private examination of conscience (Examen) (in practice fifteen minutes) at
midday and at night (Rule 1934:27). On what was at the time of the foundation of the Society a point of some controversy, the Constitutions specified that ‘the little Office of the Virgin Mary will be prayed in common’ (1934:27). This practice was not envisaged in the earliest years of the Society, as ‘[Mother Barat] knew only too well the difficulty of reciting office in a teaching order’ (Williams 1978:45). To omit it, however, proved too great a deviation from the monastic tradition that had resulted, at the beginning of the 19th century, in no Congregation of women being dispensed from the recitation of office in choir, ‘even those based on the Jesuit rule which did not require it’ (Williams 1978:45; emphasis mine). The adoption of the Little Office of the Virgin Mary - a much simplified form of the Divine Office - was seen, like the ‘mixed life’, as a compromise to this problem.

Other consequences of the Society’s orientations towards the active life were also part of the lives of the nuns in the traditional period. The Rule laid down that the style of dress was to be

    simple and modest, and, as much in the quality of the material as in the style, free from all singularity, such, in a word, as is becoming to persons consecrated to God who maintain necessary relations with the world for the end that they propose to themselves (1934:14).

These ‘necessary relations with the world’ also required that ‘perpetual adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament’¹ be confined to the house of novitiate, the exceptions that were laid down for other communities being the day of the feast of the Sacred Heart, the octave following this day, the first Friday of every month (a devotional practice that dedicated this day to the Sacred Heart), and on any other days (usually Sundays) when there was public exposition of the host (Rule 1934:16). Further, the qualities deemed essential for those entering the Society were defined in view of its need to deal with people of the world in order to achieve their sanctification. They were to be:

    honourable birth, good education, unsullied reputation, a suitable exterior, good health, an upright mind, good judgement, a docile and pliable character, appropriate knowledge and skills, even if to an imperfect degree, and the ability to acquire the education they lack and the virtues proper to their vocation. What is principally asked for is an inclination to piety, a sincere desire to consecrate oneself wholly to God, and total indifference to the places and occupations to which obedience may send them (Rule 1934:16-17).

The process by which such secondary characteristics as ‘honourable birth’ and ‘suitable exterior’ had come to gain importance in the Society reflects the extent to

¹The practice where there is someone praying in the chapel at all times of the day.
which these women gradually took on the lineaments of the social class to which they had allied themselves.

For the women of the first communities, the commitment to education was seen as being more important in determining the way of life of the nuns than was monastic tradition, and the latter was always regarded as subordinate, within the concept of the ‘mixed life’, to the former. In the experience of the women of the Centre-South Province who entered later, when the forms in the Society had become fixed, this was not so. Few would have achieved the consistency made theoretically possible by the Carmelite life, but the patterns laid down in the Rule, and adhered to in convents of the Society all over the world before 1967, created an experience that was ordered with constant reference to a clearly constituted ‘ought’. In this case, the idea of a ‘typical day’ has peculiar validity. It was this general organization that made up the formative practices and constructed the experience and habitus for both generations of women in the Centre-South Province.²

At 5.20 a.m., the bell rang and everyone, except the sick, got up. This was expected to be immediate, and there was no lingering in bed. Anyone inclined to do so regarded such a propensity as a fault, and it was matter for public self-accusation at the appropriate time. The first action of the nuns on rising was to kiss the floor, even in the privacy of their cubicle or room, as a means of promoting an attitude of humility. They then washed - in a white toilet basin, with cold water stored in a pitcher the night before - and dressed in the habit. This series of garments, far from being ‘free of singularity’ as stipulated in the Rule, was a most complicated ensemble that took some time for a new novice to learn how to wear. The undergarments were dictated by French peasant customs and of a style that even peasants in France had probably shed before the turn of the century. They had to be specially made, by nuns who had this task as their principal responsibility. This was true also of the outer clothes: the long skirt, and an underbodice covered with a many-buttoned pelerin. This was all black, except in the tropics where white was allowed, and of wool. The

²The exceptions are those who entered the Society later than 1970, and to a much lesser extent after 1967, and these form a very small minority in the Province. I met none at all in four years in Madrid.
headcovering was made up of four separate pieces that, if donned carelessly or in a hurry, made the person concerned look awry for the rest of the day. To prevent this happening, a very small hand-mirror was allowed to each person.

At 6.00 a.m. began the morning's private Meditation of an hour. This could take place in the chapel - where occasionally there would be heard the crash of books as someone nodded off to sleep - or, in the summer, in the garden. At 7.00, the first Office of the day, Lauds, was chanted in the chapel and was followed at 7.15 by Mass, which marked the end of the Greater Silence. This was the overnight period, from 9.30 in the evening till after Mass the next morning, in which exceptions to the silence that was the norm throughout the nuns’ day were made with even greater caution. The routine was modified for those who had other duties, such as the preparation of breakfast or the responsibility of looking after children in the school dormitories. Even so, Meditation, if missed or curtailed, was expected to be made up after breakfast, and every attempt was made to ensure that the minimum number of people missed Mass.

Breakfast at 8.00 was a simple continental-style affair, and the least formal of the three daily meals. Taken in silence, except for some feastdays and holidays, it was brisk and businesslike, with none of the other activities like formal grace said by the Superior, reading aloud, or penances, that accompanied the other two main

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3Two comments may be made about the wimple that indicate the attitude of the nuns towards change before 1967 and the importance placed on uniformity. Up until the 1950s, this bonnet was made of a material that required most time-consuming and complicated starching, with special machines having been developed particularly for this purpose. When it was finally decided that change was needed (I don’t know how this decision was initiated, but it would have been finalized at a General Chapter of the Vicars in Rome), the choice was made to have a nylon and plastic combination that remained as similar as possible to the previous model. This was regarded as very important in maintaining the continuity of the Society with its early members. The new nylon material was not available in all countries, and had to be specially made or imported, an expensive affair that rested on an understanding of the vow of poverty as affecting not the Society as an organization but only the use of things at an individual level. In Poland in the early sixties, even this choice was not, however, available. The Mistress of Novices in Australia, a notable needlewoman, devised a most ingenious solution. This consisted in making up large petticoats out of the material, tacked together with the thread necessary for sewing the bonnets. These were taken to Rome by the young nuns (the Probanists) who were going to the Mother House to make their final vows. From Rome, the petticoats were worn into Poland by Polish Probanists on their return home.

4Some slight concessions were made to local custom in the matter of eating. In mainland Europe, for example, breakfast was typically coffee and rolls. In England, it was tea or coffee, with perhaps fruit and bread. In India, the heat in the middle of the day had dictated a change, based on the needs of the European missionaries, to a main cooked meal for breakfast while it was still relatively cool. In Australia, there was cereal, bread, and milk coffee served in thick white French coffee bowls. These, increasingly difficult to buy, remained without handles when even the French nuns had changed to bowls with handles.
meals. Even so, the formal hierarchy of seating arrangements was observed, except for such late-comers as those who had been in the boarding-school with the children. These simply sat at the end of a table where a place had been left for them.

Breakfast marked the beginning of most people's working day, and when it was over, people dispersed to their various activities. From after breakfast onwards, the nuns accepted as normal that they would need to talk to each other. While silence was the norm, and talking was seen as the exception, in practice limited communication did take place. It did so, however, very much in terms of work or other needs, not at the level of chatting or gossip. This kind of talk might and did take place to some extent with the students at their recreations or with people from outside. For the nuns themselves, items of personal or family news might be shared with the rest of the community at the twice-daily periods of recreation. If they were to be shared with other members of the community on an individual basis, this was because the people concerned were related, because the position of either person was hierarchically sanctioned or could be so interpreted, or it occurred outside the bounds of authorized communication. In the latter case, this would be a matter for public self-accusation.

After breakfast, dormitory mistresses - usually the younger members of the community - were free to finish their Meditation before beginning teaching. Other teachers might go to supervise the students, prepare classes, correct exercises, or fit in such spiritual duties as the Rosary which they might not find time for later in the day. Domestic chores for those whose duty it was were extensive, communities often being up to sixty or more in size and schools up to several hundred students. Washing-up, laundry, cooking, cleaning, mending and other related tasks were therefore major affairs, with the nuns involved not just in doing this work themselves but often in supervising others. In the house of novitiate, for example, the novices were generally engaged for some part of the day in such domestic work, often doing by hand chores that might have been more easily done by machine, since manual work was given a positive value in their training.

The morning, therefore, was a time of activity and of contact with others: students, tradespeople, gardeners. Officially it ended with the morning's Examen (examination of conscience) fifteen minutes before lunch. For some people, especially in the school, their activities did not free them at this time. They made their Examen after lunch. In general, however, most of the community assembled in the

5 A morning drink and afternoon tea were taken between certain fixed times as people were free. They were eaten standing and in silence.
refectory after the Angelus bell for lunch. This was a much more formal affair than breakfast, and involved a number of other activities. Everyone stood in front of the seat determined by her place in the overall hierarchy (and no one was outside this) until the Superior arrived and took her place, with her councillors, at the top table. She said grace, and everyone sat down.

Anyone who wished to make a public self-accusation (this was done not on impulse but with the prior permission of the Superior) was able to do so at this point. If there was more than one person, this was done in order of seniority. When these people resumed their places, the meal began. Again it was, except for festive occasions, in silence, but accompanied by reading. This was normally the life of a saint or religious person and could, if well written, provide considerable interest (like a serial), and a topic for discussion and comment at the community recreation following. If so, it added to the sense of mild displeasure and boredom when it was interrupted by other readings, such as the monthly reading of the Rule.

Lunch was also a time when public penances, as well as self-accusation, were permitted, and these provide an excellent example of how certain practices lingered on in the Society long after they had become devoid of meaning. To some extent this was culturally relative, and some of the practices may still have been penitential in some countries. In others, and as remembered by the younger members of the Centre-South Province, the same practices were for many people merely a matter of form, despite their ideological promotion by authority in the name of humility. One such penance - and again, each person had to ask her Superior for permission to perform it - was to kneel by the refectory door as the community went out, still in hierarchical order, and ask them to pray that she would acquire a particular virtue. Another penance was to kiss the feet of the rest of the community, an action whose symbolic value tended to be lost as the penitent noted the condition of the community's shoes. A third approved penance was to be given one's food by others rather than serving oneself, certainly a trial if the dish in question happened to be something one disliked, but not generally very mortifying.

The terms of the observance of the refectory penances often applied also to private penances. There were two of these that were institutionalized in the Society: the discipline and the bracelet. The discipline was a small knotted whip, the bracelet a sharp-pointed wire circlet worn on the upper arm. These - known in Australia but

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^Occasionally it provided unseemly mirth for such inadequately socialized members as the novices. This was particularly true of the more edifying required reading, such as pious accounts of the lives of the early missionary members of the Society who met such adventures as falling over the side of a mountain when on muleback in South America.
not, interestingly, in Spain, as 'the jewels of St Teresa' - were given in a black bag to
new recruits on their own request by the Mistress of Novices. In latter years,
according to the women in the Province who entered in the decade before the Vatican
Council, these often had to be prompted, not because they were necessarily reluctant,
but because they found astonishing the continuing existence of what they had, in
happy ignorance, regarded as medieval practice. From that time on, their use was
closely supervised by successive Superiors, and any increase in the frequency or
intensity of their application had to be asked for. For many people, the main penance
was in this act of asking, or, even more, in rushing at the last moment to fit in their
permitted number of uses before the prescribed time expired.⁷

These were some of the kinds of practices that people fitted into their day as
they could, and the afternoon was a more likely time than the morning. Lunch was
followed, by those who were free, by a half-hour community recreation. This
normally took place in the general community-room, with the nuns sitting in a large
circle presided over by the Superior. Conversation was general, and, except on
Sundays, people occupied themselves with such womanly tasks as sewing, knitting, or
crochet. Those who were incompetent at any of these activities usually managed to
become proficient at one thing, such as, for example, tatting (yards of it) or darning
stockings. Recreation was followed by the chanting of Office.

The rest of the afternoon was, like the morning, spent in work, although time
had to be set aside - and this was discussed individually at the beginning of each year
with the Superior - for required prayer such as the half-hour in the chapel laid down
in the Rule, the Rosary, and some spiritual reading. For those working in the school,
this was often quite difficult, as unexpected calls on their time by children or other
teachers were common. These did not provide sufficient excuse for missing one's
spiritual exercises, however, without the express permission of the Superior, and this
she was not normally anxious to give.

The evening meal followed a similar pattern to the midday one and was also
followed by Office, community recreation, time for the preparation of the following
morning's Meditation, night prayers, and - at 9.30 - the bell for the Greater Silence
and bed. Again, the pattern was modified for those involved with the students, but
even dormitory mistresses observed the Greater Silence as far as possible and went to
bed at this last bell.

The routine that shaped the nuns' days had also a broader frame. Taken over a

⁷It was sometimes difficult to get into the discipline room on Saturday evenings, for
example, because of a discreet queue.
week, for example, it included Sundays, when the time for rising was 6.00 instead of 5.20, and the day was more dedicated to prayer. Most people tried to make some extra time in the chapel - usually an extra half-hour in order to take their turn on the prie-dieu in front of the exposed host, and there was the ceremony of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at the end of the day. In the afternoon, people were able to receive visitors in the parlour, though members of their families were normally limited to one visit a month. The nuns did not go out, except perhaps for dental or medical reasons, or to move between different convents. Nor did they visit their families, a proscription that was felt particularly keenly but accepted when someone in the family was ill or dying. Their contacts with outsiders were limited, therefore, to those who chose to visit them.

It is clear that the whole order of the nuns' life was characterized by a basically fixed routine in which individual needs and wishes were categorically subordinated to the group as a whole. This had a number of consequences, of which two are particularly relevant to the present discussion. One was that this overall organization structured the individual's experience in such a way that the commitments that she made on entering religious life, principally the vows, were almost automatically fulfilled. The second is that, even though the general organization placed emphasis on the group, it was mediated by certain other essential factors for individual members who therefore experienced it differentially.

Organizational structures and the vows

One of the fundamental aspects of traditional religious life for women in general, and very much for the nuns of the Society, was that its organization ensured that chastity was interpreted solely in its aspect of sexuality, and that this sexuality was not an issue. As regards men, the nuns lived in a largely female world where relations with men were generally structured by both place and social position. Place meant that meetings with men were not in private, except with one's confessor - and the confessional was designed to protect anonymity - or spiritual director, and Canon Law (see Appendix C) took care that the conditions of such contact were carefully laid down. Where place was not sufficient to prevent possible romantic attachments from developing, the social or hierarchical position of the two people involved usually was. Given this organizational guardianship with regard to men, it is not surprising to find that the Rule speaks of the greatest threat to chastity from friendships with other women, what it calls 'particular friendships'. In view of the overall tone of calm of the Rule, its words on this subject are particularly damning:
They will avoid with great care all that may disturb the peace and upset the union of minds and of hearts; and as in religious Communities there is no pitfall more dangerous nor less feared than that of particular friendships, nor is there anything against which they must more carefully guard themselves, keeping in mind that these types of friendships are the destructive plague that destroys Christian charity, the most common source of unjust preferences, jealousies, murmurings, antipathies and divisions; that it is even a dangerous stumbling block to chastity itself, at least to that perfect chastity that has consecrated to Jesus Christ the affections of the heart; and, finally, that these particular friendships are rightly called the scourge of Communities (Rule 1934:41).

Within the overall organization of the convent, it was as a means of preventing such particular friendships that the rule of silence was reasonably effective. Where communication did take place, it was, as we have seen, within particular contexts, and guilt was made to accompany more personal sharing. By the same token, personal hostility was also organizationally contained, and relationships at a superficial level were facilitated and allowed people to get on together.

In practice, both friendships and hostility occurred, but another potent weapon in controlling them was not only public self-accusation, but the requirement, normally twice a year during the liturgical penitential seasons of Lent and Advent, that members of the community make public accusations against each other. Often these were trivial - Sister María rattles her rosary-beads when she walks, for example - and of no particular moment to either the person making the accusation (except in having to think it up) or to the person accused. Occasionally, such accusations were bitter and destructive, and especially effective against what other members of the community saw as the development of a particular friendship. The ultimate sanction, of course, was the separation, under obedience, of the two people concerned.

If chastity was made unproblematic, so too was poverty. Individuals owned no personal possessions, and any gifts or money they received were automatically handed in to the Superior. If this was occasionally hard, as perhaps with an item chosen by the giver with a particular view to the receiver's interests or taste, there was at least little temptation to act otherwise. From time to time, especially with older members of the community, the Superior handed items back for the receiver's use, although it was understood that no right to ownership was involved, a qualification that in practice had little meaning.

As for obedience, the very structure of the nuns' lives was constituted in these terms, and ensured that the radical potential of both chastity, as autonomy, and poverty, as a challenge to relations of power based on property, was suppressed. All the details of the nuns' lives, from the trivial to the important, were subject to the approval of the Superior. Each person had a visit with her at least once a month in
order to review her own general situation. The Superior was the recipient of
confidences, of family news, of plans. She had the authority to read all incoming and
outgoing mail, although she did not always exercise this. She embodied, moreover,
the divine authority that constituted the ultimate surveillance (see Foucault
1977:197) and legitimized the rules that people were asked to obey. And it must be
said that people did obey them. The mechanisms for the rise of groups advocating
alternative action or counter-ideology were simply not there. Communication, both
with others in the community and with outsiders, was limited; newspapers were not
read and people did not have free access to books; mail was open to the Superior to
read when she so chose; the people with whom individuals were permitted contact
were only their family members or close friends, or those associated with the school,
all with the same class and ideological affiliation as the nuns themselves. Obedience
in practice was not, at least from day to day, an issue for them.

The question must be raised, however, not just as to whether the nuns obeyed
the rules or not, but as to how they obeyed them. It is from this perspective that one
can begin to identify the strategies used by them in practice to create areas for
individual action within the overall organization in ways that helped to fulfil, to some
extent at least, their option of chastity as autonomy. Crucial to this issue was their
work in education.

One such area was that, despite the fulminations of the Rule, people working
together did often develop friendships. and their work provided a legitimate context
for the sharing of interests and ideas. In the school, there was obviously a great deal
of cooperation which, even though always coordinated from above, gave people
opportunities to extend - not disobey - the rules in order to exercise their own
personalities. Even rules were subject, within modest limits, to interpretation, and
individuals, some more freely, others much less so, chose the limits within which they
were prepared to operate.

Such was the case, for example, with one of the nuns from a sherry-producing
family outside Jerez. Her sister, arriving at the convent for a visit of some days,
brought with her, as a gift to the community, a dozen bottles of sherry. She also
brought a bottle, as sanctioned by Spanish values, for her sister Mother Pilar, who
had always enjoyed her copita (her small glass of sherry). Mother Pilar took the
bottle, as prescribed, to her Superior to ask permission to keep it. This was granted,
along with the permission to drink it, but with the stipulation that this must be done
‘within enclosure’. This was not at all what Mother Pilar wanted, on the grounds
that drinking alone was not enjoyable, and she wanted to drink with her sister. Her
way out of the dilemma was creative interpretation. On the one hand, obedience
dictated that she must drink the sherry 'within enclosure'. Her sister was staying in the guest wing of the convent, which was not enclosure, but, reasoned Mother Pilar, the furniture belonging to the convent clearly was. She therefore sat in the cupboard and shared the sherry with her sister.

The freedom of interpretation exercised by Mother Pilar was not perhaps as unusual as it at first sight seems. Not many of the nuns sat in cupboards and drank sherry (which offers a totally new connotation to the phrase about being a cupboard drinker), but they necessarily used a certain discretion in applying the rules to their own actions. The extent of this discretionary interpretation depended on the individual's place within the overall organization and, very much related to this, on her work.

**Hierarchy, education, and autonomy**

In talking to former students of the Society's schools in Madrid about the older nuns in the Province, one thing that emerges clearly about the latter is the vigour of some of their personalities, and the affection in which they were held. This is not true of all the nuns, but that there were strong, wise, and well-integrated women among them is undoubted. One of them, for example, was in the position of Vicar for many years, and was described as

'a person who intimidated you. She gave you the impression that she carried a poster that said, *Noli me tangere.*' She kept her distance, but this was something that wasn't only a product of her training in the Sacred Heart as student and as religious, but also came from her aristocratic background. She was a great lady (*una gran Señora*) from her head to her toes. And yet at the same time, she expressed her affection, her understanding. She was a person who was really human, and very intelligent.'

Another woman, a school Principal - or Mistress General in the terminology of the Society - over a long period in a number of different schools was described as 'an outstanding person, both affectionate and very rigid - a typical Mistress General'. A third had been Mistress of Studies (the school's academic coordinator) for years. One of the lay teachers in the school, who had also been a student of the Society and had other close family contacts with it, described her as

'a person who was enormously affectionate and what's more didn't hide anything. She was really loving, warm, welcoming, human - very understanding. There's a word in English that describes her very well:

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8'Don't touch me', the Latin Vulgate translation of the reported words of Jesus to Mary Magdalene in the garden after the Resurrection (John 20:17).
‘easy-going’. She didn’t stand by the rules all the time. Maybe one day one of the teachers would arrive at school late. She’d say, ‘Hello, my dear’ (*Hola hija*), good morning - she always addressed you as *tu*. Some of the other nuns did, but most didn’t. She’d never say, ‘You’re late’, and so on. Normally the teacher would say, ‘Listen, Mother, I’m so sorry. I slept in.’ And maybe she’d say to you, ‘That’s very healthy. Sometimes it happens to me too. In fact, I went through a time when I always seemed to be bad-tempered and depressed’ - she’s the last person you could imagine being bad-tempered - ‘and I went to the Superior. I said to her, ‘Mother, it seems to me that I need another half hour’s sleep in the mornings.’ And the Superior gave me permission. Since then I feel marvellous.’

The experience of another nun, the Principal of the secondary school in Bilbao, indicates the quality of the intelligence of some of these women. When formal qualifications for teachers in private schools were demanded by the Republican government in 1931, this woman responded with striking success.

Without formal qualification of any kind in April 1931, by the end of 1935 she had acquired not only her *bachillerato* and degree but also a doctorate from Madrid for a thesis on Spanish miniatures of the tenth to the twelfth centuries (Lannon 1979:198).

These women were clearly autonomous and impressive social agents. One reason was suggested by the teacher mentioned earlier as providing the dividing-line between those who, as she phrased it, ‘became human and those who didn’t’. In the terms of the present general analysis, this might be rephrased as those who achieved some control over their own lives, even within the limitations of the institution, and those who internalized the prevailing ideology to the point of surrendering even this autonomy. The reason suggested was on the basis of ‘those who truly understood their religious commitment - got to the core of it - those who arrived at an *active* understanding of the love of Christ’. Such a person was the Vicar who, not directly involved with the postulants who entered the novitiate, nevertheless spoke with one whom she had known as a student after the latter had been in the novitiate for about six months.

‘She said to me, ‘How are things going for you? Sometimes I see you in the chapel and it seems to me as if you were making a great effort, and sometimes you give up.’ I said, ‘Yes, in all honesty it does cost me a great effort...’ She said, ‘That’s normal... But tell me one thing. Are you happy?’ I said, ‘No.’ And she said to me, ‘Well, if things keep on like this, we’ll have to tell you that this is not your way. Because no one can live an

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9The context of this remark was that most of the other nuns did. It is necessary in this discussion to keep in mind that the women mentioned here were notable precisely because they were in some ways unusual.

10The equivalent of a matriculation certificate.
act of perpetual heroism. It has to have at least its roots in natural happiness.'

What becomes clear on reading these examples is that all these women were in positions of authority and responsibility. Mother Pilar was in charge of a class throughout her teaching life. Another nun, now in her eighties and nearly blind, was for years the administrative coordinator (Mistress of Discipline) of one of the schools in Madrid. All her former pupils speak of her with enthusiastic affection, and she still maintains a period of informal contact each day with the present students, who also love her. These nuns had considerable contact and personal relations with people from outside the convent, whether these were with students, parents, lay teachers, or tradespeople. The basis of this was their work of education and the exercise of a professional competence that allowed these women in the traditional period of religious life to create for themselves islands of autonomy. This was so principally in the schools, but came also with the experience of responsibility in domestic areas such as the laundry or kitchen. Further, the higher the position they held in the hierarchy, the greater the limits of discretion for those ready to take advantage of it, and position in the hierarchy depended to a great extent on the possibilities given to individuals to demonstrate their ability. The work of education was therefore not only the means of personal fulfilment for many of these women, but also provided the opportunity for them to be seen as competent, thus giving them a base for promotion.

Nevertheless - and this remains a major qualification - the limits of interpretation and action, though capable of some extension, were clearly defined, and it was this definition rather than their possibility of extension that structured action for many of the nuns. There were many who did not ever 'become human'. And authority did act when the acceptable limits were not merely extended but exceeded.

A woman who was a student in one of the schools remembered:

‘One of the nuns - this was in the late forties or early fifties - got too close to the older students. They told things to her rather than to the Mistress General. And she broke rules in other ways. As a punishment, she was sent away - to France. Now she’s one of the receptionists in the front office in the school here - with the habit.’

Hierarchy, it is clear, was not just a matter of understanding the world in a particular way, but an active principle in constructing the nuns’ experience of it. The experience of individuals and their possibility of action depended on their place in the formal hierarchy, as distinct from their position based only on seniority. Closely

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11 The context that gave significance to this retention of the habit was the changes in the Province after 1970. This will be discussed in Chapter 8.
related to this was the opportunity provided through their work of education to
demonstrate personal ability. Hierarchy was structured, moreover, not just in ranked
grades, in which it was theoretically possible to pass from the bottom to the top. It
included also a principle of opposition defined very much in terms of access to
knowledge and an active role in the work of education. This meant in practice that
the Society was divided into two quite distinct groups, membership in which
determined the greater part of an individual's experience.

While all the members of the Congregation had the same canonical status based
on the three primary vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience; all lived in
community, with a Superior; wore a religious habit; read the same Rules and
Constitutions every month in the refectory; went to Mass and communion every day -
their lives were in fact affected much more by the distinctions between the two
groups than by these things that they had in common. The very way in which they
experienced these apparently common aspects was, indeed, quite distinct, and
determined precisely by an internal division into choir nuns and coadjutrix Sisters.

The distinctions were evident in almost every possible way, both to members of
the Order themselves and to outsiders. The most readily obvious one was that the
two groups wore quite different religious habits. They had, moreover, different
profession crosses and rings, the choir nuns' of gold, the Sisters' of silver. Choir nuns
were known by outsiders as 'Mother', the coadjutrix nuns as 'Sister'. Both groups had
the same local Superior, and the same strict internal hierarchical order, but the
Sisters had a secondary and more immediate surveillante, who ranked in the overall
hierarchy second to the Superior; and they always followed even the most junior of
the choir religious when the groups were together, as in the refectory and chapel. At
Mass, choir nuns went to communion first (themselves in order of seniority). The two
periods of recreation each day were held separately, except on Sundays and certain
feast days.

The internal hierarchy of the Order was indicated by the system of titles used
among the nuns themselves. The local Superior was given the title of 'Reverend
Mother', choir nuns of more than ten years of profession that of 'Mother', and both
choir nuns of fewer than ten years of profession and coadjutrix Sisters, that of 'Sister'.
In more formal terminology, such as that of the official catalogue of the Society
printed each year in French, a further distinction was made between choir professed
of less than ten years, who are listed as 'Mme' (Mesdames), non-professed choir
religious (Aspirantes), and coadjutrix Sisters (Soeurs Coadjutrices). From whatever
point of view, the coadjutrix Sisters - like women in Canon Law (a far from casual
analogy) - were relegated to the lowest rung of the hierarchy.
It was this ranking that determined the division of labour. The choir nuns were those involved in carrying out the stated work of the Congregation, that of education. The lay Sisters did the domestic chores, an orientation based on the characteristics that the Spanish Sisters as a group shared: 'a poor or at least very simple home life, little formal education, and the habit of domestic work' (Lannon 1975:257).

The Society of the Sacred Heart was not alone in this division, which was in fact quite common in religious orders from the 11th century. The early Benedictine monasteries had had no such division; its origin was with the *conversi* in the 11th century and had marked a division between clerics and nonclerics, and between the literate monks and serfs (Knowles 1966:18-19). In the case of the Society of the Sacred Heart, the division arose to deal with what was seen as a practical problem. The first lay Sister, Marguerite Maillard, was amongst the first group of the Society who made their vows in Paris in 1800. Her background is typical of that of many of those who entered as lay Sisters after her. She was the maidservant of the landlady in the house where Sophie Barat and her brother had their lodging. Later, she was 'raised from the rank of lay-sister to that of choir nun' (*Life of the Venerable Madeleine Louise Sophie Barat* 1900:86; emphasis mine), a choice of phrase that accurately reflects the social division that was maintained within the Society all over the world, so that, as the Rule said, 'none may be deprived, for lack of education, of the benefit of embracing an Institution devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus' (*Rule* 1934:165).

All of this was given careful legitimation in the idealization of the ‘hidden life’ of Jesus - the importance of this, the fact that it lasted for thirty of his thirty-three years; that the foundress of the Congregation had really preferred the contemplative life; and that the life of the Sisters was therefore closer to the ideal religious life, and so on. A representative example of this kind of justification, and the trouble that it has given to later members of the Society, is a passage from a history of the Society published as late as 1978:

The distinction between choir religious and the coadjutrices had originated in the Middle Ages among the Cistercians, in the desire to open religious life to all who felt called to it in an epoch when differences of education and social status would otherwise have been a barrier. Such distinctions were still taken for granted at the beginning of the 19th century, and without the category of coadjutrix Sisters many vocations marked by simplicity, by humble, hidden service like that of Nazareth, and often by high gifts of prayer, would have been lost to the Society (Williams 1978:43).

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12Let it be noted that this was the time of the great protest against such distinctions that was part of the French Revolution.
This rationalization contrasts sharply with the account given by Knowles (1966:18-19) of the 11th century origin of the conversi, who were brought into monasteries in order to free the monks from domestic chores. It also ignores the implications of a social division in which membership of one group cut off all possibility, in social and educational terms, of change or advancement. That this was not a necessary consequence of birth into a family of humble station even at a time when ‘differences of education and social status would otherwise have been a barrier’ is indicated by the situation of a rural Basque family at the beginning of the 20th century (Lannon 1979:196). The brother entered the priesthood and was a bishop at thirty-three and Archbishop of Valladolid for seventeen years. His sister entered the Society as a coadjutrix Sister, and passed her life in ‘humble, hidden service’.  

The ideological character of all this is clear and is demonstrated when we look at some of the ways in which value was in fact attributed in practice. While the ‘hidden life’ was deliberately idealized, the actual value attributed to better education and ‘cultural’ background was clearly indicated both by the distribution of positions of authority, and by the designation of those seen as fit to emerge into the public sphere - contact with the world, or what Marilyn Strathern (1981) calls the sphere of the ‘social good’.

No positions of formal authority, on which the possibility of autonomous action was so much based, were open to the coadjutrix Sisters, neither within the Order nor in its schools. Their ability to act, and the range of options open to them - which is at least one fundamental aspect of what we call power - was therefore totally defined and constrained by their lack of access to formal knowledge, an access that was in no way facilitated by their entry into the Society. As for forays into the outside world, the Sisters were permitted to act in the traditional domestic roles of portress or servers of food, but active relations with lay people, with the exception of the children in the schools, were very secondary in the overall organization of the convent. Where they did have a role in the schools, it was normally one of surveillance of non-classroom activities or periods, with the occasional exception of needlework classes, a suitably domestic and womanly occupation.

Nevertheless, this contact with the students was important, and these nuns sometimes developed a warm relationship with the children in which the latter tended to identify the Sisters as outside the system of authority and discipline and therefore suitable recipients of informal confidences. It was this aspect that was emphasized in

13 What the case also underlines is the differential opportunities based on gender distinctions in a patriarchal Church.
a play written in 1984 for the 125th anniversary of Chamartín’s foundation. The
writer, herself a nun and formerly belonging to the category of choir nuns, recognized
the difficulties of presenting the Sisters in a way that was neither bitter nor
patronizing. In the end, it was by making the Sister the link between succeeding
generations of children that she solved the problem. The introductory words of the
Sister capture the difficulties and the nuances of all this, and indicate the extent to
which the nuns today continue to be very much affected by the traditional relations
of the past:

'I'm no use for giving classes. Not for journeying or talking with
Reverend Mother Barat either. For sewing, yes. For working, too. For
loving the children, a lot. For listening to them and understanding them,
the most.

I've got lots of secrets under guard here inside (she points to her heart).
Very important secrets.
At night I dream that all the children of the world, through all the years
of their life and even more, come to me to tell me their affairs. With the
children I feel at home. They love me, and I love them too' (Más lejos
todavía 1985:40).

For the coadjutrix nuns also therefore, contact with the children in the school,
informal though it was, provided an important area for personal action, but in ways
that were very much more constrained than for the choir nuns. These limitations
were imposed both by their class origin and the relations in the Society that
continued to confine their action on the basis of this class membership by denying
them the possibility of extending their own knowledge.

The origin and common characteristics of the Sisters in Spain suggest another
distinction that has been identified as widespread throughout the Mediterranean:
that between city and countryside, or bourgeois and villageois. Crump (1979:86)
points out that the general hierarchical structure of Mediterranean societies has
always been based on the cities. This was certainly reflected in the Congregation,
where the choir nuns came from urban or landowning families, and the Sisters from
rural areas. In what is now the Centre-South Province, many more have always come
from poor and pious Galicia than from poorer but anticlerical Andalucía or
Extremadura. In the Basque country, this reinforcement within the Society of what
was also a distinction between rich and poor is illustrated by the fact that some of the
Sisters from the Basque-speaking villages did not even speak Castilian (Lannon
1979:196). Since speaking Basque was not only socially devalued, but frowned on by
the authorities in the Society (an attitude shared by other religious orders of the
time), it is clear that what possibilities there were for the Sisters for communication
and the establishment of personal relations were in these cases effectively cut off.
The basis of all this was the organization of social relations within the Society of which the key was the work of education. Structured into the Congregation in the division between choir nuns and coadjutrix Sisters was a distinction between the professional and the domestic based on access to knowledge and paralleling the operation of gender relations in the broader society (V. Stolke 1984: personal communication). The possibilities for action for the Sisters were much fewer than for the choir nuns. These depended for the latter as much on their actual involvement in education as in the possibility of promotion in the hierarchy, and that, as we saw, was often based on the opportunities available to the choir nuns in the schools to demonstrate their ability. Within the social relations institutionalized in the Society as an hierarchized relation of authority and submission, formal knowledge available to the choir nuns was the key not only to autonomous action but to power over others as well. A lack of knowledge was the basis of powerlessness. The situation is illustrated by the gradations in the system of naming that I looked at earlier. The choir nuns gradually and inevitably moved from being called ‘Sister’ to ‘Mother’, the status in the Society of ultimate spiritual responsibility. The Sisters remained always ‘Sister’.

The internal structuring of the Society, then, not only in no way challenged the traditional social relations that were being prolonged into the 19th and 20th centuries in Spain. On the contrary, they acted to reinforce and reproduce them by freezing categories within their own organization on the basis of access to knowledge as well as in their education system in relation to the broader society. This state of affairs was accepted by the nuns through a process of what Thompson (1984:36) calls the splitting of the referential domain. In this social ordering of the religious life, the explicit reference for the nuns was to the spiritual order. The implicit reference, and the one that was the active principle in practice, was the system of social relations prevailing in Spain itself. This is one of the ways in which the nuns’ actions became political, as I have suggested in Chapter 3 and 4. It was also the context of practice that, producing certain dispositions in the nuns, committed them to the reproduction of these relations when those of the Civil War generation might, because of events around them, have opted for change. The practice was incorporated in the division not only of their own members but of their schools also into rich and poor. As the nuns’ work of education had situated them from the time of their arrival in Spain within the Church’s ideological battles, so it continued to determine their choices - necessarily political ones - over the whole period of the Second Republic, the Civil War, and the major part of the Franco years.
Social relations, action, and reproduction

The idea of opening a school for the poor attached to every fee-paying school of the Society came from Madeleine Sophie Barat herself. She, in fact, was more drawn to the education of the poor than of the rich, but she allowed herself to be persuaded by the vision of Léonor de Tournely and Joseph Varin to direct her nuns to schools for those who might prove the new ‘leaders’ of French society. Or, rather, the new leaders would be men, a Christian elite educated in Jesuit schools to replace the fallen aristocracy. The women from the Sacred Heart schools were to be their wives and mothers. Their education was to be directed, therefore, towards providing support for their husbands and a solid Christian background for their children. In this view, and as it was translated into the Society’s schools in Spain, education was used as a means of ‘fitting’ the individual for an already allotted station in life, whether that was determined by class (Lannon 1979:194-96) or by gender. For the students who passed through these schools, the model was a domestic one that saw the wife and mother as the irreplaceable pivot of the home. In the area of social relations, the educational practice of the nuns showed the same hermetic characteristics. Individuals were ascribed to fixed positions in the social formation and then defined according to this relation.

The opposition between rich and poor, therefore, was lived by the students in the schools, as it was by the choir nuns and the Sisters, as a distinction based on characteristics that were inherent in each group and defined their members. In this understanding, poverty was an active principle defining those born to it, as the Rule’s directives to the members of the Society makes clear:

Although all the pupils confided to the care of the spouses of the Heart of Jesus appear to have the same claim on their affection, there are some, nevertheless, for whom they may have a special fondness (afición): these are the daughters of the poor, who come to learn from them the knowledge of salvation, of which the majority would be ignorant in the heart of their families. Poverty, which gives them special qualities of likeness of Jesus Christ, their humble origin, ignorance, the roughness of their manners, everything, in short, that can make them repulsive in their exterior, are so many other new claims on the tenderness and zeal of the spouses of Jesus Christ (Rule 1934:55-56; emphasis mine).

It was in this spirit that the original poor school was opened only a year after the Society’s first fee-paying school. This was in 1802, in Amiens, and it numbered 160 children. In Spain, the same custom was followed from the founding of the house

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14 This is not in Oscar Lewis’s sense of the culture that is created by poverty, but in a much more limited interpretation that denies even a right of access to power by the poor.
in Sarrià, and the relative numbers of students in each of the schools over the following hundred years seem to indicate that the policy was not unsuccessful. As indicated in Chapter 3, numbers in the poor schools in every decade of the century in fact outnumber those in the fee-paying schools. In 1876, for example, the fee-paying schools had a total of 223 pupils, the poor schools 660. In 1896, the numbers were 941 fee-paying pupils compared with 1,815 poor. In 1906, a peak was reached, with 1290 fee-paying students and 3,346 of the poor (based on Cien Años 1946).

Apart from their physical proximity, the two sets of schools had little contact, and the relations between them only served to reinforce existing social divisions. In Bilbao, for example (but this was common to all the Society’s schools in Spain)

the two schools were adjacent but functioned independently. The two sets of children entered by different doors, wore different school uniforms, used different parts of the campus. Teachers teaching in one school were not involved in the other; the respective curricula were mutually independent; children in the poor schools themselves cleaned their classroom while those in the paying school did not. First communicants in each establishment were prepared separately, and each year there were two ceremonies, held on different days. The only meetings of the two groups of pupils were in chapel for an occasional shared Mass, when they occupied two distinct sets of benches, and in an annual gift of clothes when one group was always the benefactor and the other the beneficiary (Lannon 1979:199-200).

In some cases, the girls from the poor school were given the role of the apostles in the ceremony in the school chapel for Maundy Thursday, and their feet were washed by the girls from the boarding-school. The implication of this action is clear when it is realized that this ceremony was meant to recall the example of Jesus who ‘came, not to be served but to serve’ (Matthew 20:28), and that in many churches, it was the poorest and most abject of the parish who were chosen to represent the apostles.

The class distinctions enshrined in the separation of the two sets of schools were in no way implicit and indicate the nuns’ awareness of the dangers inherent in access to knowledge in a system committed to social reproduction. The Rule stated quite clearly that the relations between the two sets of pupils was one of class, with duty on one side only (noblesse oblige, a maxim often cited to the children in the fee-paying schools.)

Help will be given, if it is possible, to the poorest and efforts will be made to foster in this direction the willingness and piety of the pupils of the ‘comfortable class’ (gente acomodada) (Rule 1934:136).

The education to be offered to the poor children, therefore, was not in any way designed to upset these relations. Teachers were to ‘take great care that the instruction given is not more than is necessary’ (1934:125). What was necessary was ‘the knowledge appropriate to their class’ (141). This knowledge was defined as
reading, writing, and arithmetic as far as it is necessary to do sums that their situation may one day demand. For those who show interest and aptitude, they may give them an introductory knowledge of orthography, making them copy with great care texts in which these rules are observed, explaining to them orally the most basic aspects of grammar (141).

Above all, however, the poor schools were to ensure that the pupils received good instruction in religion, which was to be 'the best teaching that it is possible to give to these poor children' (137). This was to guard them against 'all the dangers that accompany poverty' (137), another indication of the way in which poverty was understood by the nuns as a total and totalizing condition.

The curriculum for the girls of the fee-paying schools was also determined by their class affiliation, and, while also giving primacy to religion, was to offer knowledge in 'the human' and 'the profane sciences' (1934:117, 53). The quality and ideological content of this instruction is illustrated by a comment from a former student, now a nun in her mid-forties.

'Do you know what I did, my first year at university? I confused Luther with St Ignatius!! I had the idea that Luther was such a monster, such a villain (un bicho tan mala), that when I read his text and commentaries, and they showed a man who was so intelligent, I said to myself that it had to be St Ignatius!''

The curriculum for the fee-paying students, as members of the bourgeoisie, might even include 'the arts of adornment, as these correspond to their state and condition' (Rule 1934:53).

What was common to the instruction given in both schools was based on the characteristic that cut across both classes: that of the gender of the pupils, and of their teachers. Teachers, in studying the 'profane sciences' in order to pass them on to the fee-paying students, were exhorted 'to take great care to remain within the limits of the humble and prudent discretion that modesty prescribes in this matter for persons of their sex' (Rule 1934:53). In the poor schools, great emphasis was placed on 'the manual work common to their sex' (141). What the Society enshrined in its system of schools, therefore, was not only the relations of power based on class that prevailed in Spanish society, but also those that were based on gender. Lannon, discussing the ways in which the social relations of class were reproduced in the Society's schools (and the last poor school in the Province was not closed until 1972), summarizes some of the implications that were important for the nuns of the Province:

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15 No one was more embarrassed by this recollection than its teller.
This was by no means peculiar to Spanish Catholicism, nor to the Spanish members of the Congregation: what eventually made it remarkable was that even in the early 1930s there was no sign of change. Nearly a century after the publication of *The Communist Manifesto*, with the Russian revolution an historical fact, and the growth of trade-unionism and socialism everywhere an obvious phenomenon, and nowhere more so than in Bilbao, the Spanish Church was more blind than most to the anachronism of a charity which belongs exclusively to a static, hierarchical theory of society in which the poor are ordained by God to be poor and to stay poor. Both the dual membership of the community and the dual organization of the schools on the Sacred Heart campus in Bilbao were a continual embodiment of that theory. They reflected social divisions beyond the convent walls while remaining impervious to the changes challenging those divisions. One of the social consequences of enclosure, therefore, was not that this particular microcosm of the Church was different from the world it rejected, but that it perpetuated ‘worldly’ structures and attitudes which were increasingly anachronistic (1979:201).

For the women of both generations in the Centre-South Province, whose experience was mediated by their membership in the Society, their involvement in the everyday practices necessary to carry out the work of the Congregation resulted in a habitus that oriented them to resist change until change was offered from within the Church itself and in terms of new interpretations of their position and role. The extent of their resistance to social conflicts that had been expressed in the religious terms of the Church’s hostility to the Second Republic is outlined in Chapters 3 and 4. What was true of the Spanish Provinces as a whole was also true of most of their members. For the majority, their experience of the Civil War, or, for the post-Civil War generation, that of their parents, acted powerfully to reinforce the attitudes and dispositions that had committed the Society for so long to helping to maintain a set of rigid and anachronistic social relations. The effect of this experience extended even to those entering the Congregation as late as the mid-fifties and early sixties, and was noted by other nuns from outside Spain. One of these, who was in Rome to make her final vows in the early sixties, was enormously impressed by the Spaniards in her group, and expressed her admiration of their strong faith and sense of commitment in terms of these qualities being the result of ‘the blood of martyrs’. It is undoubted that the successful interpretation of their military rebellion in terms of a ‘crusade’ by the victors of the Civil War and the elevation of many of those who died in the Nationalist cause to the status of ‘martyr’¹⁶ gave high prestige, in precisely the

¹⁶This title was given by the official *Guía de la Iglesia* to all clergy and religious killed during the war, regardless of the circumstances of their death, whether by murder or summary execution, death at the front as chaplains, or ‘having offered in the trenches their lives for God and for Spain’ (1954:207).

The fact that the ideological implications of this are still relevant in the present day was indicated by the reaction of the nuns to an announcement in the Spanish press in October, 1983, that the Pope had decided to remove the obstacles to the process of beatification of the ‘martyrs of the Civil War’. The announcement raised subdued but strong controversy.
religious terms valued by the nuns, to the mere fact of having fought on the Nationalist side. The pride that the majority of the nuns felt, therefore, in the involvement of their families in the war was a powerful agent in helping to fix those values. One of the nuns, to take just one of many possible examples, still has the receptacle that was fashioned by her Jesuit uncle in prison to hold the consecrated hosts. It is a cut-off tin with a small wooden cross roughly nailed to it, and from this he gave communion, for three years, to each man who was to be taken out to be shot. As well, each of these men signed the priest’s prayerbook, also now owned by his niece, before his execution. The emotional power of such keepsakes is obviously great, representing as they do not just political alliances, but human suffering and heroism. It is precisely the affective force generated by the latter, however, that acts to support the social relations embodied in the former, and it was in this process that the nuns became trapped.

There were, nevertheless, some glimmerings among a few individuals of awareness of the unsatisfactory nature of the existing state of affairs, if not exactly of a need for change. There were the few women whose families had fought on the Republican side in the war. There were others to whom a slightly less conventional upbringing had given a perspective not wholly confined to the values taken for granted in the Society. One of these, for example, had had her first years of schooling in a small pueblo where her father was the local doctor. She had later gone on to boarding-school at Chamartín where she gained most of the honours available, both academic and meritorious, including becoming head prefect. Nevertheless, her acceptance of the values promoted by the school were always tinged by a slight scepticism rooted in her experience of the pueblo. She recounted her first awareness, dating from the end of the fifties, of what she came to see as the injustice institutionalized in the separation between fee-paying and poor schools:

‘The first time I became aware of the situation was when I was in fourth year of high school (4o de bachillerato). That was the year when the boarders began to stay at school for Easter. On Holy Thursday, there used to be the washing of the feet; we washed the feet of the children from the other school and gave food to the poor. I was so shocked, it left me with such a bad impression, that the following year I didn’t go. The Mistress General asked me why - but she didn’t understand when I tried to explain. She said that it was something very beautiful.’

Another of the nuns, also now in her mid-forties, also dates the beginnings of change in her own awareness of discrepancies between what the Society professed to be doing, and what it actually did, to contact with the poor school, but this was much later, and when she was already a nun.
'I always found it very easy to conform. I don't think that any critical spirit emerged for me until I don't know - when I got back from Probation in 1967. Up until then, everything seemed to me to be fine. I was perfectly happy with things as they were. But when I got back, they told me I had to go to the poor school. I found that really hard at the beginning, because it was - in the first place, it was so remote from the interests of the community. All the others, except two, and the Sisters, worked in the boarding-school, and all their conversations revolved around the school. So that, at the beginning, I felt very isolated. When they told me in June that I'd have to go, I spent the whole summer just thinking about it - uff! What's more, it was dirty - and I can't bear dirt. It was really dirty. It wasn't because the nun who was there wasn't clean. It was just that it was all a mess (una porquería). And there were cockroaches!!! I loathe cockroaches!

But when the time came, it opened up my horizons. I discovered that that was life. Firstly, because [in the boarding-school] there was such emphasis on discipline. And the other school was much more normal, much more like things are now. The children came and went, and talked in the corridors, and that was something that made me really happy. As well, the children were - so sane. I began to feel really comfortable with those people; it was a very important experience for me. It was like a first awakening to another type of person with whom I'd never had anything to do before.'

The dissatisfactions experienced with the traditional order, therefore, and an awareness of the real possibility of alternatives, provided for some of the nuns an individual disposition towards accepting change even before changes were envisaged. Situations such as these for some, together with experiences by many more of a certain autonomy in their work, provided a framework for change within the Society that was individual, despite the many structural pressures militating against it. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that such frameworks were individual, and could be contained within the overall organization of the Society. This was so because of the way in which the organization structured the relations among its members. It was also possible because these situations were experienced by individuals, not in isolation, but within a total system of interpretation that was realized in the day to day practice of members of the Society.

This system of interpretation ensured that meaning was constructed almost exclusively in the context of the whole set of relations that made up traditional religious life, a set of relations that was seen by the nuns themselves to subsume individual experience and interpretations. Its effectiveness was based on its incorporation into a symbolic order that gave it a total coherence, and made meaning adhere not in isolated fragments of experience but solely in the fixed relations between each element and the whole. Only in this context of meaning being dependent on the total symbolic ordering of religious life can one understand the power of that life to subordinate so effectively the individual to the group throughout periods of such great social change, and to maintain for so long structures and social
relations proper to a way of life that was doomed, despite its agonized prolongation in Spain, by the end of the 18th century.
CHAPTER 6

The Traditional Ordering of Social Relations and the Symbolic Order: The Religious Life as Signifier.

The effectiveness of traditional religious life in continuing to draw and retain the members of the Centre-South Province before 1967 was based on a number of different elements that produced an inextricable union between religious and social impulses, and neither of these provides an adequate explanation in isolation from the other. Certainly the institution of religious life always incorporated some of the potentially radical element of the Christian message, however differentially interpreted in different epochs. Certainly too it was always a particular kind of response to particular historical situations, which shaped its forms and influenced its direction. It was the relations between both impulses that provided the necessary basis for the rich symbolic system in terms of which the nuns of both generations in the Centre-South Province have lived out their basic commitment. It was, moreover, this symbolic system that so effectively tied them, before the Vatican Council, to the organization and interpretations by which this commitment was expressed.

I suggested in the Introduction that symbols must be seen as active, as both a productivity and a practice. It would be more accurate to suggest that symbols are a productivity through practice, since they operate through human activity both to produce particular dispositions in individuals and, by so doing, to modify the process of interpretation and signification. This is partly brought about by the development of codes, which combine, again through practice, the elements of one system, for example the use of time, with the elements of another, such as for example dress (see Eco 1976:37). It was the development over time, often inconsistent and contradictory, of precisely such codes that had resulted by the 19th century and into the 20th in the fixing of meanings in religious life. By combining in just this fashion the different practical aspects of the nuns’ lives, the various codes organized religious life into a total system. That is to say that meaning in traditional religious life was embedded precisely in the combination of a set of codes that embodied a highly complex network of changing relationships. This network, produced by historical practices that were themselves produced by the differential access to power of discrete
social groups, determined the relation of the nuns to the broader Spanish society. These relations embodied as an essential element historically produced forms of domination and legitimation (Giddens 1979:107-08).

The forms of religious life, however, did not stand at any time in their development in any simple relationship of identification with the forms of their society. On the contrary, because of the relation perceived by its adherents to exist between the religious life, even when it became an institution, and the spiritual life, the former in fact developed in contrast to its society, as a rejection of the world and all that this was interpreted to represent. In the pure monastic tradition, religious life had come to be understood as removed from and outside the world and therefore outside the historical process, and we have seen that the principal elements of this monastic tradition were imposed on the women who founded the Society of the Sacred Heart. We have also seen, however, the very direct relationship that had developed between the social relations embodied in the Congregation and those of Spanish society. It is in this context that it is possible to see the effectiveness of naturalizing myth in fixing meaning for the nuns of the Centre-South Province in their earlier experience. These women, in their own everyday interpretation and practice, attributed meaning solely - and it is this aspect of their activity that is singular - by reference to the spiritual order. Religious life, as a total system, was for them in the traditional period the institutional form through which signification was organized (Giddens 1979:113).

This process was possible for the nuns, however, only through a concealment of the actual effective relations between the ordering of religious life and the social relations of society, a historical complicity that often contradicted the very intention of those entering the Society. The organization of the Congregation therefore embodied this contradiction for its members as a contradiction between intention and practice. Even more fundamentally, as I have suggested, it encapsulated for these women the radical historical contradiction between chastity and obedience.

The symbolic order that had developed as the comprehensive signifying context and legitimizing framework for the nuns therefore acted ideologically both to draw them as individuals and as a group into connivance with prevailing social relations thus promoting the interests of the dominant middle class. The misrecognition of their actions that resulted for the nuns was maintained by a fixing of these relations. It was the symbolic order that acted as a means of control by setting the limits within which interpretation could be generated. While this situation allowed some flexibility, as we saw for example with Mother Pilar, the range of such flexibility for the nuns was very modest.
Moreover, the very extent and depth of the contradiction between chastity and obedience demanded for these women a grand elaboration of the symbolic system in order to mask the failure of practice in fulfilling for them the underlying impetus of chastity. It was in the interests of the dominant group in the Church - the male hierarchy and clergy - to promote the elaboration of this symbolic system precisely so that the dynamic of chastity, and any sharing by women of control over the processes of production and reproduction in the Church, be frustrated. This goal was largely achieved for the nuns in the traditional period by interpreting action in terms of obedience. Essential to the achievement of this end was a reinterpretation - or misinterpretation using symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1979:190-97) - of chastity itself, in which the vow of chastity acted for the nuns not as a rejection but as an acceptance of their socially defined gender role.

The control exercised over the nuns by symbolic interpretation, through its fixing of interpretations and therefore of action, was possible because of the organization of all the elements of religious life into a systematic relation, giving them meaning only on the basis of their totality. They acted to produce, through everyday practice, the habitus that shaped individual actions and interpretations. It is therefore not just as the context but as the base of interpretation that religious life as a whole can be seen as a signifier.

On the other hand, it is implicit in Eco's definition of symbol (1984:157) and Sperber (1979:137) also points out that symbolism is never wholly determined by ideology; it depends for its effectiveness as much on a range of individual evocations as on cultural and social ones. To understand the nuns' continuing acceptance of their situation before Vatican II, we must look at the affective satisfactions derived from the richness and complexity of the highly developed symbolic system that not only formed the basis for, but entirely encompassed, their life. In the meanings generated by the relations within this system, both for the nuns' understandings of themselves and for others' understandings of them, we find the endorsement and perpetuation by these women of the status quo. Ortner and Whitehead (1981) identify prestige structures and their legitimating beliefs and symbolic associations as a key factor, both in the organization of production and social relations, and in the establishment and maintenance of the tradition that perpetuates this organization (see Chapter 3). To this must be added another dimension: that of the enormous affective power of an ancient and ordered symbolic tradition. As Yeats wrote so seductively,

In custom and in ceremony,
Are innocence and beauty born.\textsuperscript{1}

Such a tradition, like that of National Catholicism after the Civil War in Spain, acts as it did for many women of the Centre-South Province to anchor individuals in the present system, with their inspiration coming from the past rather than from the future. It does this by projecting the image of an (illusory) harmony.

This chapter will establish that religious life in the traditional period can be seen as a process of such signification, and identifies the ways in which the symbolic process itself acted for the women of the Province both as a productivity and a practice. As a productivity it situated individuals in very specific ways with reference to each other and to the broader social system, and created symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1979:171-83). This in turn acted to reproduce not only the symbolic system, but also the social relations of which it formed a part. As practice, it mediated the women’s experience of reality (see also Lienhardt 1961). Looked at in general terms, the nature of the symbolic system produced at any one time by the symbolic process is crucial, then, to the structure of the social formation. For women in the Centre-South Province who situated and interpreted themselves wholly within the symbolic order, the symbols used were therefore critical, and the second part of this thesis addresses itself precisely to the generative relationship between the changes in the symbolic system made by the Second Vatican Council and the resulting transformations in the Society of the Sacred Heart in Spain.

The religious life itself as signifier

One of the major contributions of Barthes, particularly in \textit{S/Z} (1975), to the understanding of the process of signification was the identification of the signifier (or signifiers) as the active element in producing meaning. In other words, the relation between signifier and signified is not fixed, but interpretable, and the meaning produced may be plural, coinciding with that intended by the agent (in the case of \textit{S/Z}, the author) at one level only. I have suggested that this process involved for the nuns what Thompson (1984:36) identifies as the splitting of the referential domain. What the Congregation posited was an analogous relation, recognized by the nuns as imperfect, between itself and its explicit referent which was the perfect life and virtues of Jesus, as lived both on earth and in heaven. Heaven was projected as a society formed by the same social structures that operated in religious life - and

\textsuperscript{1}Given that Yeats was writing during the Troubles in Ireland, a time of great violence and social upheaval, the element of nostalgia for a past Golden Age that really never existed is marked.
obviously in the broader society insofar as these were reproduced within the religious life: hierarchical, defined by separation, chaste, and so on. The religious of the Sacred Heart developed this model through three main actions: to glorify, to imitate, and to consecrate oneself. The image - and key symbol (Ortner 1973) - used to focus this relation between the life and actions of the nuns and the spiritual world that was their ideal was the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The first paragraph in the summary of the Constitutions of the Order, read it will be remembered every month in the refectory, contains all these concepts:

This little Society is wholly consecrated to the glory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the spread of this devotion: this is the end to which all its members must devote themselves. To this end, they undertake the obligation to aspire unceasingly to their own perfection, by the imitation of those virtues whose centre and model is the Heart of Jesus, and to consecrate themselves to the salvation of souls, inspiring in them a tender and solid devotion to this Divine Heart (Rule 1934:23; emphases mine).

Glorification was to be, therefore, by imitation of the perfect life embodied in the love and virtues of Jesus. The nuns in the traditional period saw the practice of virtues as achieving this only insofar as they understood them to signify this perfect life, now the life of heaven. Other 'souls', to whom the nuns were to be spiritual mothers, were to be brought to share in the devotion to the Sacred Heart, so that they too might glorify it and reap the same benefits of relation with the divine. What was referred to by the practices of religious life was therefore understood by the nuns to be the perfect union in love with the divine which is heaven, and the religious life as a whole became, at least for its members, its signifier.

If we turn to Barthes' discussion of myth, in which myth is seen as a second-order semiological system (1972:114), then it is possible to say that, when they entered the Society, the women of the Centre-South Province in practice did identify it as the signifier; what they were seeking was in fact this loving union with the divine. This basically mystic impulse, interpreted as 'vocation', may have originated for individuals in many different ways, and it is not within the scope of an anthropological thesis to elucidate these. There were undoubtedly, however, a number of common elements. One was certainly a quest for perfection which, given the fundamental opposition between 'the world' and 'the religious', or the natural and the spiritual, could only be sought in the spiritual. Hence the rejection of the world and the embracing of the ascetic life. Religious life was seen not only as the signifier of the perfect life, but also as the best means to attain it. It is here that the essential nature of personal intentionality for members of the Society becomes evident. The transformation of the worldly into the religious, presented in Catholic theology as the
aim of every Christian, was to be achieved through intention. Attitude was as important as action. Hence, the critical factor in the whole process was presented to the nuns as purity of intention, a state more easily realizable in the solitude and prayer of the convent than among the distractions of the world. Moreover, nuns, as represented in the Society of the Sacred Heart, fall clearly into the Weberian category of religious virtuosi (1964:162-63), proclaiming not so much a message as a method (Hill 1973:2). This method was, as I have suggested, imitation.

Within the traditional interpretation, what was signified was fixed and invariable. The symbolic order was, as it shaped the understanding of the nuns, definitive and closed, concerned with a relation of essences between the individual and God that, by separating itself from the social world, appeared to partake in no way of the historical process.

But meaning, looked at from the point of view of the analyst, is plural, and the Society of the Sacred Heart, far from being cut off from the historical process, clearly incorporated in its practices, as we have seen, an implicit referent that was the social formations produced by history. If religious life in its very form was signifier, then what it in practice signified and acted to reproduce was a model of society that, as a faithful projection of prevailing social relations, reified them into an ideal, the ideal embodied in the concept of heaven. The symbols and practices produced, which themselves constructed specific meanings through their effects, belonged to the process of dehistoricizing myth. In this scheme, the historically constituted social order was taken by the nuns as divinely ordained, and wrongly assumed by them to be, in Barthes' term, innocent (1972:143).

Various aspects of the 'ideal' society projected by the Society in its traditional ordering will become clear in the following discussion, in which I am dealing with the process basic to the religious life of the constant and intentional invocation of the symbolic, and the unrelenting process of the transformation of all reality into this dimension. It was this achievement of ideological unity that, in producing a sense of consistency, acted to disguise those contradictions that were in fact inherent in the Society. At the same time, the dominance of the mythic or symbolic interpretation in religious practice led to a duality in which, as with the religious habit, for example, what was originally envisaged as a practical measure of simplicity quickly came to be mythicized, and was therefore encoded and experienced by members in the symbolic order. No action or event was ever simple, but always transformed into a second order of meaning. This constant transformation of experience certainly resulted in profound emotional satisfaction for the women in the traditional period - again, acting to reinforce and reproduce the entire system.
The basis of this all-pervasive mythicizing in the traditional period was the
Rule, which was for members of the Province the discourse presenting the ‘Real’. It
also provided the

official language, particularly the system of concepts by means of which
the members of a given group provide themselves with a representation of
their social relations. [It] sanctions and imposes what it states, tacitly
laying down the dividing line between the thinkable and the unthinkable,
thereby contributing towards the maintenance of the symbolic order from
which it draws its authority. Thus officialization is only one aspect of the
objectifying process through which the group teaches itself and conceals
from itself its own truth, inscribing in objectivity its representation of what
it is and thus binding itself by this public declaration (Bourdieu 1979:21;
emphasis mine).

Further, the Rule embodied the ideological discourse legitimizing non-innocent
practices. The ‘Real’ constructed in the Rule, therefore, and presented as simple,
coherent, and logical, was constructed in ideology and it was this that mediated the
experience of the nuns in the traditional period.

The Rule as constructing habitus: symbolic codes as practice.

In the daily living of the nuns of the Province, the symbolic system was basic to
the constructing of individual experience. The system of symbols developed by the
Society actively produced in its members the dispositions already symbolized in their
practical world. Through the living of the symbolic system, there were reproduced in
the nuns themselves both the ideology implicit in the symbols, and the social relations
of which the ideology was part. In turn, the nuns continued both to reconstruct the
symbolic system and, in so doing, to reproduce its meanings at the social and
ideological level.

Enclosure

Perhaps the clearest example of the symbolic code as practice was the rule of
enclosure. The physical enclosure lived by the nuns was not only associated with but
actively produced psychological enclosure, and this became the principal factor
mediating the nuns’ experience of reality (see Lannon 1979). The Rule clearly laid
down the boundary and defined the fundamental opposition, inside-outside, an
opposition that was paralleled, as we shall see below, in the opposition between
boarding and day pupils, internas-externas, based on the distinction between rich, or
comfortable, and poor. In the article in the Rule that specified the means to be used
‘to glorify the Sacred Heart of Jesus’, the final means in a list of four was ‘the contact
necessary with persons from outside’ (Rule 1934:11), and we saw in Chapter 2 the
extent to which Madeleine Sophie Barat attempted to resist enclosure in order to
pursue this end. Nevertheless, although the Constitutions elaborated the ways in which strict enclosure might be modified in order to facilitate this work, emphasis remained on such modification as the exception rather than the norm. Indeed, the very dedication to 'the salvation and perfection of one's neighbour' was, rather curiously, made a further reason for maintaining enclosure: 'For this reason they will keep enclosure, whose advantages are of such worth in maintaining the integrity of the vows' (Constituciones 1978:Arts.225 & 226).

The distinction between inside and outside was the fundamental organizing principle of the space that the nuns inhabited. The buildings themselves, constructed to accommodate a boarding school and a poor school as well as the living quarters of the nuns were, without exception, large and imposing (and often beautiful), and generally surrounded with extensive grounds enclosed by high walls. These walls marked one boundary between the world of the convent and the secular outside, and the nuns could move freely within them. The persons from outside permitted to enter were, moreover, strictly limited.

Persons from outside may not enter inside the house. The mothers who bring their children to school must be excepted, as must close female relations (las parientas cercanas) who may wish to see the place provided for these children. They may be allowed to enter with the necessary dispensations (Constituciones 1978:Art.230; emphasis mine).

Other exceptions were made for the parents (father included) or sisters (brothers excluded) in the case of serious illness of a novice or 'any of those not bound by final vows' (Art.231), a female founder (fundadora) or distinguished benefactress (insigne bienhechora) (Art. 232), and, 'in certain extraordinary cases', any 'person of distinction' who may request it (alguna persona de distinción) (Art.233).

Although the nuns might move freely within the building and grounds of the convent, insofar as obedience took them there of course, another very definite boundary was marked by those areas actually reserved for the nuns themselves: that part of the building in fact named enclosure (clausura), or cloister. This basically referred to the living areas of the nuns, and included cells, dormitories, refectory, infirmary, and recreation areas. In the house of novitiate (Chamartín for the choir

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2 The garden was sometimes dispensed with, for example, Diputación in Barcelona, the first convent in Bilbao, Caballero de Gracia in Madrid. Even where the front door of the convent opened directly onto the street, however, the walled off concept continued to prevail, for, as stated in the Constitutions, 'the entrance will be always closed, and able to be opened only from the inside' (Constituciones 1978:Art.228).

3 As the gender marker of persona is already the feminine a, it is not possible to specify whether only women are intended here. In view of the other very clear indications, one may assume, I think, that only distinguished women were implied.
religions, and, from 1919, Sarriá for the coadjutrix Sisters), the entire novitiate area, and usually part of the grounds, fell within enclosure.

On the principle that 'space defines the people in it', and that 'behaviour and space are mutually dependent' (Ardener 1981b:12), this formal organization of space was clearly crucial. Not only did enclosure mark the boundary between inside and outside in a general sense; it also incorporated the further opposition between religious and worldly, with space being defined also according to those groups whose identity was indeterminate. The children in the schools, therefore, in one spatial definition - convent walls and world - belonged inside. The boundary was breached by the parlour, where families and other visitors came in and went out; by the children themselves; and, very importantly, by the chapel which 'may be open to persons from outside at the time of Mass and services', but 'with a view to this, having a high railing that will separate them from the inhabitants of the house' (Art.234). The school area of the building was therefore in some sense that transforming space between the religious and the worldly that allowed the one to act on the other, and was, as we have seen, the area where some autonomy was possible for the nuns. The children were both the objects of the nuns' transforming action and their agents for continuing it in the outside world.

In another spatial definition, the children belonged in the world - though a world potentially transformed through grace - and the pure religious area was the area of enclosure. Since the whole convent itself was an almost entirely female world, and the enclosure by definition even more completely so, the exceptions made as to who might enter this area from outside are instructive. They bring us back to a view of religious life firmly situated in the social structures of Church and society. Only the priest and the (male) doctor were permitted inside the enclosure.

In the case of illness, the doctor and the confessor shall enter to see the sick person, insofar as necessity demands it; but they will always be accompanied by the person whose responsibility this is (Constituciones 1978:Art.236).

Enclosure, therefore, and its concomitant organization of space, constituted the overriding framework within which the nuns experienced their relations with the world (in both its senses). It was the perception produced by so experiencing their material environment that was determinative in the relations between convent and society. As Lannon points out in her analysis of the Sacred Heart convent in Bilbao between 1876 and 1931, 'physical enclosure was, for the community, an appropriate expression of an enclosure spirituality which was widespread in the contemporary Spanish Church' (1979:199). She goes on to point out that, even though contact between the nuns and seculars was in fact quite extensive,
two common factors in these contacts are worth noting. Firstly, they all took place on the convent's property, and secondly, they all had some kind of specifically religious character (199).

What was true of the Bilbao house was equally true of the other Sacred Heart convents in Spain.

Further, this emphasis on separation from, rather than incorporation into, the world resulted in the strict regulation of other channels of intrusion from the latter. Letters, both coming into and going out from members of the community, all passed, as we have seen, through the Superior of the house, and newspapers - even when these became a fairly general medium of information - were read only by the Superior and perhaps some of her council. News from outside, therefore, when it filtered through to the nuns at all (and many events didn't) was always mediated and indirect - and hence discontinuous and more than a little unreal. Those channels of communication that there were with the outside only intensified the focus of the nuns on that symbolic, spiritual dimension that they then came to perceive as total in the very moment of separation. Again in the case of Bilbao, Lannon suggests that these lines of communication, 'that ensured that there was no contact with the 'other' Bilbao, the Bilbao that was not interested in religion and had no cause to walk through the doors of the convent of the Sacred Heart' (1975:267), formed a series of concentric circles. Beyond the convent itself was contact with other religious of the Sacred Heart, both from other parts of Spain and from abroad, with a large influx of nuns from France when convents were closed there by the government in 1903-04. Then there was contact with the clergy, who, for the Sacred Heart nuns, were almost wholly represented by Jesuits - a fundamental influence on the members of the Congregation. Then came the local Catholic world of sodalities and the families and relatives of the nuns and school children; the diocese, represented by bishops who came from time to time for various functions such as prizegivings; and finally the Church of Rome.

Enclosure as it was experienced by the nuns lends itself to diagrammatic representation (Figure 8) in which the boundaries iconographically mark quite clear divisions, both physical and psychological.

This multi-level expression of enclosure was clearly, therefore, both actual and symbolic. The same may be said of the organization of time, that other sphere of experience constitutive of the meaning of action.

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4 It must be remembered that the period under review here, 1876-1931, was a period of dramatic social and political upheaval, and a time when anticlericalism was virulent.
Figure 8: Representation of the World of the Nuns experienced through Enclosure. (Based on Lannon 1975).
Time

Time in the Rule was seen as the necessary annexe to eternity, and hence to be so regulated that the focus of each and every day was on advancement in the spiritual realm. This spiritual realm, by encompassing the material actions essential to living, endowed them also with symbolic meaning. A summary of the order of day given in the Rule will make this clear (see Figure 9).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spiritual focus</th>
<th>Practical necessity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.30 Rise</td>
<td>5.00 Private recitation of the Angelus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.30 Rise</td>
<td>6.30 Tidying of room, making bed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.00 Office</td>
<td>7.15 Private meditation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.00 Office</td>
<td>8.00 Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.45 Office</td>
<td>12.00 Angelus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00 Office</td>
<td>12.00 Lunch - preceded by a blessing and grace. Reading of edifying material during this meal. Once a month, the summary of the Rule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.30 Office</td>
<td>12.30 Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.30 Angelus</td>
<td>6.30 Supper. Reading. Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.30 Angelus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.00 Office</td>
<td>8.00 Reading of points prepared for the following morning’s meditation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.00 Office</td>
<td>Community prayers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.55 Office</td>
<td>Examination of conscience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.30 Lights out</td>
<td>9.30 Lights out. The Greater Silence, which lasts till after meditation the following morning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9. General order of day laid down in the Rule.  

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5 There were in fact some later minor variations on this scheme, as for example the time of rising which was at 5.20, with Meditation from 6.00 till 7.00.
If one adds to this rather bare outline the attitudes encouraged by the Rule towards utilitarian actions, it becomes clear why the distinction between the two spheres of action was seen to be artificial in the overall perspective of the nuns.

The spirit of their vocation and the honour which they owe to the Heart of Jesus, to whom they have given and consecrated themselves, requires that they do not limit themselves to considering Him as their model and uniting themselves to Him in the practice of all the virtues, but that they also, in all their actions, look at this adorable Heart and seek in it the dispositions and interior spirit with which they ought to carry them out, since there is none, no matter how humble, to which this divine Master did not wish to lower Himself, in order to be in everything our model (Constituciones 1978:Art.76).

The sections following this directive, Articles 77-79, dealt with the attitudes appropriate to care of the body, eating, resting, sleeping, and taking part in recreation. All was to be basically directed towards the glory of the Sacred Heart.

The impact of time, then, was to present the nuns with an experience of reality that was ordered, harmonious, tranquil, and immutable. Great events were not envisaged, and the humble details of every day were invested with a sense of weighty significance. Moreover, the perception of the uninterrupted - and uninterruptable - flow of time and events overlaid any sense of the discreteness of categories that might otherwise have been engendered by the different dimensions of enclosure. All was to be made timeless, and effectively dehistoricized. This also helps to explain, I think, why even such turbulent events as the Tragic Week in Barcelona in 1909, the ‘persecution’ under the Second Republic, and the catastrophe of the Civil War did so little to change attitudes or lifestyle among the nuns of the Civil War generation. In a divinely ordered universe, in which all that was fundamentally important was spiritual, such worldly events, even when they actually broke in in all their passion on the quiet world of the nuns, could be viewed - and dismissed - as mere hiccups in the transcendent flow of time. Time in this experience was entirely divorced from the historical process. For the nuns, it was, like space, merely the ineluctable context of their consecration, the basis and expression of which was the vows.

The Vows

The vows, along with enclosure for women, were the principal characteristics distinguishing the traditional religious life of the nuns of the Province from other lifestyles, whether secular or religious. In Chapter 5 I looked at the ways in which the organization of convent life was both based on and subsumed the practice of the vows, with obedience as a unifying principle of action. Translated into the symbolic order, obedience became both legitimating and legitimated, as we have seen. But, as
might be expected from all that has already been said, the most crucial effect of the symbolization of the vows was on the vow of chastity. It is here that the power of the use of the symbolic order as control for the nuns is clearest, and the distorting effect of its transformation into ideology best demonstrated. In the unresolved contradiction between chastity and obedience, it was imperative in the interests of the relations of power in the Church that the nature of chastity as an option by women for control over themselves through control over their sexuality should be disguised. This was achieved by developing a definition of chastity that focussed on, and thereby reduced it to, two aspects. The first of these was, as we have seen, to make chastity equivalent in practice to virginity.\(^{6}\) Women in religious life continued to be defined by their society in terms of a status that depended for its maintainance on their physical non-accessibility to men. The other aspect was to invoke the other category whereby women in the broader society were generally defined. This was also on the basis of their sexuality, and in relation to men, but with emphasis on their reproductive role. This was the category of 'spouse'. From either point of view, the very means of self-control projected by women themselves was wrested out of their power by an attribution of meaning to their act that effectively suppressed - by a kind of interpretive rape - the implicit intention of their choice. By this exercise in power, the patriarchal relations dominant in the Church were maintained.

At the same time, the Church accepted the choice made by women, as well as men, not to marry. Sexuality, therefore, though it operated definitionally to reduce women to the relational, was in its practical dimension denied and sublimated through the symbolic system. Bourdieu's observation that it is not the universe of discourse but the universe of the unexpressed that is important is particularly pertinent here (1979:167-68). In the Society's Rule, no mention at all was made of sexuality, but the nuns were seen as inaccessible sexually to the men who might normally have expected this kind of relationship with them. This they effected by becoming the 'spouses' of Jesus Christ.\(^{7}\) The Rule referred to this relationship over and over again, thus reinforcing its exclusivity. In the Society's ritual practice, the nuns accepted the definition that reduced chastity to virginity by presenting new

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\(^{6}\)Some modification of this equivalence was allowed in that widows, for example, were not virgins at the time of entering. From that point onwards, they effectively were.

\(^{7}\)An illustration of the practical effectiveness of this barrier, and its acceptance at the various levels of society, was a situation that occurred in Australia in the late sixties, that is, after some changes had started to occur. A group of nuns, two of them students at the university and in their mid-twenties, were involved in a teaching programme at the state prison for men. Their inclusion in the programme was in spite of an official prohibition by the prison authorities on women under thirty being allowed into the prison. Undoubtedly central to this sexless state for the two nuns was the fact that they still wore the habit.
members of the Congregation as brides. The ‘wedding’ that committed them to an exclusive relationship with Christ was celebrated at the ceremony when new entrants, after six months of postulantcy, took the habit. The ritual was celebrated in all its sumptuousness, with the girls dressed beautifully as brides, and family and friends present to witness publicly to the novices’ removal from normal sexual relationships. The ceremony culminated in a highly emotionally charged change of clothing, from the worldliness of the marriage clothes of a bride to the drab garb of the spouse of Christ.

Again, the avoidance of words was pregnant with significance. The word ‘wife’ (mujer), with all its connotations of sexual fulfilment and potential child-bearing, was never used. ‘Spouse’ (esposa), being more aseptic, more ‘symbolic’, was entirely satisfactory in the nuns’ terms in conveying the meaning of the clothing ceremony in which the expressed sexuality which is the normal culmination of a wedding was denied in the very moment expected by the inner logic of the ritual. The power in the use of the normal nuptial form for this ceremony therefore erupted precisely here - in the total inversion of its meanings. Sexuality, the very basis of human marriage, no longer existed for the spouse of Christ. She was to be no longer ‘natural’ but indeed like ‘the angels’.

At the same time, while denying sexuality, what was left for the nun in the view of society was what one might call the essence of womanhood. Nuns became more ‘essentially women’ and therefore more ‘feminine’ than their married sisters, whose very sexuality kept them somewhat unpredictable and dangerous in male perceptions. Therefore, the virtues appropriate to Womanhood were those stressed in the Rule. This reinforcement of gender role, while at the same time denying the sexual role, was perhaps best symbolized - as might be expected in view of its crucial signifying character in the clothing ceremony - by the religious habit and veil.

The Habit

The prayers for the blessing by the officiating priest of the habit and veil in the clothing ceremony summarizes the overt symbolic meaning with which it was invested in the Society of the Sacred Heart:

‘Oh God, supremely faithful in your promises, who have promised to your faithful ones the goods of heaven, the clothing of blessedness and eternal joys, we humbly implore your mercy. Bless in your compassion this habit, symbol of humility of heart and of scorn (desprecio) of the world, with

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8 In Spain itself, mujer is the normal word used colloquially for ‘wife’. The distinction I am making here would not have existed in Central and South American Spanish, where esposa, ‘spouse’, is the everyday word for ‘wife’.
which your servant is to be clothed. Protect, guard this habit of holy chastity, to the end that, having worn it throughout life, it may be for her a clothing of immortality, through Jesus Christ Our Lord.’

*Blessing of the white veil*9

‘God, your Apostle commanded that, out of respect for the angels, women should cover their heads with a veil as a sign of submission, of humility and of modesty, we beseech you for the glory and honour of your name, pour out upon this veil the abundant power of your blessing so that your servant who wears it may be submissive to you in all things, and that you may preserve her in true humility and keep her gaze far from all vanity, O God who lives and reigns for ever and ever.’

*Putting on of the Veil*

‘Receive the yoke of the Lord, his yoke is sweet and his burden light’

(Oraciones para la ceremonia de Toma de Hábito n.d.).

For those outside the Order, the habit was surely the key symbol of the religious life. Leach (1976:56) suggests that clothing has to be highly standardized and easily recognized for meaningful information to be conveyed. Whether this is generally true, it was certainly so with regard to the nuns. Much of the mystique still surrounding nuns for those who have had little contact with them remains tied up with the power that this symbol had to convey the separateness and dedication, and hence ‘goodness’, of these women. Through the habit, nuns projected an image of otherworldliness that affirmed the transcendence of spirit over matter, the religious over the worldly, the virgin over the whore. Duality - opposition - was inherent in the very success of the symbol. Indeed, this very success indicates the extent to which the habit achieved the status of an essence by being withdrawn from the historical process (Barthes 1972:141). It became what it symbolized; the habit was the nun.

By the nuns too, as is clear from the blessing prayers, the habit was granted this same status. In view of the fact that it was only one symbol within the whole range of symbols that constituted religious life in the traditional period, and that it was religious life itself that acted as the total signifier in this period, we must look for further meaning. It is to be found in the link between the habit and chastity, a link that also exemplifies the efficacy of naturalizing myth. To deal with the latter observation first, it must be pointed out that the historical basis of the habit in the Society of the Sacred Heart was not chastity but poverty. Its ‘essence’ in the original conception of Madeleine Sophie Barat was, as we saw earlier, simplicity and freedom

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9Novices were distinguished by a white veil from nuns who had already made their vows. At the time of making first (temporary) vows, the white veil was replaced with a black one, and a crucifix was given to the nun. For her final (perpetual) vows, normally five to six years later, she was given a cross to wear always round her neck, and a ring - a completion of the nuptial symbolism of the clothing ceremony.
from singularity (Rule 1934:43-44), and the dress of the first nuns was in fact based on the peasant dress of Sophie's own province of Burgundy. With various modifications over time, that was the style that was retained and worn by the nuns until 1967 - but, since history had moved on, and the habit hadn't, it had by that time become totally removed from the context that had produced it. Practically, then, the habit was based on poverty. Ideologically, it was subverted and mythicized by a chastity that had been itself subjected to and distorted by obedience. And if chastity affirmed gender - the essence of feminine Womanhood - in the very action of denying sexuality (the body) then the body and its intrinsic sexuality had to be hidden. Asexuality as experienced by the nuns in the traditional period thus became the reverse side of gender acceptance, and both things constituted the signified of the habit. Moreover, the habit itself generated, in those who wore it, the related dispositions and - it must be said, despite the danger of a pun - habitus. Indeed, the identity of the two words is not casual, with their Latin base (habere, habitus) having the reflexive sense of to be constituted. The wearing of the habit produced specifically those bodily dispositions that literally embodied the feminine virtues of modesty, meekness, and submissiveness. It also acted to reinforce that separation from the world that so much defined religious life, by acting as a 'clothing enclosure' (Raymond 1971:81).

With the wearing of the habit, moreover, went a whole range of bodily behaviours and disciplines that acted to produce dispositions appropriate to docility, and to obedience. As Foucault comments:

>[The modality of these projects of docility] implies an uninterrupted, constant coercion, supervising the processes of the activity rather than its result and it is exercised according to a codification that partitions as closely as possible time, space, movement (1977:137).\(^{10}\)

This kind of discipline was not just assumed in the Rule. It was laid out in the Rules of Modesty\(^{11}\) that were included in the part of the Rule that was read aloud every month. These directions were short but specific.

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\(^{10}\) Okely (1978) shows that similar processes related to the discipline of the body were at work in girls' boarding-schools in England.

\(^{11}\) These were taken from the Jesuit rule and based on social conventions regarded as appropriate behaviour for women but also on the military experience of St Ignatius. The relation made by Foucault between the imposition of bodily discipline and the production of dispositions of docility are demonstrated. It is also possible to see this concern with a body meticulously specified by its component aspects as part of the same Ignatian technique that Barthes sees as having produced the scrupulously articulated Spiritual Exercises (Barthes 1971:45-80).
1. In what relates to the mutual relations of our members and their exterior deportment, one may say in general that one should be able to see in all their actions modesty, humility and religious maturity; but they should keep particularly in mind the following things:

2. They shouldn’t turn the head lightly from one side to the other, but only when it is necessary, and always with gravity; and if it is not necessary, they should hold it straight, slightly inclined forwards, and neither to one side nor the other.

3. Let them keep their eyes in general lowered, without raising them too much, nor turning them from one thing to another.

4. When they are speaking with those in authority, let them not look them fixedly in the face, but below the eyes. 12

5. Let them show in their expression joy rather than sadness or any other less well regulated emotion.

6. Their clothing should always be clean and arranged with religious decency.

7. Let them hold their hands still or in a suitable position.

8. Their walk shall be moderate and not precipitate, unless there is urgent necessity, and in that case they should behave with as much propriety as possible.

9. Finally, let all their gestures and movements be so well regulated that those who see them may be moved to piety.

10. If they have to speak, let them be very circumspect, both in the matter of conversation, and in their manner of dealing with it, and let all their words breathe modesty and edification (Rule 1934:86-88).

The realization of these rules in practice by the nuns was certainly enhanced by wearing garments as cumbersome as the religious habit. At the same time, the original meaning of poverty in the habit, in its dimension of living the common life, although suppressed, was not entirely eliminated. The nuns tended to see the wearing of it as having the same effects as that of any other uniform - though I think something like the Mao suit rather than for example an army uniform is an appropriate analogy. Group rather than individual was stressed, and individuals were released from concern with what was interpreted as non-essential and frivolous aspects of living. Moreover, the wearing of a habit was also an attempt to remove the individual from the exigencies of her particular position in society. Insofar as dress is normally dictated by occasion and by the relation of the individual to the social positions of others, the nuns saw this as eliminated by the habit.

Further, the nuns lived all this in the mythic dimension, which acted to take the drabness out of it, and to allow individuals to experience what was prescribed as though it were an inspired and freely accepted choice. In this sense, myth acted not so much to legitimate belief as to transform experience into emotional satisfaction, and, at times, beauty.

12 This was a piece of cultural relativity that caused problems in Australia even for those in authority. The Mistress of Novices of one generation used to explain that it was based on the ‘boldness’ of Spaniards, and needed a little adjustment in interpretation in order to be applied elsewhere.
This question of emotional satisfaction is obviously central to an understanding of why women continued to be drawn to religious life, and, in this instance, to the Society of the Sacred Heart in Spain. It is a consideration that demonstrates the crucial importance of language. Within the social formation, in which myth becomes ideology, language can use only the metaphors available to it, metaphors that are not only derived from society but determined by their use within social relations. The metaphors available to the Congregation were invested, and hence drawn into complicity, with the meanings given by society. In using the image of the nun as the bride of Christ, therefore, the nun was offered the emotional satisfaction connoted by the relationship of spouse. The metaphor itself provided a channel for affectivity. At the same time it relied fundamentally on a final masculinization of the idea of God (not just the historical male identity of the man Jesus), a male monotheism that reinforced the hierarchy, God-male-female (Radford Ruether 1983:54).

All these dimensions were summed up for the members of the Society in what was certainly their key symbol, both summarizing and elaborating (Ortner 1973): the Sacred Heart. The complexity of this symbol in the Congregation means that it is impossible to do more here than simply indicate some of its relations with the main concepts I have already developed.

Symbol of the Sacred Heart.

The choice of this symbol by the foundress of the Society must be seen in the context of her experience, indirect though it was, of the French Revolution, with all the stories that this produced among the pious, as in the Spanish Civil War, of sacrilege, martyrdom, and miracles. In such a context, the appeal to a sensitive girl was strong of the image of a God of love, promoted by another nun (Margaret Mary Alacoque) against the dourness of the Jansenists only a century before. And indeed, the ‘sacred fire of love’ (Rule 1934:8) is a central theme of the Rule.

Although poverty, chastity and obedience are the three great bonds consecrated by the Church to unite souls with Jesus Christ in religion and make them His spouses, nevertheless, they must be persuaded that they will never achieve union with His Divine Heart without a fourth bond that unites them all among themselves; and this bond, that is not the subject of a vow, but the goal of the great precept of Jesus Christ, is that of mutual charity.

The spouses of the Sacred Heart will understand without difficulty that

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13 Her brother Louis was imprisoned for some time in Paris, and in considerable danger of execution. He was, however, released. And in general, the village of Joigny was far from the centre of all these stirring events.

14 I would suggest that the appeal of the devotion to the Sacred Heart rested also on the extent to which the image offered certain feminine characteristics to orthodox Christian piety.
principally to them are directed these words of the divine Master: ‘A new commandment I give you: that you love one another as I have loved you’ (39; emphasis mine).

Love was presented as the motivating principle for the life of members of the Society and was indeed often remarkably achieved. Nevertheless, despite the choice of a specifically body metaphor as the central symbol for the Congregation, this love was to be entirely spiritual. (And indeed the bodiliness of the metaphor was emptied of content by the constant prefix of ‘Sacred’ or ‘Divine’). ‘Particular friendships’, the ‘scourge of communities’ (Rule 1934:40-41) were to be avoided at all costs, and even the nuns’ care for the children was to admit of no especially close relations, which might cause these ‘souls which cost [Jesus Christ] so dear... to close their hearts to all the impressions of grace’ (Rule 1934:52, 54). Their love was to be a spiritual love, productive only at the level of ‘souls’, and directed solely towards their Divine Spouse who - and this also is a central image - had called them to His service. The metaphor of vocation, the personal election of the individual by Jesus Christ, is perhaps the fundamental explanatory myth in the reproduction in members of the Society of the whole symbolic system. ‘Not you have chosen Me, but I have chosen you.’ The nun was not one of an indistinguishable mass of followers; she was the elect, the personally chosen. Even the central tenet of the Christian message, ‘Love one another as I have loved you’ was directed ‘principally to them’. Whatever the vicissitudes of life, they were a gift from her Spouse in order to bring her closer to Him until they were finally joined together in eternal bliss.15

The lived metaphor of vocation, then, meant at least two things in terms of the present discussion. One was the reinforcement of those feminine attributes required by obedience. The nun did not choose, she was chosen. Her role in life therefore was the fulfilment not of her own will, but the will of her Spouse - represented, as we have seen, by the will of her Superiors. Moreover, the concentration within this basically masculinized spirituality of her affective powers on union with Jesus Christ focussed the vision of the nun on death and eternity. The general tenets of the Church about the importance of the afterlife became for her intensely personal, and death was seen as the joyful climax to that nuptial union begun with the clothing ceremony. Time therefore, which, as we have seen, acted to remove the nuns from the impact of history, already signified for them eternity. It was a necessary passage within which

15Only someone as eminently down to earth and creatively resistant to the effects of symbolic control as St. Teresa of Avila could recognize the irony of this attitude. It was part of convent folklore that her comment after a series of very trying incidents was, ‘If this is what you do to your friends, Lord, it’s no wonder you have so few of them’.
their offering of themselves - gift and sacrifice - had to be accomplished. But it had no essential importance; it was merely the prelude to the bliss of eternity, where spirit would be united to spirit. Life was to be suffered, not acted upon. The energetic initiative implicit in the historical origins of the vow of chastity was once more trivialized by a spirituality generated by obedience.

This same spirituality, masculine in orientation and submissive (receptive) in practice, not surprisingly left little room for Mary, the Virgin Mother of Jesus, so potent a devotion in popular Catholicism. Certainly, she was given honourable mention in the Rule:

It is also proposed to honour with special devotion the Most Holy Heart of Mary, so perfectly in conformity in all things to the adorable Heart of her divine Son Jesus (Rule 1934:10; emphasis mine);

she is included in the full official title of the Society (one that is in practice almost never used); and the Office recited daily by the choir nuns bore her name. But one is given the sense of mere tokenism. Perhaps because it was difficult for the nuns to relate to the real, historical person of Mary and to the popular practice that elevated her to divine status in a spirituality refined to essences, her place was also reduced to that of archetype, and therefore model rather than Mother. She was made a model of those same feminine virtues already required by the nuns' union with her son. It is not surprising to find, therefore, that she was given a more active place in the Province in the devotion of the children in the schools rather than in the ceremonial life of the community. It was in the incorporation of the schools into the symbolic order that its effectiveness, not just as a productivity but as reproductive, is illustrated.

The symbolic code as reproduction

Just as the world of the nuns had become a closed system, generating those structures that, like Spanish society itself, were instrumental in the processes of reproduction, so too the schools run by the nuns showed the same hermetic characteristics. I demonstrated in Chapter 5 that the dynamic of these processes of reproduction was derived from an ideology that ascribed individuals to fixed positions in the social formation and then defined them according to this relation. In the schools, this generated two principal oppositions: the inevitable male-female, and the more unexpected rich-poor. Both oppositions acted as a basis of structural definition for those who fell into each group, and attracted characteristics from the more general oppositions within which the nuns acted, such as high and low, pure and impure, and, particularly, inside and outside. Since the schools were for girls only,
however, the negative evaluations given to ‘female’ by this scheme were more ideal than real. Femaleness was not of itself devalued, since it was not experienced in its structural aspect as opposed to male, although it did influence the kind of education that was considered appropriate for girls.

The parallel opposition between rich and poor, however, was lived, as we saw in Chapter 5, as immediate experience, with the distinction between the two sets of children being apparent and experienced at every possible level. This was summarized in the normal terms used to refer to the different schools - the boarding school with its fee-paying members was the internado (pensionado), the poor school, free, and with day students, was the externado. It was perhaps this opposition of inside and outside that was central in orienting the processes of reproduction necessary for the Congregation itself towards the internado rather than the externado.

Lannon points out in relation to the Bilbao house, founded in 1876, that

the majority of those arriving to make their novitiate in Chamartín had been educated in schools run by the Congregation. The case of the Bilbao school is instructive... [There were] thirty-eight between 1927 and the outbreak of the Civil War [1936], nine of whom came from the same one year in the school (1975:251).

This tendency for new recruits to be drawn from the nuns’ own schools was overwhelming. Although I was not able to get access to the relevant statistics, it would be safe to say that, up to the time of the changes in the 1960s, the vast majority of the choir nuns in Spain had been educated in Sacred Heart schools.

The same was not true for the coadjutrix Sisters. Lannon indicates that the principal source for this group were parish priests - one of whom was ‘a man with a ‘gift for discerning vocations and directing them well’ [and] had guided no fewer than one hundred and fourteen of his protegées into religious communities of one kind or another’ (1975:253).

The pensionado and medio-pensionado then, produced recruits for the Society.

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16 Although its equivalent within the convent, domesticity and lack of knowledge, was, as we have seen in the case of the coadjutrix Sisters.

17 The term internado referred to the actual situation of the children as boarders, and not all of the Society’s fee-paying schools in Spain were boarding-schools. Two in Madrid were, one wasn’t. These fee-paying day schools were known as medio-pensionado. Although these schools did share a great deal in common with the boarding-schools, they were distinguished in some ways that indicate a kind of hierarchy among the three sets of schools. The students of the fee-paying day schools, for example, were not eligible for the Society’s highest awards at the annual prizes, the First and Second Medallions and the coveted Prize for Excellence.
The *externado*, in general, did not. While an obvious difference between the two certainly lay in the possibility of creating a more total atmosphere among boarding-school than day-school pupils, this does not account for the equal effectiveness of the system in the other day schools, the *medio-pensionado*. The key to the greater acceptance of the value system perpetuated by the nuns lay in two factors. One was the class background of the students which, in the fee-paying schools, was similar to that of the dominant group in the Society itself. The other was undoubtedly their incorporation into the symbolic order.

Life for a fee-paying pupil of the Sacred Heart was embraced within an obviously less stringent but nevertheless comprehensive symbolic system that offered similar interpretations of reality and similar affective rewards - at least for those who did not actively reject it. Ritual was not just a matter of religious ceremony, but of progression through various series of ranks and expressions of personal virtue. Public virtue was rewarded each week (and the lack of it punished) by the public award of a note of merit or otherwise in an assembly of the whole school and teaching community. Each term it was reinforced by the granting to a select few, elected by their companions under the final decision of the nuns, of ribbons of merit - sashes of specific colours that carried the status of prefect and were worn proudly as part of the school uniform. Private virtue had a different hierarchy, through a series of sodalities that were not correlated quite as closely with age and school grade as were the ribbons. Each sodality had two stages: that of aspirant, and that of full member, with the symbol of transition from the one to the other being the solemn bestowal of

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18There were obviously exceptions to this, one of whom was Josefa Menéndez, a Spanish coadjutrix Sister who entered the Society in France, not Spain, in 1920 and died after only three years there. She later achieved modest fame as the recipient of visions of the Sacred Heart. The book that chronicles her mystical saga, *The Way of Divine Love* (1949), is a fund of examples of the spirituality dealt with earlier in this chapter. The great caution with which her claims were dealt by her Superiors, and the very discriminating way in which the book itself was actually used by other members of the Congregation itself, even after its semi-official approval by the Church, is illustrative of the attitude of the Society towards personal mysticism. In the interests of the common life and of the apostolic orientation of the Congregation, it was not encouraged. In instances where there did seem to be evidence of mystical experience, the subject was expected, under obedience, to confide in her Superior and then to submit herself entirely to the latter's guidance. Josefa Menéndez is the only reported example of a proclaimed visionary, but it is very interesting that the propagation of the literature related to her experiences was aimed more at those outside the Congregation rather than among the members themselves. One suspects that this dissemination was prompted more by pride in and loyalty to a 'saint' of their own than by a view of the content of the visions as particularly stimulating. For some members, it was actually an embarrassment, and those in authority have always been guarded in their comments about the whole phenomenon. The nun who was Josefa's actual Superior over the visionary period, and who therefore became closely involved with both the experience itself and the process of 'discernment' required by the Church, later became Superior General of the Society.
the sodality’s medal. The culmination of these sodalities was that of the Children of Mary, and receipt of this medal marked the highest level of incorporation, outside of actually entering the Congregation, that pupils could aspire to. That it was a transition charged with significance was indicated in two very clear ways. One was the choice by the recipient of a motto that was generally engraved round the rim of the medal and was intended to serve as her life’s orientation. For many it did act this way, and the effectiveness of the symbol is demonstrated by the fact that many women continued to wear the medal at least for some years after leaving school, if not for the rest of their lives. The other was the use made of the medal-bestowing ceremony to affirm the identity between the virtue-based status achieved within the school and a more intense (special) membership within the broader Church. The ceremony of bestowing medals in the Spanish Provinces took place at the end of High Mass on three days a year: December 8th, the feast of the Immaculate Conception (and the day of the Procession of the Lilies); March 19th, the feast of St Joseph; and May 25th, the feast of St Madeleine Sophie. All were bestowed by the main celebrant of the Mass, the school chaplain or a visiting cleric. The recipients of the Children of Mary medal were given special honour.

The pupils in the poor school also had ribbons and sodalities, but they were used as much to mark the children’s difference from the fee-paying pupils as incorporation into any specific symbolic system. The ranking was the same in each school, but the colours of the ribbons associated with each were different, and the sodalities and medals were also distinct. Ritual was indeed used to reinforce the social definitions already implied by the condition of poverty; the principal annual festival of the year was that of St Vincent de Paul, the patron saint of the poor (Rule 1934:149).

The annual festivals, in the fee-paying school as well as among the nuns, served to punctuate the school year with celebrations that reinforced the inward focus of both pupils and teachers while at the same time acting to reproduce the dispositions necessary for the girls to ‘take their place’ in the world and ensure their appropriate behaviour. Perhaps the best example of such celebrations was the Procession of the Lilies. On the feast of the Immaculate Conception (December 8th), this ritual formed the centre of the day. Each girl, wearing white veil and gloves, was given a lily that was then placed in an urn in front of a statue of the Virgin, while the prayer was repeated by each one:

O Mary, I give you the lily of my heart. 
Be thou its guardian for ever.
Chastity in the symbolic system of the nuns was replaced by purity for the children, and seen, for those not privileged enough to receive a vocation, as fundamental to their role as Christian wives and mothers in the world.

**Conclusion**

The traditional life of the nuns of the Province operated as a text made up of a series of codes (Eco 1976:68): dress, use of time, organization of space. Each of these codes, and, more importantly, their combination, elicited from the nuns the behavioural responses that ‘are the proofs that the message has been correctly received’ (Eco 1976:37). The meaning generated by these multi-levelled codes, however, lay not within each one separately, but in the relations historically created between them. This relation was constructed by combining the various elements of religious life in the symbolic order, which thus became the totalizing context within which the nuns lived and carried out their own interpretive action. For life lived so comprehensively in the symbolic order, the rewards were obviously great. These rewards, the symbolic profits ‘conferred on practices conforming to the official representation of practices’ (Bourdieu 1979:40), acted to produce in the nuns the dispositions essential for the reproduction of the system. It was a system however that was, as we have seen, increasingly divorced and alienated from the historical process and incorporated no self-generating mechanism for change. Indeed, its own logic was one of ever-increasing closure. Moreover, the impulse that had led to the founding of the Congregation at the beginning of the 19th century and with it the energy to attempt new forms had been spent. No new energy was generated from this original initiative because of the way in which it had been structured into old forms and symbolic traditions that had deflected and disseminated the original dynamic. It was in fact suffocated by the very accumulation of symbolic riches.

The question must be raised as to how, within such an ideologically and structurally closed system it was possible for the nuns to bring about change even after the Vatican Council. The answer lies, I think, in two related dimensions, and some clues have already been given. One is to be found in the potentially subversive nature of the vow of chastity itself. This was inherent in the goals that Madeleine Sophie Barat and her companions initially posed for the Society, goals generated by a vision of an active role for women in the world. The expression of these goals within forms dictated by the hierarchical and patriarchal relations of power in the Church undermined the thrust of the women’s involvement in the 19th century resurgence of women’s religious orders, just as it had done in earlier centuries with, for example, the power of Abbesses in the 10th century, the Beguines and women monastical
Superiors in the 13th, the communities initiated by Angela de Merici and Mary Ward at the time of the Reformation.

Nevertheless, the dynamic of chastity to give the nuns some alternatives to a domestic role and to provide opportunities for autonomous action, though limited and largely turned in upon itself, was realized in fragmented ways by at least some of these women. The choir nuns found opportunities for self-realization and for acting as partial agents of their own destinies principally in their work of education. To some, however small, extent, their study and teaching broke the circle of inwardness and forced them - often joyfully - to terms with the outside world. Dispositions were thus fostered that were certainly at odds, no matter how misrecognized, with the domination of an overriding symbolic order.

For the coadjutrix Sisters, this was much less so. Because of the nature of their work, which was domestic and 'hidden', and the ways in which it was legitimated within the overall symbolic system, their investment in the latter was generally even greater than that of the choir nuns. The results of this were to be felt over the period of changes, when the careful legitimation of what was essentially a distinction based on class and gender ideologies collapsed.

The coadjutrix Sisters were, however, not the only ones to resist change in the aftermath of Vatican II. Nor were they unanimous in their resistance. There were many of the choir nuns also who had unqualifiedly accepted the limits of interpretation laid down by the official interpretation of the symbolic order. This raises a second fundamental question as to what experiences of the nuns before Vatican II prepared them - or not - to accept its changes. This is the question of interpretation, and is, as we have seen, essentially related to the issue of chastity.

There were those women who, even within the limits fixed by official interpretation, had found means of achieving flexibility. In practice, too, the rigid opposition between the spiritual and the world that had been such an important factor in the development of the religious life was experienced by the nuns less as a total opposition than as a spectrum. Contact with outsiders through teaching or other activities, interpreted as it was as a religious activity, ensured that these 'souls' from 'outside' could not be relegated to the unregenerate secular. A change in the definition of the 'world', therefore, found the nuns not wholly unprepared.

Nevertheless - and this point is crucial - the women of the Society from the time of its inception, and this included the nuns of the Province, had submitted voluntarily to the authority of the Church and to the system of relations that it incorporated. In the traditional period, they accepted as definitive for their own lives the official interpretation of their position and their action. The contradictions fundamental in
the Society were masked and repressed, and the symbolic system acted to reinforce the role of the Church as legitimizing agent for the practices of the Society. Only from the Church then, could come change for these women, and only when the Church itself challenged the symbolic system could the tensions within that system emerge. It was a measure of both the degree of those tensions, and of the effort unknowingly expended on containing them within the accepted symbolic system, that this process when it occurred was less an emergence than an eruption.
PART II
Change: 1964-1984
CHAPTER 7
Generative Principles of Interpretation and Practice:
The Chronology of Change

The Church and the Second Vatican Council

Change for the nuns of the Province was initiated by the Roman Catholic Church's Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (1962-65). It was this Council that resituated the principles of interpretation that had defined the monastic practices on which the nuns' lives were traditionally based. Most importantly, it transformed the relation between 'the world' and 'the religious' that had demanded separation between the two. As the fixing of interpretation had locked the nuns into a particular set of social relations both in the Church and, more particularly, in Spanish society, so the official opening up of interpretation to question and the possibility of alternatives meant a fundamental restructuring by these women of the religious life itself. It was this process, as they generated new practices based in historical understanding, that challenged the dominance of the symbolic order.

As we have seen, this dominance of the symbolic order had developed for the nuns within a set of relations of power based principally on the Church's hierarchical and patriarchal interpretation. This gave way in the aftermath of the Council to a plurality of interpretation that gave the women common cause with other subordinate groups in the Church in a reaffirmation of what they swiftly came to understand as the fundamental principles of the gospel. This realignment of relations in the Church of which the nuns were part gradually became a challenge to the monopoly on correct interpretation claimed by the official Church, an eventuality not foreseen by the Council Fathers - and certainly not by the Spanish bishops - when they met in Rome for the first time on October 20th, 1962. It was not in the original intention of many of the bishops who made up the Council to indulge in any major reinterpretation, and the new orientations that did emerge from the Council only partially addressed those issues fundamental to relations within the Church itself and between the Church and the rest of society. In view of the complacency of most bishops prior to the Council, it is surprising that even the limited redefinitions that were to radically alter the lives of the nuns were achieved at all.
When John XXIII announced his plan of convening the Church's twenty-first Ecumenical Council on January 25th, 1959, only three months after his election as Pope, the announcement was received in most quarters with respectful enthusiasm, but some surprise. What was there to discuss? With the Pope's infallibility defined in terms that appeared absolute by the first Vatican Council (1869-70) and Church administration functioning effectively since the Lateran Treaty of 1929 from the security of its own legally constituted state, there seemed to most Catholics, and certainly to the nuns of the Centre-South Province, no threat, either spiritual or temporal, to the one and true Church [that] is the community of men brought together by the profession of the same Christian faith and conjoined in the communion of the same sacraments, under the government of the legitimate pastors and especially the one vicar of Christ on earth, the Roman Pontiff (17th century definition of the Church by Robert Bellarmine. Quoted in Dulles 1983:14).

Only in a very few cases among the hierarchy - some of those in Belgium, Holland, parts of Africa, Latin America perhaps - was there any urgent awareness of a need for change, and it is doubtful if even those, such as Cardinal Suenens of Belgium, who most wanted debate initiated had any idea of the radical - and I use the word advisedly - impact such a debate would have. When the windows of the Church were opened, the image used by John himself, it wasn't just the fresh air he desired that blew in; it was a cyclone.

The events of Vatican II and its ongoing effects continue to be the subject of passionate discussion. I wish to look at only four of the concepts that emerged from the debate, as they are the concepts central to developments within the Society of the Sacred Heart in general, and to the women of the Centre-South Province in particular. They are first, the concept of the Church itself; secondly, the interpretation of the place of religious life within the Church; and then - and these are two areas that are related and in which, I suggest, the Council failed to come to terms with its own most radical impulses - the image of God; and the place of women in the Church.

Certainly, the essential contribution of Vatican II was a vital transformation of the concept of the Church itself. It was from this crucial metamorphosis that virtually all other changes derived. The key to the change may be found in the Council's rejection of the initial document on the Church in which the first chapter was entitled, 'The Nature of the Church Militant' (Dulles 1983:15). This was an image that defined the existing orientation of Catholics. The title of the first chapter became after discussion in the Council 'The Mystery of the Church', and its opening
words, 'Christ is the light of all nations', were an attempt to define the basis of this mystery. They also indicate the essentially biblical nature of the Council's theology - a return to sources that determined the shift in understanding of the nature of the Church. Dulles outlines the general meaning of this concept of mystery in the Council's usage, and demonstrates its basis in the New Testament (Paul's letters to the Corinthians (1), the Ephesians, and the Colossians), in an essentially historical, not mythical, understanding.

The mystery par excellence is not so much God in his essential nature, or the counsels of the divine mind, but rather God's plan of salvation as it comes to concrete realization in the person of Christ Jesus (1983:15).

Far from promoting further mystifying, then, this concept of 'mystery' attempted to resituate belief in history - in the event of the incarnation. In so doing, it helped to shift the focus of belief from essence to action. At the same time, achieving such a change demanded a radical re-evaluation of history itself, and therefore of 'the world' within which history is acted out. The fundamental duality between the religious and the world, the spiritual and the material, was in principle at least rejected, and 'the world' shed its hostile character to become a totality, seen as loved by God and affected by sin (McDermott 1979:211), yet ultimately redeemed by the historical death and resurrection of the man Jesus.

Such an understanding of the world generated a whole series of related challenges to the symbolic system operative in the Church, and new oppositions emerged, centred on events rather than on ideas. God was not to be confused, or merged, with the human. He (and I use the terminology of the Council) was seen to remain as creator, and other. Nevertheless, this understanding postulated that he has chosen to act in history, an action that culminated in the incarnation. Humankind in such a view is therefore not God, but has become sacred through the entry of God into human history in the person of a man, Jesus. If God at one level in this interpretation remains in opposition to mankind, it is because of the separateness of persons, and is not an opposition between the sacred and the profane. It is, on the contrary, an opposition that rests on the concept not of separateness but of sin. Mankind is fallen, and human nature wounded. Hence the action of God in history is a redeeming action, and the central opposition becomes one between fallen and redeemed. This is, at the same time, not a practical but an historical opposition, because, in the Council's understanding of the incarnation, and of the historical person Jesus, all has been already redeemed, and is therefore, at least potentially, sacred; all, that is, except that which deliberately chooses not to be - and it is this deliberate choosing not to be that is regarded as sin. The secular as gradually seen in
the Council is not therefore in opposition to the sacred - and the profane does not exist.\textsuperscript{1}

This radical re-interpretation was not equally present in all the Council documents. Nor was it entirely worked out in its full implications. Nevertheless, the principles were present, and achieved their most complete expression in the document \textit{Gaudium et Spes}, the Pastoral Constitution \textit{On the Church in the Modern World} (1965).

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man. That is why this community realizes that it is truly and intimately linked with mankind and its history (Art.1).\textsuperscript{2}

In such a revision of the concept of 'the world', the problem for those such as the nuns affected by the Council’s deliberations was to develop an adequate understanding not just of the nature but of the role of the Church and of its members. Dulles (1983) suggests that there were five central, though not necessarily comprehensive, models produced by the Council: the Church as institution, as mystical communion, as sacrament, as herald, as Servant. He does not elaborate a sixth, which was also central to the Council documents: the Church as pilgrim.\textsuperscript{3}

Each of these models generated subsequent actions in the Society and in the Province, but perhaps the crucial ones were those of the Church as pilgrim and as Servant. Dulles summarizes the other four as giving

a primary or privileged position to the Church with respect to the world. In the institutional models, the official Church teaches, sanctifies, and rules with the authority of Christ. In the communion models, the Church is viewed as God’s People or Christ’s Body, growing into the final perfection of the Kingdom. In the sacramental ecclesiologies, the Church is understood as the visible manifestation of the grace of Christ in the human community. Finally, in the herald models, the Church takes on an authoritarian role,

\textsuperscript{1}One might say that, in this belief system, \textit{no} dirt is out of place!

\textsuperscript{2}The translation of the Council documents throughout is that of Abbott (1966).

\textsuperscript{3}The Church on earth, while journeying in a foreign land away from her Lord (see 2Cor. 5:6), regards herself as an exile. Hence she seeks and experiences those things which are above (\textit{Lumen gentium} 1964:art.6).

The Church, ‘like a pilgrim in a foreign land, presses forward amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God,’ announcing the cross and the death of the Lord until He comes (1964:Art.8).
proclaiming the gospel as a divine message to which the world must humbly listen.

In all these models, the Church is seen as the active subject, and the world as the object that the Church acts upon or influences (1983:83).

In these models, the official Church sees itself as retaining its right to act as arbiter of correct interpretation. What Dulles calls the Servant model is therefore fundamentally distinct from these others. Based on the biblical image of Israel, and later of Christ, as the Servant of God (1983:23), and found particularly in the Constitution On the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes 1965), it acted to shift the Church from the centre to a role of service and of reconciliation:

[This sacred Synod] offers to mankind the honest assistance of the Church in fostering that brotherhood of all men which corresponds to [the highest destiny] of theirs. Inspired by no earthly ambition, the Church seeks but a solitary goal: to carry forward the work of Christ Himself under the lead of the befriending Spirit. And Christ entered this world to give witness to the truth, to rescue and not to sit in judgement, to serve and not to be served (1965:Art.3).

In such assistance to the welfare of mankind on earth lay a fundamental orientation to social action, and it was one that was to be crucial for the nuns.

Perhaps even more importantly, the model of the Church as pilgrim incorporated a basic reorientation, developed more fully in the Constitution On Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum 1965), from the Church as guardian, conserver, and unique interpreter of the word of God, to the Church as seeker.

As the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward towards the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfilment in her (1965:Art.8).

In this understanding of the Church as seeker, the members of the Church, hierarchy as well as others, would then become open to dialogue, to listening - and learning - as well as to proclaiming. In such an understanding, the monopoly on correct interpretation would no longer be claimed.

Two major consequences followed from this reversal of attitude. One was the openness of the Council to the work of Protestant as well as Catholic exegetes and theologians, an openness culminating in the Decree On Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio 1964). The principle of plurality was recognized, for the first time since the Council of Trent three centuries earlier, and was seen, not as dividing and destroying, but as unifying and healing (Dulles 1983:14).

The other consequence implicit, but not realized, was an understanding of the New Testament, not as an archetype but as a prototype.
Both archetype and prototype denote original models. However, an archetype is an ideal form that establishes an unchanging timeless pattern, whereas a prototype is not a binding timeless pattern or principle. A prototype, therefore, is critically open to the possibility of its own transformation. Thinking in terms of prototype historicizes myth (Schüssler Fiorenza 1983:33; emphases mine).

The principle of contradiction was not absent from the Council. As we shall see, the tension between these two understandings of the gospels emerged even before the Council was closed, and has been at the basis of much of the struggle for change among the members of the Centre-South Province.

In terms of their effects on action, these were the central changes emerging from Vatican II that affected the women of the Province and of the Society of the Sacred Heart in general. Their more immediate impact, however, came through the Council's deliberations on the religious life itself and its place within the overall mission of the Church in the world.

Religious life was explicitly treated in the Council documents in two places: a chapter in the Constitution *On the Church* (*Lumen Gentium* 1964) and a separate Decree *On the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life* (*Perfectae Caritatis* 1965). Both were centrally important for the women of the Province, though for different reasons. The discussion in the Constitution *On the Church* (*Lumen Gentium* 1964) situated the religious life within the life (the mystery) of the Church, and provided the theological basis for evaluation. This task was by no means straightforward in an interpretation of the Church centred on 'The Call of the whole Church to Holiness' (1964:Chapter 5) that challenged the very basis of the traditional elitism of holiness of the religious orders. Baptism was seen in the Constitution as the essential call to holiness, and the very language used to discuss the laity took its terms from that traditionally reserved to define the religious life. In the document's terms, the laity have a vocation (Art.31); they share in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ (Art.31); they must stand before the world as a witness to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus and as a sign that God lives (Art.38; emphases mine).

With such a perspective, the comprehensive symbolic system built up in religious life was indeed undermined. What was not called into question was symbolic interpretation itself. Religious life, defined by the 'profession of the evangelical counsels' (the vows), became a sign of a sign.

The profession of the evangelical counsels, then, appears as a sign which can and ought to attract all the members of the Church to an effective and prompt fulfilment of the duties of the Christian vocation. The People of
God has no lasting city here below, but looks forward to one which is to come... the heavenly kingdom (Art.44).

The obvious difficulties of the Council in dealing with this group reveal the persisting tension between the archetypal, or mythicizing, tendency in the Church and the prototypical, or historicizing, one. The fact that they were not resolved at the theological level was to be reflected in developments in the Centre-South Province and in other religious congregations in the post-Conciliar period. Beyond incidental recognition of the action of the vows at the level of practice - for example, 'by giving its members greater freedom from earthly care' (Lumen Gentium 1964:Art.44) - the Council did not come to grips in Lumen Gentium with the historical actuality of persons in religious life. They were left, not as themselves, but as symbols of something else. It is very significant that the other group receiving such treatment in the Council and post-Conciliar theologizing were women - and the nuns were caught up in both these spheres.

In the Decree On the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life (Perfectae Caritatis 1965), the members of the Council, while indulging in some general mythicizing, did better in situating religious in their historical context. In addressing the question of religious life in terms of 'the changed conditions of the times', the document raised concrete issues related to the actual situation of religious men and women, and it is this document that undoubtedly effected the first changes in the structures of traditional life. The dynamic of the Council made its impact on the majority of the members of the Province through practices; by changing what people did, it helped change what they thought.

The most immediately noticeable changes called for by the Council were three. Institutional distinctions between different classes within religious Congregations, such as that between the choir nuns and coadjutrix Sisters in the Society, were suppressed (Perfectae Caritatis 1965:Art.15). Cloister for all but contemplative orders was eliminated (Art.16). And religious habits - though maintaining their status as 'signs of a consecrated life' - were to be modified to suit 'the requirements of health' and 'the circumstances of time and place' (Art.17). Other directions, such as more extensive training for members, in both religious and secular fields (Art.18), were also to be important, but were to have their influence in the Society later.

In bringing religious life, even partially, down from the lofty symbolic heights, the Council managed to apply to it the same criteria for reading 'the signs of the

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4The importance of this aspect is brought home when it is realized that, in the English medical vernacular, rickets used to be known as 'the nuns' disease'.

times' repeatedly requested by John XXIII. To that extent, it succeeded in introducing new elements into the structures of religious life that shattered the self-perpetuating symbolic system that had come to dominate the lives of members. To the same extent, it broadened for members the possibilities of acting as subjects rather than being acted upon as objects. Nevertheless, a basic ambivalence remained.

The same is true of the treatment of women in the Council. Tavard has done an acute analysis of Catholic models of women that may be related, directly or indirectly, to the Council debates. He identifies four:

In the first model, mankind is ultimately made of only one sex, male, whom the female ought to imitate; in the second, mankind is made of two sexes, men and mothers (1973:129).

The third model is the descendant of what Tavard calls - with due qualification - the Tertullianist model (131). This is expressed in the notion, updated since the second century, that woman's very nature is essentially receptive.

Weakness and receptivity form a wedge for the insertion of spiritual strength. The weakness of woman dialectically symbolizes the power of God. Woman is no longer an instrument of evil and an image of sin; she symbolizes the littleness and the spirit of childhood which open the gate of heaven (135).

The fourth model is that promoted by what Mary Daly dubs the pedestal peddlers (1975:147), and perhaps represents the final triumph of the Mary over the Eve myth in the only form possible within the social relations of a patriarchal Church. One of the major exponents of this model was Paul VI, and its Conciliar expression is comprehensively found in the messages delivered at the close of the solemn ceremonies marking the end of the Council. While one group of men were singled out - 'men of thought and science' - women were collectively addressed as 'girls, wives, mothers, and widows'. One quotation from this message is perhaps enough to 'make even the Eternal Woman see the point and laugh behind her veil' (Daly 1975:157): 'Wives, mothers of families..., pass on to your sons and daughters the traditions of your fathers' (Abbott 1966:733). As Tavard comments: 'Woman thus appears as a fugitive figure symbolic of life, hyphening in between the fathers with their traditions and the sons and daughters of the future' (1973:136). Without labouring the point, it is difficult to avoid the observation that this symbolizing of women out of personal existence was proposed by celibate men, and subsequent elaborations in addresses by Paul VI probably gave it even greater emphasis than
that originally intended by the Council Fathers.  

Indeed, although women as a group were not specifically treated in the Council documents - an original chapter on women in the Decree *On the Apostolate of the Laity* (1965) was deleted (McDermott 1979:188-89) - women were mentioned forty times. McDermott points out that the encyclical of John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* (1963), written between the first and second sessions of the Council, was something of a catalyst for later discussions of the nature and role of women in society and in the Church (1979:206). It was this encyclical that introduced the phrase ‘signs of the times’, and listed as one of these ‘signs’ - interpreted in a wholly non-symbolic mode - the entrance of women into public life. The four mentions given to women in the Constitution *On the Church in the Modern World* (1965) all reflected this usage, and deserve to be quoted in full:

Where they have not yet won it, women claim for themselves an equity with men before the law and in fact (Art.9).

With respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, colour, social condition, language, or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God’s intent. For in truth it must still be regretted that fundamental personal rights are not yet being universally honoured. Such is the case of a woman who is denied the right and freedom to choose a husband, to embrace a state of life, or to acquire an education or cultural benefits equal to those recognized for men (Art.29).

[The domestic role of the mother] must be safely preserved, though the legitimate social progress of women should not be underrated on that account (Art.52).

Women are now employed in almost every area of life. It is appropriate that they should be able to assume their full proper role in accordance with their own nature. Everyone should acknowledge and favour the proper and necessary participation of women in cultural life (Art.60).

It is clear that a fifth model, based on these references, must be added to Tavard’s four: that of woman as a responsible person in her own right, acting within history. The fact that this model has been virtually ignored in later official statements, while that of woman, the ‘vision of virginal purity, which restores the most lofty affective and moral feelings of the heart’ (Paul VI, quoted in Tavard 5)

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5It should be noted that it was only at the third session that women auditors - the first women in history to be present at a conciliar assembly - were permitted to be present. Their presence had been suggested by Cardinal Suenens of Belgium. He had previously been the author of a book, *The Nun in the Modern World* (1962), that had rocked a number of women’s religious orders. Received with great joy by some, it was seen as so potentially dangerous by others that it was forbidden by the Superiors of many convents. He is a person whose influence on the Council was profound. It was he who was also largely responsible for promoting the Constitution *On the Church in the Modern World* (1965), the most radical of the Council documents and the only one to be suggested from the floor of the Council.

6This conventional term, ‘public life’, is here particularly apt, I think.
1973:137), has been sentimentally promoted, is but another indication of the contradiction between mythical and historical interpretation left unresolved, despite their best efforts, by the Council members.

The failure of the Council to resolve issues relating to the subordination of women in the Church also reflects its failure to address the androcentrism of the Church’s dominant image of God. While rejecting so much else, including the dominance of the institutional model of the Church, the Council simply did not recognize its patriarchal base. The most positive contribution of Council members in this area was their emphasis on the importance of the Spirit in the life of the Church and its members, an emphasis that, while it in no way redressed any balance in the image of the maleness of the Trinity, did perhaps open the way to a search for alternatives. Nor did the Council really recognize the extent to which the Church’s interpretations were essentially situated within particular sets of relations of power that it had itself institutionalized. Without this recognition, and some ceding of its claimed monopoly in correct interpretation, the Church lost control over the very forces for change that it had tried to channel.

Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the changes in understanding and practice initiated by Vatican II introduced new elements into traditional Church structures. Moreover, with its fundamental change in focus from essence to action, it incorporated a dynamic element in such a way that the resulting structures have been kept open to further transformation. Such openness has been maintained, even against the forces of reaction, by the very contradictions left unresolved by the Council. These have meant that the Church has become ‘a sign of contradiction’ not so much to the world as to itself. The same contradictions are to be found within the Society of the Sacred Heart as an international body.

The Society of the Sacred Heart

The Society’s response to the Council was, in its strong tradition of filial obedience to the Church, wholehearted. The international and strongly centralized character of the Society meant that the original direction for change, even for members of the Centre-South Province, came from its centre in Rome. One of the Spanish nuns who was in Rome as a member of the Society’s governing body during the Council, and Superior General over the first three critical years of change, supports this position:

'I was at the heart of the change, and I have to say that the changes came solely from the Council. Solely. There was no internal fuss... We knew that the young people felt very repressed... But the change came from
obedience to the Council.\footnote{Further comments in this section come from the same interview with this previous Superior General.}

The key to the Society’s response to the Council came, then, from the principle of obedience that had defined the subordination of the nuns within the overall relations of power in the Church, and from within the very heart of the symbolic system that had functioned to maintain that subordination. Coming from the context of the Congregation as a group, it mobilized the women in the first instance in terms of the group. The experience of change, however varied in individual cases, has been very much in terms of the group - as a whole, and as a point of reference. Indeed, this has been one of the principal characteristics of change: its origin, its motivating force, and its source of greatest tension. It is individual members who have experienced change, but always within the group and in relation to the group.\footnote{Except, of course, for those who chose to leave. This is an aspect of the changes that will be looked at briefly later.}

Only with this in mind is it possible to understand the processes of their changing attitudes.

At the same time, the measures called for by the Council attacked those very elements in the traditional symbolic system that had most deeply mediated and defined members’ experience. They also altered the structure of government to decentralize authority. These changes took place in three main stages, each dependent upon a General Chapter\footnote{All recognized religious orders in the Roman Church are required to send representatives every six years to a general meeting known as a Chapter, usually at the order's central house. This General Chapter is the principal official decision-making body for the congregation.} of the Congregation.

The first of these was the normal six-yearly Chapter of 1964, and coincided with the Council itself. In retrospect, a number of members of the Society, particularly those in government, have evaluated this Chapter as possibly even more important than the later ones, though this is an evaluation of hindsight, and never appeared so to general members. The group within the Society on whom most immediate impact was made were the coadjutrix Sisters, for it was this Chapter, following a directive from the Vatican, that suppressed the distinction between coadjutrix Sisters and choir nuns. The sign of the change was their adoption of the habit worn by the choir nuns, despite the fact that this habit itself was under review.

At the same time, the choir nuns themselves changed their profession rings from gold to silver, a token of a new commitment to poverty by the Congregation. The importance of such a shift in emphasis by the Society should not be underestimated,
despite the underlying lack of practical concern with the actual cost of both exercises. It was, as the former Superior General already mentioned phrased it, the beginning of an ‘option for the poor that challenged what the Society had become: ‘les grandes dames du Sacré Coeur’. This ‘option for the poor’ was quite different in kind from that charitable attitude that had led to the founding of poor schools by the Society, and which had defined ‘the poor’ as an immutable group with its own inherent characteristics. It was the Chapter of 1964, in fact, that directed the closure of those poor schools that still existed, as they did in Spain, on the grounds that such separation only served to perpetuate an unjust system based on inequality. Over the following years, all the poor schools were closed, and their students incorporated into the main schools which adjusted their fee-paying systems accordingly. A further development was that many of the women began to raise questions about the geographical locations of the Society’s schools, and to ask whether this aspect was, of itself, a denial of real commitment to the poor.

The 1964 Chapter, too, suppressed enclosure. This suppression, and the change in practices consequent upon it, was ultimately to prove probably the most generative of all the changes for the nuns, although it was generally not implemented till after 1967. This was certainly so in the assessment of a former Provincial who is still a key person in developments in the Centre-South Province. She nominated it unhesitatingly as the one most important change in the Society. As she saw it, ‘It is one thing to know that there are poor people. It is another thing to actually see them.’

The accuracy of this assessment of the critical importance for the nuns of involvement with the outside world that came with the ending of enclosure, and the resulting impact of an experience of actual poverty, is borne out by what happened in another Province of the Society. One of the Spanish nuns who had spent some years in South America recalled what had happened in Brazil:

‘Because of enclosure, the nuns couldn’t go to the shanty towns. If there was a problem, they’d send one of the students, or one of the Old Girls. When the Vicar came back from the Chapter of 1964, at seven o’clock in the evening she gave the news of the end of enclosure. At 7.30 the nuns were in the shanty towns with the children.’

With enclosure went the vow of stability, made by members at their final profession. This vow had been introduced in the Society in 1826, at the time of the official approbation of the Constitutions (see Chapter 2). As it had operated in practice in subsequent years, the vow of stability had become synonymous for the women with enclosure itself. In 1964, when the General Chapter decided that
enclosure was to be suppressed, the nuns therefore needed clarification of the canonical status of the vow. Enquiries to the Sacred Congregation of Religious produced the unexpected result that the vow of stability had no canonical foundation for religious orders of the active life, and therefore no content at all. There was therefore no official objection to the suppression of enclosure. The formal suppression, however, did not have an immediate impact. It was left to the discretion of individual Provincials to implement it as they saw fit - and many did not see fit. Only gradually did its implications become felt.

The fourth change was also not immediately obvious, and was indeed not fully implemented until the Chapter of 1967. It was a change in the organization of the Society from Vicariates to Provinces, a system of government that had, in fact, been desired by the foundress (see Chapter 2). The alteration was an important one, based on the Chapter’s principles of subsidiarity and decentralization. It gave far more authority and responsibility to Provincial governments, while retaining the central government in Rome.

It was the General Chapter of 1964 that laid the groundwork for what its members envisaged as gradual change. The extraordinary General Chapter of 1967, called again in obedience to the Vatican Council to work out the meaning of appropriate renewal in practice, made the meaning of change accessible to all the members of the Society.

This Chapter was undoubtedly the most important of all those held since the early Chapters of the Society. Its members, including for the first time elected delegates from all Provinces as well as the Provincials, were wearing the newly modified habit. The document, Orientaciones ad experimentum (1967), that they produced, and that were the result of two and a half months of deliberations by the delegates, appears very modest for its momentous content. In some ways, this document appeared to merely restate as basic to the existence of the Society the traditional values of religious life - prayer and the vows - and to reaffirm the central role of the work of education. The entire context in which these statements were made, however, and on which interpretation itself depended, was palpably different from that of earlier documents. Indeed, although the Orientaciones continually invoked the words and directive of Sophie Barat, in Vatican II’s sense of returning to the Order’s origins, in some ways its own recommendations were in fact a radical departure from what I have indicated earlier (Chapter 2) as being at least a part of this ‘primitive spirit’.

What did come through as reflecting and developing the legacy of the foundress was a strong emphasis on the centrality of community. The vows of poverty and
obedience were both explicitly resituated in relation to the life of the religious in common, and the practical changes envisaged, in terms of recreations and meals, for example - far from radical, but a significant departure from previous practice - were specifically included in order to promote stronger personal relationships among members. The emphasis was on ‘fraternal [sic] love’ (Orientaciones 1967:42), openness to each other and dialogue (50-51), reciprocal confidence, and freedom (60): all derived from and based on a theological interpretation of community life as being considered ‘as an image of and participation in the life of the Trinity in a reciprocity of love and of service, in the union of action and distinction of functions’ (Orientaciones 1967:59).

The spirit of this would undoubtedly have been applauded by Sophie Barat, but it was a far cry, and not only in choice of words, from the formulation concerning particular friendships in the original Constitutions that were spoken of as ‘a danger to chastity itself, at least that perfect chastity which has consecrated to Jesus Christ all the affections of its heart’ (Rule 1934:41).

It was in its treatment of the vow of chastity itself that the Orientaciones revealed most clearly the contradiction that had developed as basic to the religious life. On the one hand, there was an unequivocal affirmation of the centrality of chastity to the nuns’ choice. Following the lead of Vatican II in its Dogmatic Constitution On the Church (Lumen Gentium 1964), the Orientaciones changed the traditional order of the vows from ‘poverty, chastity, and obedience’ to give chastity first place. The alteration was seen as very significant by the nuns themselves, and welcomed by them. Chastity was affirmed as ‘the foundation of the religious state’ (Orientaciones 1967:39). It was ‘an extraordinary source of spiritual fecundity in the world’ (39) that recognized the importance for the individual nun of her ‘fulness of womanhood’ and the need to achieve ‘a new dimension in her sexual, emotional, and creative powers’ (41). Chastity in this presentation was certainly conceived by its formulators as a liberation, not a denial.

At the same time, the mystification created by the situation of chastity within the patriarchal relations of the Church lingered on. Chastity retained its equation with virginity, and thus remained basically defined as sexuality instead of liberation: ‘As God makes life spring forth from death, in the same way virginity awaits the unique fecundity of the Spirit’ (Orientaciones 1967:40). This orientation attempted again to make of chastity ‘a sign of a new life won by the Redemption of Christ’ (1967:39), a ‘symbol of the union of Christ with his Church’ (40). It was, in short, ‘chastity for the Kingdom’ (40-41).

Events were to prove that, for many of the nuns in the Centre-South Province,
chastity 'for the Kingdom' was not necessarily incompatible with chastity for liberation. Nevertheless, the confusions evident in the Orientaciones expressed what were to remain as fundamental tensions as the nuns moved to take greater control over their own interpretation and development after 1967. Just as the impulse to chastity was dissipated for the founding members of the Society by their acceptance of the prevailing social relations in the Church in their times, so, too, the members of the Congregation in 1967 failed to see the obfuscating effects of official interpretation on their own attempts to resituate their choice of chastity in a broader commitment as women to the public concerns of the Church. In practice, this confusion was to remain basic in the Centre-South Province, and to affect also its members' efforts to reinterpret their work of education.

On the contrary, on the subject of education, the Orientaciones were very clear. In the first instance, they reaffirmed categorically the basic commitment of the Society to the work of education. The concept of education involved, however, was definitively different from that of Léonor de Tournély. The new orientation was made clear in the very first statements of the Chapter: 'The geography of hunger coincides with that of ignorance; today more than ever is education a vital question' (1967:15). Within this context, the Chapter clearly specified what it saw as the Society's failings:

- a certain identification with particular social classes, a triumphalist spirit too sure of itself, a tendency to prefer structures to persons, a certain lack of charity among ourselves (16-17).

There followed a statement of what was to be defined as the primary responsibility of the Society: to work through education for social justice.

We do not wish to evade our responsibility in the face of the facts: two-thirds of the world are hungry, 250 million children lack education; the advancement of women poses new problems. We must and we wish to widen our field of apostolate and open ourselves to all social classes (17).

It was at this point that the Chapter in one sense faltered in its analysis and reverted to a simplistic relationship between means and ends that truly reflected the spirit of the founders; education was to become again the direct instrument for changing social reality (although a social reality defined quite differently from the original):

In a world that aspires to universal brotherhood, the Society, persuaded that union is to be achieved mainly by education, will reach out with all its strength to make brothers of social classes and distinct races (1967:54).

A brief, and slightly uneasy, acknowledgement was made in the Orientaciones of the
more radical implications of this goal: ‘It will study the economic solutions that may make possible this reality’ (1967:54). Far from embarking, however, on any clear commitment to comprehensive change (and it should be noted that 1,566 of the Society’s 6,225 members at the time of the Chapter (25.2%) either came from or were working in Third World countries), the Orientaciones retreated from the global scene to focus on the Society’s own immediate role:

But it is in the heart of the Society itself and of each religious that there should be intensified, above all, an insatiable desire for unity and for justice that makes of our *Cor Unum et Anima Una* a working reality. Only thus, far from favouring unconsciously a class spirit, shall we achieve the development in our students of the social awareness that is demanded by an authentic Christianity (1967:54).

Whatever the qualifications, however, it was in these two main aspects - the emphasis on community and the commitment to education for social justice - that the Orientaciones envisaged the most profound change in the Society’s direction. All the rest of its recommendations may be more or less related to these, and indicate a strong ideological shift that was to be reflected in major changes in practice in the Centre-South Province.

The General Chapter of 1967 officially initiated three years of experimentation, initial modifications with members testing the possibilities of change, in the Society as a whole. These were erratic and varied, but energetic, and were summed up in the results of a professional Study of the Society published early in 1970. This Study was commissioned by the central government in preparation for the General Chapter of 1970, one of whose principal tasks was to assess the developments of the previous three years. It consisted of two parts: a questionnaire, that attempted to present the actual state of affairs in the Society with regard to elements such as age structure, distribution of work, and attitudes; and a self-survey of each Province that set out to assess the situation of the Province in relation to local demands. The results, as presented in the ‘Critical Reflections’ of the study (*Estudio de las Provincias* 1970:3-10), are illuminating.

The first part of the Study was dedicated to an evaluation of the Society as a whole as it had developed up to the time of the Vatican Council. The problems of these traditional structures were listed in a series of critical points that identified characteristics that had developed in the Society and distorted its task. These were specified as the triumph of institutionalization over the original charisma of the institution; dynamism had been sacrificed in favour of sacrosanct ‘tradition’, and

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10 The Society’s motto: One heart and one mind in the Heart of Jesus.
rules had become not a means but an end. There had been an almost exclusive
orientation of the apostolate to students of the upper classes. Education was seen to
have been understood not in a comprehensive sense, but as reduced to teaching. The
Study cited a concentration on internal problems as opposed to a confrontation of the
actual problems of the Church and the world. This was seen to be true even in
changes in apostolic activity after 1967 that it claimed had been motivated not by
‘valid reasons, that is to say, to respond to the concrete necessities of the country’,
but by internal circumstances that had forced the changes, such as, for example, ‘the
progressive ageing of personnel or the search for apostolic activities for elderly people’
(3). The Study mentioned also the predominance of large communities (comunidades
mamuts) that made it difficult ‘to establish dialogue, take decisions in common, or
participate in spontaneous prayer’ (6). Another point made by the Study was that
there existed an attitude that involved a divorce from outside apostolic works and
social life of both the manual tasks necessary to support such large communities, and
of those members of the community entrusted with them. These were often, even
since 1967, former coadjutrix Sisters. Finally, the Study mentioned the reduction of
the forms of prayer to those laid down to suit a way of life a century and a half
previously; and the emphasis on ‘unity’ of the Society as a whole at the expense of the
flexibility required in order to respond to local needs.

Even the changes that were adopted in the wake of Vatican II were seen in the
Study to

have referred principally to the lessening of religious discipline. Even if
they are judged positively, they have contributed only very half-heartedly to
confronting the crisis in religious life (8).

The Study made a number of recommendations about the means necessary to
strengthen this confrontation. One was a reaffirmation of the 1967 Chapter’s
emphasis on an orientation to the poor, although it was suggested that this need not
always mean strictly material poverty. Secondly, the importance of a revitalization
of community was stressed. The qualification was added that the life of the religious
community must be centred on a specifically apostolic activity, even though the
living community and the work community may be distinct (8). This dedication to
the apostolate formed a basis for a third recommendation in the Study: that of
altering the accent in the question of personal sanctification from the strictly personal
to ‘personal sanctification for the sake of the apostolate’ (9).

It is clear that the question of the apostolate, understood principally as the
work of education, was seen as critical in this Study, an understanding that was
expressed unequivocally in such passages as the following:
The problem of the reorganization of the apostolate is urgently situated in first position. In many cases this reorganization may, perhaps, signify a radical break with the past and be a bold venture. Nevertheless, a decision must be made that, posed as the main principle, may cause many other questions, such as community structure, the importance of the number in communities, etc., to find a solution (1970:11).

This critical self-evaluation by the whole Society was welcomed by many members of the Centre-South Province, and provided an assessment that was to be a basis for the General Chapter of 1970.

While the impulse to change is certainly to be found in the Chapters of 1964 and 1967, it was the Chapter of 1970 that for many members of the Province marks the beginning of their real emergence into autonomy, and that initiated a six year period of new departures - a change in interpretations and practices out of which the women began to construct a whole series of new practices and new understandings of action and of the symbolic order. For the women of the Centre-South Province, the choices they made as they attempted to express their new understandings in concrete form were realized within the context of major social change in Spain itself. It was this coincidence in movements for change in the religious, economic, and political spheres in Spain that was to give specific shape to the actions of the nuns.

Spain

Just as contradictions were inherent in the Congregation itself, so too they were in the Spain of the post-Civil War period. Though muted in the first years, both by the post-war weariness of the people and by active repression, they nevertheless continued to underlie the social relations within Spanish society. Central to the principal cluster of contradictions was the ongoing tension between the two modes of production - feudal and capitalist - that had underlain developments in the country since the early nineteenth century. While not directly or simply derived from this central contradiction, others may be seen to be related. In the first place, there was a continuing subservience of economic matters to political - and ideological - interests (Wright 1977:59), a subservience that led to the development of policies that oriented the country in the earlier Franco years to isolation rather than incorporation into a European or world economy.

It is of course impossible to do justice to the complexities of the Franco period, and of the position of the Church in this, in a brief summary of developments. What is important for the present discussion is the way in which these developments affected the members of the Centre-South Province and the extent to which they formed the context for action by the nuns after 1967.
For many of these women, what may with justice be called their religious awakening - because it is sometimes so called by them themselves - was the very instrument of their political awakening at a time when public opposition to the Franco regime was beginning to gather strength. In many ways, the personal histories of the women in the Province, especially of those of the post-Civil War generation, are part of this broader movement. It was in fact the growing realization of the political aspects of their actions that marks perhaps the strongest difference between the women of the post-Civil War generation and the older nuns.

In the first two and a half decades of Franco’s government, the nuns were committed, in what they regarded as apolitical action, to support for the regime and for the National Catholicism that it spawned. The active, though misrecognized, nature of this support was attested, for example, by the enthusiastic rhetoric of the various addresses given on the occasion of the centenary of Chamartín in 1959. One of the principal speakers on that occasion was the former Propagandist and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alberto Martín Artajo, who, even though he had fallen into personal disfavour with Franco (de Blaye 1976:375), was still publicly identified with the regime.11 The Civil Order of Social Welfare (Beneficencia), Cross of the First Class, was presented to the school by the Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Works, Antonio María Oriol (Memoria del Centenario 1959:36-37; from here on referred to as Memoria). But perhaps even more significant was the celebration of the centenary by a pilgrimage of ‘reparation’ (desagravio) by the students of the three schools in Madrid and some others to the Cerro de los Angeles, site of the consecration of Spain by Alfonso XIII to the Sacred Heart, and of ‘sacrilegious’ destruction by the Republican militia in 1936 (Memoria 1959:36-37).

Only as the ideas of Vatican II began to make some impact did some of the nuns gradually become aware of the disjunction between an unequivocal support for the regime and a changing understanding of their commitment to social justice. This was so for women from both generations. As they became conscious through the 1960s of their place in Spanish society, Spanish society itself was experiencing rapid change brought about by the burgeoning of an economic ‘miracle’ as it came to be generally known.

The tenuous nature of this miracle, made plain in a later period of recession and crisis after 1973, in no way detracts from its impact on Spanish society in general. For the 1960s as a whole, Spain could boast the most rapidly expanding economy in

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11 His sister Carmen had been a nun in the Society, and his wife, his six sisters, and his daughters were all educated in Sacred Heart schools (Memoria del Centenario 1959:34).
Western Europe (Harrison 1978:155-56), and the effect of this on those living through the period was dramatic. The nuns’ experience of these developments was quite different in quality from their experience of earlier public events. They had direct access to the media for the first time and the information thus acquired, limited as it still was by legal censorship, made them aware of the movements of dissent against the Franco regime. These movements were produced by developments in the economic and political spheres of Spanish society. They also came from within the Spanish Church itself.

The decade of the 1960s in Spain was a time of massive social change that was critical for developments in the Centre-South Province. Most importantly, this decade, especially after 1962, marks the final achievement of dominance in Spain by the capitalist mode of production. This meant neither that the feudal mode disappeared, nor that Madrid lost its controlling power as bureaucratic centre. Both these institutions to some extent retain their traditional structures up to the present. What did occur was a shift in the basis and organization of production and in the distribution of population. For the first time, industrialization was undertaken on a broad national base, and was accompanied by a process of economic modernization ‘characterized by a systematic effort to implement more efficient ways of production and distribution’ (Lieberman 1982:7-8). The result was that Spain’s economic base at last changed from a predominantly agricultural to an industrial one (see Table 7-1).

As Harrison (1978:150) points out, in 1965 the factory finally overtook the farm as the leading employer of labour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>45.51</td>
<td>26.51</td>
<td>27.98</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>50.52</td>
<td>22.13</td>
<td>27.35</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>47.57</td>
<td>26.55</td>
<td>25.88</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>39.70</td>
<td>32.98</td>
<td>27.32</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>34.30</td>
<td>35.20</td>
<td>30.50</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>29.11</td>
<td>37.28</td>
<td>33.61</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>27.06</td>
<td>37.75</td>
<td>35.19</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>25.15</td>
<td>36.09</td>
<td>38.76</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>22.91</td>
<td>36.77</td>
<td>40.32</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7-1: Occupation of the active labour force in Spain according to the census data, 1930-75 (%). (From Harrison 1978:150.)

Accompanying this change occurred what has been, and can only be, described as a flight from the land. Between 1960 and 1975, five million people left the land for the industrial towns and the tourist regions (Harrison 1978:150). Emigration also contributed to a population movement that constituted one of the major elements in the changing structure of the economy (Wright 1977:5).

Moreover, while Madrid remained the administrative centre, solely bureaucratic
control was replaced by financial control, with the banks playing a critical role, and by a rapid growth of the city and province as an industrial centre in its own right (Wright 1977:32-33).12

The social changes brought about by these economic and demographic transformations were most immediately reflected for the nuns in the field of education. Such effects had begun slowly to be felt even earlier, particularly from the period after 1953, when the leaders of the country realized the necessity of increasing what they saw as the cultural level of the Spanish people as an indispensible condition for economic development (FOESSA 1975:201). This new realization was reflected in the law of secondary education of 1953, and in the increasing numbers of students enrolled in schools. In 1951, for example, only 49.5% of school-age children were enrolled in primary schools, whether government or private. In 1965, this had risen to 82.5% (based on FOESSA 1970). Growth in the number of secondary school students is shown in Table 7-2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Periods of significant economic development</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Secondary students per 100,000 inhabitants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postwar</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic recovery</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>1,117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic liberalization</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1,536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>2,176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Development plan</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>2,801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>3,284</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7-2: Growth of secondary education, 1940-67. (Based on FOESSA 1970.)

The direct involvement of the Church in education, that is, in schools run by its own members, especially the religious orders, shows a corresponding increase over the same period, from 620,000 pupils in primary and pre-schools in 1945-46 (19% of the

12 From the early 1960s Spanish economists voiced their concern at the emergence of a new financial oligarchy, centred on Madrid, which controlled huge sectors of national industry. In 1965, e.g., the 300 leading Spanish financiers controlled 98% of steel production, petroleum refinery and electricity generation (Harrison 1978:165).

Banking may be said to have replaced bureaucracy.
total) to 1,464,000 in 1969-70 (32%). In secondary education, where the State emphasis mainly fell, the proportional growth was less, although the numbers are still impressive: 106,000 in 1945-46 (55%) to 553,000 in 1969-70 (40%) (based on Hermet 1980, and F.E.R.E. 1980). An overall picture of this increase in access to education is given in Table 7-3, which shows the changes in the overall level of final educational levels for both boys and girls between 1961-62 and 1971-72.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical &amp; other</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool &amp; primary</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>84.7</td>
<td>73.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7-3: Student population by final level of studies, 1961-71. (%)
(Based on FOESSA 1978.)

It is clear that, although access to higher education was still unequal, the figures do show some improvement in the distribution of educational resources, particularly with regard to girls. This process of gradual improvement in access to education in response to the changing economic situation resulted in the White Paper of 1970, introduced by the then Minister for Education, Villar Palasif. The so-called ‘technocratic model’ that emerged from this new legislation marked the end of the influence of National Catholicism in education. The new model was far less ideologically aggressive than previously and more oriented towards the demands of the marketplace. The law of 1970 is still basically in force. The structure of the education system it produced will be dealt with in Chapter 10.

Perhaps just as important in this period as changes in education - indeed, probably more so - was the growth in public opposition to the regime. This was twofold. On the one hand, it came from a number of internal sources - workers, students, the Basques - that can be no more than mentioned here. What is significant about these groups in terms of the process of ideological change was their link with the Church and hence some claim to a legitimacy that derived from a model of society totally distinct from that offered by National Catholicism.

On the other hand, with the opening of Spain to the rest of the world - and this
was the time when the nuns were beginning, for the first time, to read newspapers - people were made aware of the pressure of international opinion. This was particularly evident, even with censorship, on such occasions as the execution of the communist, Julián Grimau, in 1963 (Carr 1983:726), and the trial of sixteen activists of E.T.A. (the Basque separatist organization) in Burgos in 1970 (de Blaye 1976:279-323).

Indeed, the period from 1969 has been dubbed the period of ‘pre-post-Francoism’ (de Blaye 1976:253). It was a period of increasing unrest and incidents that culminated in 1974 in the spectacular assassination of the Prime Minister, Admiral Carrero Blanco. After that event, the death of Franco (November 20th, 1975) was almost an anti-climax. The fact that this long-awaited event coincided with the beginning of an ever-deepening recession in Spain - the worst and longest in recent European history (Graham 1984:283) - was submerged by the political focus of the ‘transition’ to democratic government. The importance of Franco’s death in the long term is also secondary to the changes in the structure of Spanish society that accompanied - no matter how erratically - the final establishment of capitalism at the centre of the economic process, and the establishment of the social relations, particularly the dominance of the middle class, appropriate to such a formation.

As the nuns of the Province emerged from the isolation and sheer lack of access to information that had characterized them before the Second Vatican Council, their new awareness made them particularly sensitive to the political issues represented by such crises in the regime. Part of this sensitivity arose from a realization of the extent to which they lagged behind other sections of the Spanish Church in reinterpreting the terms of their religious commitment and its relation with social action. That this action became political for a number of them was a result of the historical position of the Church in Spain.

The Church in Spain

Developments in the Spanish Church are important for the women of the Centre-South Province, not only because of the close symbolic and structural relations between the two, but also because of the Church’s highly political character. This meant that much of the change, both for members of the Church in general and for individuals in the Province, was expressed in political terms.

The context and general dimensions of this intense politicization in the Franco years had resulted in the growth of National Catholicism. Inherent in the very concept of this ideological projection, however, was a tension in which the interests of the Church in maintaining ideological supremacy were often in conflict with those of
the State. Franco himself, while maintaining all the appropriate forms of devout Catholic practice, was in no doubt as to who was using whom. This was clearly indicated by such instances as his balancing of the Church against the Falange, and his achievement of a Concordat with the Vatican in 1953 which gave him, among other privileges, a restored right to negotiation and veto in the naming of bishops. His awareness of the importance of this right led him to refuse a direct request, presented by Pope Paul VI in a personal letter of 29th April, 1968, to relinquish it (García Villoslada 1979:693).

This divergence of interests between Church and State had led the Church to distance itself somewhat from the regime even in the early post-war years. As early as 1939, for example, even the very ideologically committed Cardinal Primate, Gomá y Tomás, who had been largely responsible for the Spanish bishops' letter to the world in 1937 in open support of the Nationalist 'crusade', was moved to send a letter to the Head of State. In it he protested against the government's intervention 'in all aspects of the life of the Church in the country'. And in 1945 an editorial in Ecclesia, officially the journal of Catholic Action but certainly the mouthpiece of the hierarchy, aggressively asserted the prior right to educational control by the family and the Church over the State, and declaimed against 'any educational monopoly that physically or morally forces families to have recourse to Government schools' (Ruiz Rico 1975:199-200).

This lack of common interest between Church and State was perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the irascible voice of that most reactionary of churchmen, Cardinal Segura y Saenz, the archbishop of Sevilla (Miret Magdalena 1984:64). This prelate, so actively hostile to the Republic that the Vatican had allowed him to be expelled in 1931 (García Villoslada 1979:348-49) by 'accepting his resignation' from the see of Toledo and hence as Primate, was a constant irritation to Franco. His infringements included matters such as his refusal to sign the bishops' letter of 1937; his rejection of an inscription to José Antonio on the cathedral in Sevilla;15 pastoral letters such as one in 1952 urging a renunciation of any American aid that required Spaniards to tolerate heretical concepts, and one a few months later blacklisting the periodical Arriba for an editorial that had complained against the demands being made by Catholics to curb Protestantism in Spain. The effect of this on Franco may be gauged when it is realized that Franco himself had written the Arriba editorial in

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15 Many cathedrals, even up to the present, bear the inscription: José Antonio. Presente - an invocation of the founder of the Falange, José Antonio Primo de Rivera. There usually follows a list of names of those who died on the Nationalist side in the Civil War.
line with new economic policies that were to depend heavily on American investment (Shneidman 1973:89-90). Personal relations between the two men were indeed strained, as indicated by Shneidman:

Throughout 1952-53 Franco attempted unsuccessfully to silence Segura. In 1953, when visiting the Spring Fair in Sevilla, Franco decided to hear Mass privately in his residential chapel. Not being on speaking terms with the archbishop, Franco did not bother to inform Segura. When the archbishop learned of the proposed private Mass, he decreed that the caudillo ‘would be deprived of Mass’ as punishment for this affront to ecclesiastical dignity. When word reached Franco’s entourage that Segura had ordered that no priest under his jurisdiction perform Mass, the politicians sought a cleric not subject to the archbishop of Sevilla. A few weeks later Segura suddenly ‘became ill’ at a church gathering held at Zaragoza when he learned that Franco was present (1973:90).

Segura, though not alone and certainly not the last, was certainly an anachronistic proponent of an ideology based on an idealized vision of ‘the theocratic, absolutistic monarchy of the 16th century’ (Ebenstein 1960:11). More representative of an emerging opposition within the Church were those becoming increasingly vocal concerning social issues, such as Bishop Angel Herrera y Oria14 of Málaga and Marcelino Olaechea of Valencia (García Escudero 1984:132-33). It was involvement in social action that was to do most to change the consciousness of Spanish Catholics, though this did not then include the nuns of the Province, before Vatican II.

Although there are no clear divisions in the constantly shifting relations between Church and State, nor is any one set of attitudes or alignments chronologically or completely replaced by any other, it is nevertheless possible to distinguish three principal phases after 1939: a first, from the end of the Civil War to around the mid-fifties, which was undoubtedly triumphant. It was this period that was reflected in the celebrations for the centenary of Chamartín. A second covered the following decade up to Vatican II, during which the hierarchy, under pressure from groups within the Church involved in social action, began to take on what has been called its tribunicial function (Ruiz Rico 1975:203);15 and a post-Vatican II phase, when internal pressure for change was supported by developments within the international Church.

Two movements central to the second phase are of particular interest here for

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14 Angel Herrera’s commitment to social and political action was far from new. He was prominent long before the Civil War as the leader of the Catholic National Association of Propagandists and was editor of the periodical El Debate. His niece is a nun in the Centre-South Province.

15 The term is taken from a study of the functions of the Communist Party in France and refers to the role of a particular group as popular leader or spokesperson.
the indirect effects they had on the action taken later by the nuns. The first was the increasing political involvement of the two workers’ groups tolerated under the auspices of Catholic Action - itself one of the groups specifically recognized under the terms of the Concordat (1953:Art.34). These groups were the HOAC (Hermandades Obreras de Acción Católica, the Workers’ Brotherhoods of Catholic Actions), and its youth branch, JOC (Juventud Obrera Católica, Young Catholic Workers). These groups were not initially radical, but their involvement in workers’ problems and their pressure to have these recognized forced the hierarchy to be aware of the situation and to take a position at some variance with, though rarely in real opposition to, the Government - to play, indeed, the so-called tribunical role. In view of the findings of a survey carried out by HOAC in 1957 of 15,491 workers in different industries, it would have been difficult to take their pastoral responsibilities seriously and do otherwise (see Table 7-4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious practices</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Openly anticlerical</td>
<td>89.6</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children baptized, and Church wedding &amp; burial</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uninterested</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antireligious (self-declared)</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observance of Easter duties</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasional practices (funerals, weddings, etc.)</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance at Sunday Mass</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>92.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7-4: Survey of religious practices and attitudes of workers, 1957. (Based on Ruiz Rico 1975:211.)

Moreover, HOAC provided the necessary shelter from which the far more radical - and illegal - Workers’ Commissions (CCOO) were to emerge.

The second movement, whose importance also lies in its role of providing the possibility of legal meetings, was related to the Law of Religious Association. Under a new law of 1964, limited right of association was granted to religious groups (Castells 1973:487). It was this law that enabled sympathetic priests to make Church premises available to groups for meetings without enquiring too closely as to their status under the law.16 That the numbers of such priests was growing is indicated by

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16 Interview with the founder of the Neighbourhood Associations movement in Granada.
an increasing dissociation among many of the clergy from the public political alignment of the Church, a dissociation that could lead them to talk in 1961, on the anniversary of Franco’s uprising, of the ‘18th July, a day not of the National Movement but of National Reconciliation’ (Ruiz Rico 1975:222-23).

The ground was not therefore entirely unprepared for the advent of Vatican II, although it would be unwarranted to suggest that the preparation was anything more than minimal, despite the cheerful declaration of one prelate on his return from Rome that ‘the Council was already being achieved in Spain’ (Ruiz Rico 1975:225).

How far from the truth was this optimistic assessment may be illustrated by comparing the results of the fourteenth Plenary Assembly of the hierarchy in February, 1971, with those of the Joint Assembly of bishops and secular priests in the same year. The lists are too long to be given in full here. A couple of points must suffice. It must also be taken into account that the disruption of the Republic and the Civil War is significant here in having caused a considerable age-gap between the clergy and the bishops. Very many of the clergy at this stage, particularly the secular clergy, were under forty; 61% of the bishops (the figure is for 1966) were over sixty, and another 36.6% over forty-five (Ruiz Rico 1975:225).

In the Plenary Assembly of Bishops, there was almost unanimous agreement (only two dissensions) with the system of naming of bishops, and more than half accepted the statement in the Concordat of the confessionality of the State. The Joint Assembly, on the contrary, claiming for itself in practice equal right to interpretation, requested the suppression of all forms of civic-political discrimination based on religious belief, and the elimination of all Government intervention in the naming of bishops (Ruiz Rico 1975:228-40). The much greater preparedness of the Joint Assembly to confront the realities of the times clearly reflects the intervention of the clergy, and the extent to which they had already moved from underneath the hierarchical umbrella. A move towards increasingly public engagement in protest actions, such as that in Barcelona in May, 1966, when 130 priests and religious marched in silent protest against police maltreatment of a student (FOESSA 1975:536) also demonstrated this independence.

The beginnings of moves towards greater freedom and independence for the Church, then, must be sought at this level, with the hierarchy to a large extent being forced to accommodate such pressures. This process was made somewhat easier as older bishops were replaced. After the Council, Pope Paul VI moved quickly to retire the twenty-two bishops who were over 75 (González-Carvajal 1984:305) and appointed their successors as auxiliary bishops rather than titular appointments to their various sees. This meant an important change in the composition of the new
Episcopal Conference, in that the new bishops did not have to undergo the test of Government approval. In the seven years from 1966 to 1971, the percentage of bishops over sixty dropped from 61% to 40.6%, and that of those under forty-five rose from a modest 3.4% to 12.7% (Ruiz Rico 1975:225-26). At the same time, impressive public action was taken by such key figures in the Church and in the hierarchy as the Abbot of Montserrat, Dom Aureli Escarré, who had to pay for his outspokenness by exile in 1965 (de Blaye 1976:243-44); the Basque bishops, particularly the Bishop of Bilbao, Antonio Añoveros, who consistently opposed the regime over its repressive policies towards the Basques (Carr 1983:737); and the man who not only presided over a reorientation of the Church after Vatican II, but perhaps did most to distance the Church officially from Francoism and therefore to promote a smooth transition to democracy after Franco's death, Vicente Enrique y Tarancón.

In the light of these developments, the death of Franco in 1975 marked no major shift in Church-State relations. Rather, it opened the way, in the wake of the re-establishment of a democratic system of government, to the replacement of the 1953 Concordat with five Agreements (the Acuerdos of 1976 and 1979) much more closely attuned to the situation both of post-Franco Spain and a post-conciliar Church. The Church surrendered virtually all former privileges, retaining only certain financial rights, and the Government ceded control over the naming of bishops. This new spirit of separation but mutual goodwill was rather quaintly illustrated by a change that was really quite peripheral to the major concerns of both Church and State, though certainly not to those of the general population of Spaniards. From a decree that

the State shall have for holidays the days established as such by the Church... The civil authorities, national as well as local, shall protect the due observance of rest on the holidays (Concordat 1953:Art.5),

the Acuerdo of 3rd January, 1979, indicates that

The State recognizes as holidays every Sunday. By common agreement it shall be determined that other religious festivals are recognized as holidays (Art.3).

The Spanish Church thus accepted the secular character of government and, with it, a transformation in its official status in Spanish society. Further, with a renewed liturgical stress on the centrality of key theological feasts such as Easter and Pentecost, the Church had clearly dissociated itself from the popular symbolic system in which even secular life had revolved around the main holidays of 'Holy Thursday,
The Ascension, and Corpus'.

These developments in both Church and Spanish society form the essential and total context that shaped the ways in which the nuns of the Centre-South Province began to work out their own interpretations and practices after the General Chapters of 1967 and 1970. The initial impetus for change and its essential legitimizing came from the Second Vatican Council, and was mediated for the nuns by their membership in the international body of the Society of the Sacred Heart. Their own expression of changing understandings and action was very much a product of their situation within the Spanish social formation and their response to its changing relations. This was particularly so in view of the decentralization of government in the Society after 1967, with greater powers delegated to the local Provincial. Nevertheless, the international dimension of their experience remained crucial, and the effects of the nuns’ membership not only in the Society as a whole but in the larger and more powerful body of the Roman Church remained an essential counterpoint to their reshaping of their own understandings and, through that process, the reconstruction of themselves as agents.

17 Ascension Thursday, and the devotional feast of Corpus Christi, centred on the Host and dedicated to the belief in the real presence of Jesus in the eucharist.
CHAPTER 8
From Symbolic Order to Social Action: Taking Control of Interpretation

Developments in the Centre-South Province after 1967 fall very clearly into three periods. The first, from 1967-70, was the time of ideas, a time in which the nuns began slowly to realize some of the implications of what had been said in the Vatican Council and in the 1967 Chapter. At the same time - together with a sense of excitement generated by the new ideas, and despite the reluctant attitude taken by many Superiors - the often timid experiences related to the ending of the rule of enclosure started to make their impact. This process culminated for the Society as a whole in the General Chapter of 1970, the Chapter that marks the beginning of the second period, from 1970 to 1976.

It was in the wake of the 1970 Chapter that change was effected by the nuns in action. As they accepted the Vatican Council's theological reinterpretation of the concept of 'the world', they became aware also of the broader implications of this transformation. Many of the aspects of their attitudes and selfhood that had previously been defined as 'bad', and therefore to be repressed or eradicated, were now recognized as 'good', even as important for physical and mental health. The result was a movement by various groups in the Province to live 'in' the world as they worked out the meaning of these new definitions. This was a period of a veritable explosion of activities on the part of many of the women, of new initiatives, of involvement in social and political action, of a new practical realization of the implications of their option for chastity. It was the period that radically confronted the bases of interpretation and practice that had subverted the dynamic of this option and had promoted the nuns' misrecognition, through the controlling domination of the symbolic order, of the social relations within which they acted. In coming to acknowledge the arbitrary character of historical events, something that they did
quite explicitly in the 1967 General Chapter, \(^1\) many - not all - of the members of the Province chose to give meaning to their religious commitment in terms of an historical interpretation based on ‘the complexity of human acts’ (Barthes 1972:143), rather than of a mythical or symbolic interpretation that attempted to reduce this complexity to ‘the simplicity of essences’ (143).

The effects of this choice were to rock the very structures and ideological representations that had defined the nuns' religious commitment in the institution. The period after 1970, therefore, was also a period of rupture, of passionate commitment to change, and of conflict and confrontation. It was a period in which the comprehensive control previously exercised both directly, and without effort or stress, by those in government in the Society itself, and indirectly, through the invocation of the symbolic order by those in power in the Church, began to collapse. The third period of development is therefore that of the realization, implicit or otherwise, of the implications of direct action. It started with the alarm that those in authority began to feel very early after 1970, but was most clearly expressed in the General Chapter of 1976. This period dates from 1976, and is designated by many members of the Centre-South Province as a period of *involution*, a word that describes an official reaffirmation of the symbolic order as the principal context within which meaning was to be derived, and of obedience as its key to practice. With this official withdrawal - partial but definite - to symbolic interpretation, the nuns of the Province were again confronted with the practical effects of their subordinate position within the Church. Nevertheless, their own shifts in relation to other groups within the Church and in Spanish society after 1967, as well as the increasingly concrete expression in new practices of new definitions of themselves and their role, had altered for many of them the terms of this subordination. There has been, therefore, considerable resistance among many groups to attempts in the Province to reassert symbolic interpretation, a resistance based in the first instance on the displacement of this kind of interpretation in the General Chapter of 1967.

\(^{1}\)The Orientaciones state:

The Society, like the Church, lives in history. It does not wish, cannot renew itself according to rigid and uniform schemas that have been drawn up beforehand. For this reason, the Chapter has not tried to lay down definitions but to make us live, through our human and religious experience, those realities, always old and always new, contained in the charisma of the Foundress (1967:11).
Change in symbolic interpretation, 1967

The positive valuation of 'the world' that came from Vatican II and a sense of openness to history were fundamental to the Orientaciones ad experimentum that were issued by the General Chapter of 1967. This was indicated by the Superior General of the Society in her opening address to the delegates:

We must do what the Church did in the Council: an examination of what it is fundamentally in itself, and also what it ought to be in the world today...

In its tasks, the Church has never lost sight of the historic context within which it has to work out its own evolution...

Here we have the way laid out for our special Chapter...

The world...is not only in evolution, but almost in revolution. Our aim is not to fight against this current, that would be in vain; we cannot change the course of history; but we must seek how the Society can pursue its apostolic work, without ceasing to be itself, without deviating from the mission that the Church has entrusted to it from its beginning (Orientaciones 1967:4-5).

It was in this spirit, and with this fundamental change in orientation, that the Chapter developed a whole new discourse. Though some of the words remained the same as those of traditional religious life, their context and interpretation were profoundly altered. The most important of these in terms of subsequent practice were precisely those that rejected the symbolic structures which had acted to distance religious from the world, and had made them experience history always at some remove - a Chinese box effect. Central to this had been the vow of obedience - and central to the Chapter's deliberations was a, partially implicit, recognition of the fundamentally distorting power of this vow. Perhaps the principal generative change introduced in the Orientaciones was an attempt to resituate obedience within newly defined structures of government. These were summed up in the document in words that were presented as the norms of government and that came to be regarded by many members of the Province as magical: subsidiarity, decentralization, participation, and co-responsibility (1967:18-21). With them came the concepts of dialogue, and 'a responsible and active obedience' (19). Also dynamic was a recognition of 'the charisma of each member of the community' (20; emphasis mine). No longer was the sense of individuality to be lost in an unquestioning submission to authority. Each person was seen as bringing her own special gifts to the community, and these were to be recognized and cherished by all, including authority.

Authority remained, but it was to be an authority of service, exercised not hierarchically but in community, which was seen to be central to a renewed religious life.

Other changes initiated by the Chapter that resulted in fundamental changes in
practice by the nuns were the definitive lifting of enclosure; the broadening of the concept of the Society’s educative role, and with it a call to make the Society respond to genuine ‘needs’, especially as these were defined in the context of social justice; a fundamental reorganization of finance; a recognition of the need for flexibility and personal responsibility in the use of time; a comprehension of the importance of free access to information at all levels; and a very hesitant broaching of the question of the possibility of further minor changes in the habit (the most radical envisaged by the Orientaciones was a change of colour, for example to grey in Japan).

The response to all this by the then Madrid Provincial was quite different from that of the Cardinal who returned to Spain from the Council with the satisfied response that everything had been already achieved. At the first meeting with her council on her return from Rome, her account of the results of the Chapter began with the portentous words, ‘Things are probably going to change a great deal, much more than we thought,’ and startled her councillors. It was an intimation of the effects of access to information. As one of the councillors remembered, ‘When they used to come back from Chapters, they used to tell us more ridiculous things than you can imagine - four and a half bits of nonsense (cuatro bobadas y media).’ There was a marked contrast, for example, with the Chapter of 1964 only three years earlier, when, as another member of the Province expressed it in talking to this former councillor,

‘they spoke of the union [of choir nuns and lay Sisters], of poverty, it was when they suppressed enclosure. But the Vicars returned in total silence (calladas, calladas). Here, we knew nothing of all this. Not even you, and you had more status than we did.’

The extent of the suppression of information was illustrated by the experience of a nun who had not been present at the 1964 Chapter. One of the Vicars on returning from Rome was killed in a car accident. Her replacement was named from the Vicariate that later became part of the Centre-South Province, and she received a letter from the Superior General, with a full account of what had passed in the Chapter. The details of this letter later passed into the general store of information in the Province, and were recounted by one of the nuns: ‘In the letter was stated: point one - there is no enclosure. Second point - but don’t give too much importance to this, so as not to lose the spirit of enclosure.’

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2 As, for example, when the composition of the bonnet had been changed in the 1950s.
3 It will be remembered that, before the 1964 Chapter, the Society was organized into Vicariates, not Provinces. The person in charge of local government, therefore, was known as a Vicar.
This lack of information, even in matters pertaining to the Society itself, had been particularly strong in Spain, as another member of the Province, who was in Rome from September 1966 to February 1967, remembers:

‘In Probation, everything was very peaceful. I remember - and this is very funny: [the Superior General] called us together and told us that she was going to give us as the name of our Probation: ‘Unity in love’, because in a moment when the Society was so divided - and I, I said to the person next to me, ‘Why is it divided?’ It’s just - we had no idea of, of - as we used to be in Spain, so closed. The generations of Spaniards (españolas), really, like champions of the faith - we knew nothing about trends, nothing about the Council - nothing at all. At least, we knew that there’d been a Council, certainly, but as for the documents - they’d come, but as there was no enthusiasm for anything new - well - we read them like a pious document and not like something that was going to change your life.’

This comment indicates that the situation in the Society in Spain by 1967 was not necessarily typical of the rest of the Congregation, and that pressures for change among other groups had, by this time, already emerged. The woman who was Superior General from 1967 to 1970, a Spaniard from the Northern Province, identified this pressure as coming particularly from the communities in North America, but as not confined to these groups. The fact that her predecessor, a Frenchwoman who was in office at the time of the Probation of ‘Unity in Love’, should designate these pressures as ‘divisions’ is an indication of their strength.

In Spain, however, the impact of the Civil War had been to freeze the attitudes of the nuns as of other groups in Spanish society, and to reinforce their position as ‘champions of the faith’. Their experience of change after 1967 was in a sense, therefore, the result of a double chronology: that which was affecting much of the rest of the world and was filtered to them through the main body of the Society, and that which confronted them in Spanish society - itself a late-comer to the full effects of industrial development - in the sixties and seventies. For these reasons, the implications of the Chapter of 1967 were slow in being felt in the Madrid province. As one person remembered, ‘Community life in 1967, for example, there was a new concept of community, but, obviously, the big communities continued, with the same number of people5 and so on.’

Nevertheless, the nuns now became subject to developments in Spanish society itself, and more so after the grudging lessening of censorship in 1966 (de Blaye 1976:232-33), and the daily appearance in the community room of a newspaper of

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4This time in Rome was for her Probation, a period of six months of reflexion made by all members of the Society before taking their final (perpetual) vows.
5This was often sixty or more.
even such limited views as the Catholic Ya, or the monarchist A.B.C., meant an availability of information such as the nuns had not experienced since entering the convent. There was even access to radio and television. Moreover, talking among members themselves was allowed, on a scale previously unthought of. With a more relaxed style of community living, this was possible between former choir nuns and coadjutrix Sisters as freely as it was amongst women who had been previously in the same categories. As well, people were required to work out and take responsibility for their own time table, and particularly their own times for prayer, even though this was still within a fairly structured community life. Further, questions of finance were raised and discussed, and the possibility of personal use of money, through an allocation of individual budgets. This, to begin with, was to be very much in a process of experimentation, so that members could relearn the value of money, and hence achieve a more realistic understanding of the meaning of their vow of poverty.

This was the period when the question of poverty itself became central to people’s concerns, as they struggled to reconcile a personal commitment to poverty with a life lived in enormous and often beautiful buildings which ensured that they lacked for no material things. Many became acutely aware of the discrepancy between the siting of their schools in affluent and predominantly urban areas when the critical social problems of the country were socially and geographically elsewhere. From these questionings came a search for means of expressing poverty more realistically, and with it a growing awareness of the distorting effects of the class differentiation that had marked the social relations of the Province, both internally and externally. From this recognition grew an awareness of the exigencies of social justice based on new and broader personal action, as one women recounted:

‘For me, my first spark was the summer [of 1967]. I read, and I remember it perfectly, imagine it, a journal...that the Jesuits published... I remember some articles on the religious life, and on involvement in social life (la inserción social) of religious life. That opened up new horizons for me. I went to the Superior - a woman who was very open for those times.. - and said that I wanted to spend a summer in social work(un verano social), to look for an experience of work. She said to me, ‘Very well. In the mornings, you can go to the kitchen, and in the afternoons, to the laundry.’ It was wonderful - because it made me understand the life of the Sisters. I realized what it was like - the whole morning in the kitchen and the afternoon in the laundry. On the first day in the laundry, when I arrived the whole room was covered in red water, and I said, ‘What’s this?’ They told me that the washing machine had broken down and all the water from washing the sanitary pads [of towelling] had come out. The first thing I had to do was clean it all up by hand.’

This came from the daughter of a wealthy businessman, whose mother had always got up early in the mornings so that she could be dressed, with her earrings and pearl necklace on, before her husband or children saw her.
Such an awakening to an understanding of the diversity of social experiences, and the extent to which such experiences were determined for individuals by their membership in a particular social class was fundamental to many women in the Province over this period. As some of the nuns began to become acquainted, for the first time, with the realities of poverty, there was opened up for them a new series of choices about their own relations with other groups in Spanish society and in the Church. The dimensions of these choices were only to become clear later on.

For other nuns, those recently emerged from the novitiate, the beginnings of change were experienced as the opportunity to advance their biblical and theological studies, an opportunity that, from 1967-69, brought them into contact with a group of priests whose ideas ‘opened us up tremendously’ (nos abrió una barbaridad). An older woman who was in charge of these studies lived through the same process and recalled: ‘We lived very much in these ideas, we weren’t living real life, of course, but the ideas in that moment [opened us] very much indeed. It was a moment in which our ideas needed to change, and we had that change.’ Symptomatic of the change as this woman saw it was the initiation into criticism.

‘That was when we began to criticize the hierarchy. I remember the first feeling, the first time - I still remember it, eh - when I heard a serious criticism of the hierarchy. It was just - I’d never heard a criticism. Listen,’ whispering, ‘I was forty-five years old, and I’d never heard a criticism of anything. And the first time that I saw, in a perfectly quiet way, a perfectly calm way, a criticism, based on the gospel, of the power of the Church - it was - I don’t know...’

For this woman, this was a first recognition of the effects of the relations of power in the Church itself on the processes of interpretation, and the extent to which she herself had accepted what was in fact a particular ideological representation (not her words but not unrepresentative of the way she later came to think). For her, the inception of critical thought was the beginning of a process of freeing her own interpretations from ideological representations derived from an acceptance of, in this instance, the hierarchical relations of power in the Church.

The years between the Chapters of 1967 and 1970, then, were the years of beginnings, of thinking about the possibilities and dimensions of change, with some modest essays into action. It was the Chapter of 1970 that allowed change to be clearly expressed in action.
The effects of action: 1970-76

The document produced by the Chapter of 1970 (Capítulo General 1970) developed the same themes as that of 1967. There were, however, important initiatives, principally the introduction of the concept of option. The Chapter of 1970 is remembered by most people in the Province as the Chapter of 'the five options', those aspects that emerged, after three years of questioning and mild experimentation, as definitive of the fundamental reality of the Society. Growing as they did out of practical needs and responsive action, they formed part of a developing discourse situated in, and defined by, a new historical interpretation by members of the Society. The five options developed by the delegates to the Chapter were: internationality; the educational mission as a service to the Church; solidarity with the poor; solidarity with the Third World; and a renewal of community life as an 'essential condition of the future of our religious life and an authentic response to the appeal of the Church and of the world' (Capítulo General 1970:12-16).

These five options provided the context for a formulation of the fundamental characteristics that were to define a renewed religious life. It is significant that, in its emphasis on practice and its search for new bases, the Chapter document excludes from the characteristics that it presents as fundamental any use of the traditional language, even the traditional names, of the three vows. By so doing, the delegates to the Chapter emphasized the need for the women in the Society to look for new meanings in their expression of religious commitment. Instead of talking of chastity, poverty, and obedience, therefore, the Chapter document sets out what the delegates saw as the 'fundamental lines' of religious life:

- a serious life of prayer, centred in the Eucharist and in the Word of God [the Old and New Testaments]...
- true interpersonal relations, concrete expression of a commitment of universal love in Christ; mutual acceptance and sincere pardon, in an atmosphere of friendship and joy;
- to share all that we are and have, in a style of life voluntarily simple, austere, and welcoming;
- search by the community of the Will of the Father, in total availability (disponibilidad), a search to be helped in simplicity by evangelic authority;
- an effort of discernment, that may open us deeply to the human values of this secular world in which Christ acts;
- concrete insertion into the human community in order to love and to serve better (Capítulo General 1970:17).

In this outline it is possible to recognize chastity, poverty, and obedience, but presented in such an open way as to invite members to make their own interpretations in the light of practical situations. Essential to this process as seen by the delegates was to be the 'effort of discernment', a new word that they saw as
summarizing a desirable openness of attitude by the nuns in all their basic relationships: with God, with the Church, with the world, with Superiors, with each other in community.

These new approaches in the Chapter of 1970 were to prove vital in their effects, and it is this Chapter in particular that, as a woman who became Provincial in the first year of its implementation expressed it,

'continues to be most studied, most read, most loved by us... It was when, in reality, we throbbed, we lived [the reality of the changes], with a great hope for community, a great hope to form small groups. The great changes - in life itself - have their roots in the Chapter of 1970.'

This 'great hope' to form small communities was the actual impulse to action, and it was the move to form small communities, with the associated friendships and simplicity and flexibility of living, that provided the essential context for all further developments. Entwined with it was the movement to find works that responded to more fundamental 'needs' than those that had led the Society to a 'certain identification with specific social classes' (Orientaciones 1967:16-17). One of the keys to developments in the Madrid province was the person appointed as Provincial after the Chapter. It was she who, during the first year (her only year in office), encouraged and facilitated the movement of groups out of traditional communities and into flats in barrios (city neighbourhoods).

The movement to form smaller communities actually started in the big convents, where the resident communities were first divided into smaller groups, each independent of the others except for such matters as meals, which were taken in common. But from 1971, some groups began to look for flats, as a means of creating a life more integrated with the general population, and therefore more in touch with practical issues. Some moves were functionally motivated, with the choice of area dictated more by matters of availability and price than by any other consideration. Others first identified a particular work, and chose a flat or other living quarters that enabled them to carry out the work. All the moves, however, were to areas where previously there had been a significant absence of religious personnel: the barrios populares (working-class neighbourhoods) of the cities, and the pueblos (villages) of rural areas. There was also a movement of people out of the Province's own schools, and into government schools or other areas of work, in response to the broader concept of education outlined by the 1967 Chapter:

As well as our centres of education and of primary and secondary schools, Teachers Colleges, and University Colleges, we have today 'other means in our power': teaching in parishes, slums (suburbios), the creation of catechetical centres, of orientation, of welcome; the direction of courses of
formation for adults, of children who are subnormal, or abandoned; visits to families, according to apostolic needs, holiday colonies; participation in missionary teams; in short, any type of education that may be needed (Orientaciones 1967:56).

Unlike earlier foundations, however, the continuity of flats and of new works has been to some extent fluid, dictated by changing needs - and the interpretation of this concept subsequently became a fundamental source of conflict - and availability of personnel. An outline of some of these developments indicates the extent of diversification in the Province. In 1967, a school was opened in Sevilla in a predominantly gypsy area (Torreblanca). In 1968, a community moved to an outer industrial area of Madrid (Torrejón de Ardoz, also an American base) to open a parish school at the invitation of the local parish priest. There were problems with the local council over this, although classes were begun after the General Law of Basic Education of 1970. These classes were held on the ground floor of a block in which the nuns lived on a floor above. In the same year, a Junior College (Colegio Menor) was opened in Santiago de Compostela as a residence for children coming to school from the villages of Galicia. In 1969, the former novitiate in Chamartín was turned into a residence for working girls. In 1970, another Junior College was opened, this time in Granada, again in a gypsy area (La Chana), as well as a residence (Colegio Mayor) in Santiago for University students.

In 1971, the actual move into flats began - Hortaleza in Madrid and Zaidín in Granada. A childcare centre - described by one person as 'so very, very poor' - was set up in Vigo, in Galicia, and another Junior College, with a primary school attached (Escuela-Hogar) in Priego, a village in the province of Córdoba. In 1972, a small group of four moved to one of the poorest areas in the Canary Islands, living in the pueblo of Castillo del Romeral in the south of the Great Canary island and teaching in the state school. In 1973, a group of three nuns joined a mixed community in San Sebastián in a boys’ reformatory. In 1975, the community from a University College (Colegio Mayor) in Madrid changed to Moratalaz, a barrio rojo (in the popular parlance, a red or Communist neighbourhood). And in 1976 and 1977, other communities rented or bought flats in Madrid. (Some of these will be looked at in detail in the next chapter.) By 1981-82, there were fifty-one communities in the Centre-South Province, made up of 505 members (see Table 8-1).

Many of the women in these communities continued to work in the Society’s already established schools; others moved to new institutions for which the Province

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6This very Spanish institution is used to provide opportunities for summer holidays for those groups that normally could not afford to go away.
Western Andalucía | Eastern Andalucía
---|---
Aracena | Granada
Huelva | Priego de Córdoba
Sevilla | Total
Total 9 | Total 7

Canary Islands | Galicia
---|---
Las Palmas | Pontevedra
Vecindario | La Coruña
Castillo | Santiago
del Romeral | Vigo
Puerto de Rosario | Total 6
Total 7 |

Madrid | Santa María de Huerta
Miraflores de la Sierra | (Soria)
| Coimbra (Portugal) | Total 2
Total 19 |
been most restricted in their previous experiences, it was a dazzlingly new opportunity and was seized with enthusiasm. For a number, the options that were opened up by their experiences of greater autonomy included the choice to leave the Society. For still others, there was apprehension and fear, and a rejection of change that directed them to look for affirmation and support in the structures and practices of the past. None of these groups, however, escaped the effects of the challenges, which were derived also from events in Spain itself and the access to information by the nuns after 1967.

These were the last restless years of Francoism, with strikes, student protests (especially strong as one nun experienced it after the 'revolutionary' year of 1968), the financial crash in 1969 of Matesa, a company with strong links to the influential Catholic organization Opus Dei. It was the time of the Burgos trial of 1970, in which sixteen activists, among them two priests, of the Basque militant organization, the E.T.A., were committed for trial before a military tribunal (de Blaye 1976:281-323). This was all part of the growing public opposition to the regime and all testified to the increasing legitimacy of such opposition within the newly emergent capitalist society. They were the turbulent years and their coincidence with the changes in the Congregation meant that, for some members, the form that their action took was political. The political action grew, however, out of commitment to social action, in the light of the five options of the 1970 Chapter, and to what individuals saw in their new understandings as the basic message of the gospels. The key word in the spoken, as opposed to written, discourse for people discussing this period is, in fact, evangelical.

The following accounts were given by women who made choices over this period that involved them very directly in realizing their own new understandings in practice. They indicate the importance for the nuns of their practical involvement in social action. They demonstrate also the more general principle of the essentially historical nature of interpretation and its dependence on the situation of individuals - in these cases the nuns - within the overall system of social relations. The women who recounted these histories were all radically affected by their active involvement with groups that ranked very low in the overall scale of power relations, and by their own direct experience of poverty. Their practical responses all had as much to do with restructuring their own understandings and resituating themselves within the system of social relations, both in Spanish society and in the Church, as with trying to achieve social change. It also had to do with taking control over their own lives in order to realize effective action for others. All these points are made clear in the women's own words.
The first account concerns work in a boys' reformatory in San Sebastián in 1973-74.

'A priest who knew our nuns in San Sebastián came to Madrid. He wanted to set up an educational experience, with a mixed community, to try rehabilitation of delinquents. [As I had a sabbatical year], I offered myself, if they would have me for just one year. And it was the most marvellous experience. The first year was extraordinary, because it was the birth of a - of something very united to poverty, or shall I say, very united to a tremendous lack of means. But with a community - I've never lived in a community with such vigour (fuerza) as that community. We were three - three nuns - one left afterwards, but fine, that was absolutely right for her. She fell in love there, she'd always felt very dissatisfied - and she fell in love with one of the Jesuits, and they got married. She's fine. The other one is still a nun, she's from the North.

So, there we were, and there were also three Jesuits, a seminarist, and an educator. We lived there, in a fairly large house on the outskirts, and we nuns had a little house in the garden - it used to be the garage - and cold - I've never experienced cold like that - and the most wonderful dirt. There weren't any cockroaches [which I can't bear], but there were mice, everywhere, in all the rooms. Mice don't worry me, and we had one that was practically part of the family. But they wouldn't let us sleep. They used to get among the papers [and make the most awful noise]...

The boys were in small groups of six. I had a group of the oldest ones, 15 and 16 year olds. As I could only stay a year, we thought it better for me to have the ones that would be leaving, to avoid emotional complications. One's in jail now in Madrid. They used to be terribly aggressive. They'd fight at dinner time, and there'd always be threats: 'I'll stick you with a fork, I'll stick your eye out with a fork.' Always threats. Then his brother came, with a glass eye: 'Look, my brother stuck my eye out.'

Another experience was in Granada, in the Residence for school girls (Colegio Menor) begun in 1970.

'I was in the university college, in Madrid.. There I started to become much more aware, much more critical. When I began in the college, I didn't like it at all, the girls seemed to me very bourgeois, and so on... I was also on the management team which I didn't like a bit. But of course, the university opened my mind a lot - we read a lot - it was before the 1970 Chapter, with all the preparation, and it was a time of such a lot of [activity] - and we were a group of students, thirty or so. We institutionalized a thing we called Journals (Revistas), on the pretext of commenting on journals, and articles - it was the moment for conspiracies. It was a wonderful time. I remember it, everyone remembers it, with enormous affection.

Anyway, after that, it made my hair stand on end to think that they might send me to one of our schools. I could already see that - no. So I talked to the Provincial. She told me that they were going to set up the first foundations that were to be made at the more popular level (de la gente más sencilla). They would be three junior colleges - that's girls from the villages, with scholarships, who come to go to high school and live in a residence. It's a wonderful work, because it's concerned above all with relation, not with teaching.

So I was sent to La Chana, to be Superior with a community that was
beginning. It was a most marvellous experience. I was only there for a year, working in the high school. We hadn't yet changed to secular clothes, but I had changed, and taught French in the high school.

We began with a very good group in community. We were eight, and lived very poorly. That really unites the community a lot. It was a new work, and we didn't have many resources. Everyone remembers it as a golden age.'

At the end of that year, this first Superior was replaced by another who also assessed her time very positively:

'I spent six years in La Chana, as Principal and Superior. It's a residence for girls from the villages - teaching them to live in a city without devaluing their origins. I handed over the administration of the college and the making of rules to the girls. They were divided into thirteen groups, with a religious to help them. But they really were responsible for running the college.

We also used to go to the jail - every Sunday, until three in the afternoon, with the wives of the prisoners - finding work for some, help for others.'

As well as involvement in particular works, a number of the nuns became actively involved in Neighbourhood Associations, the background to which was described by one of the men who was instrumental in setting up the Associations.7

'The Neighbourhood Associations grew up after the Law of Associations was passed in 1964. They began in parishes, a little sitting room for old men, with a T.V., or where they could play cards. The first ones were set up in Bilbao, and we got copies of the statutes here in Granada. The first childcare centres were set up by these Associations. But they became very politicized in the 70s. Because the political parties still hadn't been legalized, they used the Neighbourhood Associations as their platform.'

One of the nuns who worked closely with this man described her own experiences and impressions:

'The Neighbourhood Associations began precisely in order to change society - to make people aware (concientizar) of injustice. It's for that reason that I think a lot of the young nuns, the ones who were questioning, got involved in the Associations, because they were responding to the gospel. All the people working in the Associations were working for the same objectives. [I was living in the girls' residence in La Chana,] and I thought that to be a religious in a barrio either has meaning, or doesn't have meaning. If it's to have meaning, then it's only because you live the life of the people in the barrio. That's how I got involved in the Neighbourhood Association.

In theory the Associations had a certain legality, but in practice, no. The committee met every week, the Association every fortnight or so. They had to send the agenda beforehand to the governor, or the mayor, I don't remember, with the date, the place, the time - and they couldn't change

7He was later elected to the Senate as a Socialist representative in the first elections after Franco's death.
anything important afterwards. The police always came to supervise the meetings.

What the Associations tried to do was to improve the material and social conditions of the people. We began two childcare centres - one on another floor of the same building as the residence, and another. They were begun to help mothers who had to work. There are a lot of these, and there are a lot of gypsies in the barrio. We tried to help them by looking for work and getting them jobs.8

Perhaps the most dramatic initiative in these years was that in Castillo del Romeral, in the Canary Islands. It was described by one of those involved:

'In 1970-71, I was sent to Las Palmas. I had a year in the school, as a class teacher. In the first Holy Week, we went to a pueblo in the south of the island. Two of us went. We got involved in a shanty settlement, we were in one of the shanties (chabolas). For me, that was my major conversion. We stayed with a family, we had a room at the side, the roof was of that sort of paper - cartons, or paper of those bags of flour that has a very thick, strong paper. We had some mattresses, nothing else.

So there we were in Holy Week, in a shanty with some of the parents, we ate together, had dinner together, we spent time with the children, we prepared all the celebrations - they were wonderful days. Of course, there was no water, no toilets, no light, nothing. In the shanty we had nothing. And that really made me think a lot, really a lot - in actuality with how little it's possible to live. And those people, even within the exploitation to which they have to submit, when they have what is fundamental, that is, love, then they're happy... [The settlement] is only a quarter of an hour by road, 12 or 15 kilometres... from the hotels, the swimming pools, the lights. And I said to myself, We are educating the children of the exploiters. And that's impossible, it's a contradiction, it can't be... I used to be happy and very committed when we were in the schools, with those other children - we didn't know any other reality. But as soon as I went out of the convent - that great castle - and encountered another reality, knew another kind of necessity - it's an irreversible process... For me, what was fundamental was the Chapter of 1970....

So, from that Holy Week, everything had to change... We made enquiries, talked with people; [we found that in the Canaries in the south] there's a great lack of schools, there are hardly any; teachers don't want to go the the pueblos, they'd rather stay in the cities...9 So we began to organize our papers. Everyone told us we 'were mad... Even in the legal office (la

8That such help might not always have been accepted in the spirit in which it was offered is illustrated by a story told by this same person, who later left the Congregation but still lives in Granada.

'One day I saw one of the gypsies, one of the mothers from the childcare centre, begging at the door of the church. I asked her why she was begging, and she told me she had no money. I said, 'Come to my house. You can clean the things I never have time to do - the windows, and the curtains - and I'll pay you.' 'How much?' she said. 'A thousand pesetas,' I said. 'A thousand??!! I can get 3000 begging. And on top of it all, I'd have to work!' '

9It should be noted that this information had clearly never been taken into account by the nuns in the Province's schools in the Canaries, of which there are seven, despite their previous presence in the islands for over seventy years.
gestoria) they said to us: ‘What on earth are you getting involved in?’ It’s because the southern part of Las Palmas has the reputation of being very tough, very combatative, aggressive. ‘You’ll be living like - in a town of the wild west. With one gun to defend yourselves and the other to kill’...

Finally, then, we organized our papers... and went to that pueblo. There were official houses for the teachers, and there was an empty one, so we took that... There was nothing there - we had no doors, no windows... We did it all ourselves. The only thing we asked [from the Province] was money to buy a fridge, because without a fridge, as the heat is frightful all the year round, it’s impossible to live... [For chairs], we used old tomato cases. And that’s how we lived for a time...

We arrived, four of us, on 20th August, 1972... From the time that we arrived we saw that there were very few schools, the children were without schooling. We saw that it was necessary to ask for premises (locales); so we asked for premises. The following year, they named as Principal one of the others who had come with me, Ana. After that, there was 100% attendance at school. Ana used to go to all the tomato fields, rounding up the children, and to all the houses, with the Family Book,10 saying, ‘This one, and this one, and this one, should all be at school. Come on, to school’. ‘Aay, Señorita, it’s just that...’

Close by, there was a settlement that was linked to the pueblo, with really foul shanties, absolutely foul. There was no school there. They had to come into our school by public transport, even the very little ones. In the beginning, they let us use some old army huts, as a loan, but there came a moment when they said no. We had to ask for prefabs, those that they make in three months. Fine, very good, the local council would make them for us, no problem. Everything was fine, everyone happy. But it turned out that the council decided not to set them up in the settlement, but in Castillo itself. That meant - it was that the very little ones also had a right to go to school. Fine, so everyone came to the pueblo. We went to the bishop - not the present one, the previous one, who was useless. We got together all the small landholders, all the tomato growers, and said, What are we going to do? And of course, we were still in Franco’s time, so that meetings were illegal. But we made a lot of fuss to the Minister and to the Civil Governor, and to the mayor. But when the time came for school to begin - no prefabs. Right, we got together a big meeting, in the church in Castillo that’s the only place big enough, as well as the fact that it was possible to meet without danger, because it was a church. We called the mayor, asking for an explanation as to why they’d made the decision not to build the prefabs, without consultation with the people. In case he was engaged, we wrote a letter. Everyone was at the meeting, all the children - and, of course, the children surrounded by all the police that it was possible to see on the island. We called the mayor. We waited an hour, two hours. Since we were in the church, we read bits of the gospel, we prayed psalms, we sang... It wasn’t to try to sublimate the situation, but to see what, in this situation, Jesus would do. What were the rights that we had to defend? Without violence, without aggressiveness, but they are rights that belong to us. So, what should we do? Right, go and look for the mayor. But the parents said, As we don’t want violence, or to act by force, let’s wait here another hour. If he doesn’t come, we’ll cut the highway, the traffic on the highway. You can imagine it, the main tourist highway, in the tourist area. It was the parents who decided it: ‘Come what may, our children come first.’

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10 An official document in which all members of a family were registered.
Honestly, it made us tremble. These were new situations for us. Totally new. But obviously, just because you're a nun, you can't stay safely at home. If you're with the people, then you've got to go the whole way, no?, in every situation.

Right, everything was organized for the big march to the highway. We knew that the mayor would come then, obviously. So we had to organize it very well. We had to think who would be arrested - so first we were going to have the men on the outside, and the women and children in the middle, so they wouldn't be hurt. But then we thought, no, it's we who should protect the men, so they won't be arrested. So the women and children went on the outside - there were the people from three settlements there. We'd begun the meeting in the church at four o'clock, and waited till eight. The mayor lived about a quarter of an hour away. The mayor at that time was a man manipulated by the Count who owned all that part of the island.

So off we went to the highway, singing as we walked. We had to walk two and a bit kilometres, with the children as well. When we got to the highway, the police said, 'Please, break up this meeting.' Our spokespersons were Ana, one of the priests, and one of the parents. They said, 'No. We've come peacefully. What we want is to ask for a school. But we want the mayor to come. We think he ought to come, because we gave him plenty of warning. You must understand.' Of course, the Civil Guard, and the police - they said, 'And if the mayor takes a long time coming?' One of the parents said, 'We're not in a hurry. Let's sit down here.' So we began to sit down on the highway - and you can imagine it, with all the cars honking. When we were just about all sitting down - I don't know where from - the mayor appeared. He must have been waiting somewhere there, don't you think? To see just how far we were prepared to go.

So there he was. The highway branched off to another pueblo... that was on the land of the Count - that means that the people there couldn't marry without the Count's permission - and this is only ten years ago - they couldn't marry. Beside that road there's a church that belongs to the Count. So the mayor said: 'Very well, here I am. And it's night already. Why don't we go to the church?'... So we all went to the church. We were about 2000 people. Anyway, we went into the church, and the first thing that one of the parents said was: 'We want to talk to you. But please, what we don't want are the forces of public order. This is a matter between you and us. Be kind enough to leave - all the National Police, the Civil Guard, and the secret police.' Because of course, we didn't know which ones were secret police. But in the pueblo, everyone knows each other, and the school children were saying, 'This one doesn't belong to the pueblo, and this one.' So the children got rid of all those who didn't belong to the pueblo. It was perfectly plain that they were secret police - we could see the handcuffs in their pockets.

We closed the door, and there we were, with the mayor - and of course, it was all very emotional. We said, 'Señor mayor, we want to know why you're not going to make the prefabs. We want a date, and we want it within three months' - we gave him three months, because they can make prefabs in two and a half - and we want them in in pueblo.' 'Yes, yes, yes, yes, of course, of course, of course, of course. But obviously, I have to consult others.' 'You are the highest authority in the council, so you can agree. But let's have it in writing' - off they went to find a piece of paper...

- 'We want to ask, first, that they'll build the school in the pueblo; second, that there will be no repercussions in any of the families who are here, that there'll be no repression. And thirdly, that we can leave here peacefully to return to the pueblo. We have two and a half kilometres to go, and it's dark.'
'Yes, yes, yes, yes to everything.' And that's what happened, the mayor signed, the secretary signed - and the people, obviously, they knew that identity cards are very important, you always have to put your identity card number on everything - so they said to the mayor, 'Put your identity card number!' And that’s how things turned out. We left it like that and went. When we got to the pueblo - think of it, such a wonderful, beautiful thing - when we arrived at the pueblo, on both sides at the entrance to the pueblo, there were a crowd of people clapping us. They were the labourers who hadn’t been able to come with us...

The next day, we went to school, and on every corner we saw the Pair, secret police, watching us. We had police for a month in the pueblo.

We cut the highway on the 14th of January. In three months, we had the prefabs. And we celebrated it properly, I assure you.'

The aftermath of this incident, despite the (written) assurance of the mayor, was that two of the priests, and the school principal, Ana, were fined. The people of the pueblo took responsibility for paying the fines, and collected the whole amount, some 600,000 pesetas (then about 6,000 Australian dollars). The priests refused to pay the fine, but before all the due legal processes had been completed, Franco died (in November of the same year). The same woman narrated the dénouement of the incident:

'This was funny. The Civil Guard arrived in the pueblo, but didn’t know where we lived. They went to one of the houses and asked, ‘Where is the school principal?’ The woman answered, ‘That depends. If you’ve come to fine her, I won’t tell you where she is. You’ve got no right, after all she’s done for us, how she’s helped the children. Here we manage as best we can. So if it’s something bad...’ The police answered, ‘Calm down, calm down, señora. It’s good news.’ ‘Well, you tell it to me first.’'

These narratives all illustrate the extent to which those women in the Province who accepted change positively were prepared to go in taking control over their own lives and actions. They indicate also the extent to which this control was based on their preparedness to situate the interpretation of their basic religious commitment in a concrete response to specific social groups, and to test this interpretation in practice. These, however, were largely individual initiatives. What was perhaps an even more significant indicator of developments in the Province between 1970 and 1976 was what happened in the novitiate and hence with the formation of new members that is essential for the reproduction of the Congregation. This was recounted by one of the women who were involved in this process:

'I was in Granada when the Provincial rang me to ask if I would take charge of the novitiate... [When the changes began], no one knew what the novitiate should be. Everyone said to us: We know very well what it shouldn’t be, but not what it should be. From one point of view, then, I was very happy, because I love creating new things. They said to us in the 1970 Chapter: Do whatever you think best, and I thought that was marvellous...
There were eight novices. I went to meet [the other member of the formation team], and I remember, to her the most normal thing in the world was to live in the big school in Zaragoza, which was like Chamartín. The first day that I met her, she showed me over the school, and showed me the rooms where she said the novices would stay. Honestly, it made my hair stand on end when I saw those rooms. So as soon as we got to her room, I sat down and said to her: 'Pilar, before we begin, I have to say to you that the first thing that I have very clear is that we can't live here. I believe that formation comes from life, from people, from relations, and in this house, you have to go through seven doors and cross four gardens to get anywhere. For us, that's impossible'. [The Provincial] was on my side and gave me a lot of support.. The result was wonderful - there was a community that had begun to work in a barrio of Zaragoza, a very poor barrio, like, for example, the worst parts of Vallecas in Madrid, real slums. We'd started a school there, one of our own, and that community lived in one of the houses in the barrio. So we found a house there, one of theirs, it was an old school and we lived in pretty terrible conditions, but for that reason it was marvellous - it was called Valdefierro - it was a house where people came in and went out all day, there was a lot of life. The novices worked in catechetics in the parish and in the school.

We knew nothing of canonical years\textsuperscript{11} - in 1971, everything was Spring, everything was creativity. There was no one to impose any 'but'. Imagine it, we didn't even sign the document of their vows - we had to do it later... We just didn't give those things any importance. There was one year in the novitiate, very little - it was really only nine months. It seemed very little to us... So the first year, we got together all the young nuns of the province as well as the novices, we were about thirty or thirty-five. We went to the school in Pamplona - it was horrific. A frightful month and a half, stuck in a school, without knowing what to do there. I felt dreadful... So the next year, we changed the plan. For the next five or six years, we rented a house for the summer, for example an old seminary in the country, maybe a summer seminary like those they have in Soria, where the seminarists used to go but that's now empty, or in one of the summer holiday houses - we settled in there with all the young people. Obviously that was much better, everyone in jeans, everyone sharing the cooking, we went on outings. We had a plan, for example, one month, we'd have a retreat, then afterwards, different things - we spent one summer on Marxism, or studies of the gospels, different sorts of things that we planned, but at the same time, there was a level of living together, of outings.

Finally we went to Tiemblo, to a holiday house that we’d been given, and it seemed a bit to the Provincials that we were living like gypsies. And in a way, I suppose that was true. But I think it's very healthy; if at twenty whatever years you’re not capable of sleeping on a mattress on the floor, in a sleeping bag, then what sort of young people - but that didn’t go down very well with them... And we made decisions that they, above all the Provincials in the North, thought that they should have made... For example, [we left a lot of things to individuals to decide]. And that, for example, seemed very bad to the Provincials. They said that we had very little authority. And why not? When all’s said and done, I’ve got very

\textsuperscript{11}Canon Law laid down specific requirements for at least one year of formal training in the novitiate. The so-called canonical year had to be completed without interruption in the officially approved house of Novitiate. This official approval came from the Holy See. If the canonical year were interrupted, it had to be begun over again (Canons 553-55, Bouscaren & Ellis 1955:266).
little faith in formation, and I guess they noticed that. It seems to me that a canonical year is not formative by regulation. It’s life that forms you. And so that was - well, we come together because it’s obligatory and we do the best we can and try to reflect on what we’ve lived, to give ourselves some points of reference, but I’ve never felt like a person who wanted to give formation to anybody, and I’ve always had a big problem with spiritual direction. I don’t believe in spiritual direction - maybe it’s because I don’t know how to do it. I really only believe in relation. I really found it very difficult, those years of formation, because I can always tell when a novice came to talk to me because I’m the person responsible for formation (la formadora) - and something in my subconscious rejects her...

Anyway, by then everything was beginning to develop. They began to talk a lot about the Mistress of Novices, and I began the fight against the idea of the Mistress of Novices. We had a meeting in Rome in 1975, and I could see that things were already changing. They were talking even more of the Mistress of Novices, and that was another thing altogether. I fought a lot there, but I realized that there was no point... There was a Frenchwoman there, very structured, she’s now in charge of the Probation - we had great battles, we were the two who fought the most, but I realized that now there was a different option. She didn’t believe at all in working in a team, she talked always about there having to be a person with the final say, she was the Mistress of Novices... I was very amused, they presented us with plans of formation that were so complicated - all with circles, all coming and going, everything was regulated, everything was down on paper - the novices should go here and look after the old people and then come back to the novitiate and spend time there, and afterwards do a course with the Jesuits. As for me, I said, I’m incapable of doing all this - I haven’t prepared anything, I haven’t presented anything - I don’t know. It seems to me that every person is a world and that - the year of the novitiate is a lost year, for some people it’s useless, they’ve been formed by other things, an important experience, or something else altogether... We had one novice [who was experiencing a great crisis of faith]... How could I read texts of the Mother Foundress to someone who didn’t even know if she believed in God? It was impossible. And that case proves to me that life has got nothing to do with what is put down on paper. I have very little faith in papers.

This woman, like the others quoted, is one of a number of people in the Province who moved rapidly and creatively to reinterpret not only their own lives but their relations with others in the Province and in the broader society. There were others who found that their reinterpretations could no longer be expressed even in the more flexible structures of the altered communities. These were the women who left the Society over this period. As I had no access to the Provincial records, it is not possible to give exact figures concerning those who left, but present members agree that there were many.

This development certainly had much to do with the questioning and

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12 This was a phenomenon by no means confined to the Society in Spain. On the contrary, it was worldwide after the Vatican Council, and affected men’s as well as women’s Congregations. It was accompanied in all cases by a drop in the number of new recruits to religious orders and constitutes the so-called ‘crisis in vocations’ that has been experienced especially in developed countries.
reinterpreting of religious values encouraged by Vatican II. It was also undoubtedly tied up with the changes in Spanish society from the 1960s, changes that included both an expansion in opportunities for women and a displacement of the traditional legitimizing role of orthodox religion. Spain in the sixties finally incorporated secularism as an acceptable alternative. The plurality involved in this process made it easier for women to leave religious life. For those who chose to remain as members of the Province, the move to secularism was reflected in the extent to which the nuns chose to discard the religious habit.

Given the importance of the habit in the system of symbolic codes that had constituted their experience in traditional religious life, the nuns’ choice to reject the habit was obviously very significant. The Chapter of 1970 had only one reference to the religious habit, but the context was very important.

Discernment of the values of secularization

The phenomenon of secularization is a universal fact and a tendency of civilization that is manifested in various ways in different countries. It brings with it a progressive ‘desacralization’ of certain aspects of our life (house, habit) that at times have been confounded with the deep reality of religious life and that laid emphasis on separation from the world. Religious life must confront (asumir) this situation with clarity and loyalty. This demands the recognition of temporal values:

Work (or profession)
Leisure and relaxation: to know why we choose them and why we give them up
Dress as an expression of a person close to her brothers and sisters and who had made an evangelical option
Money: to know how to work out a budget and to use it with loyalty and generosity (Capítulo General 1970:28).

This was confronting the symbolic code with a vengeance. Its results in the Madrid province were, as has been indicated already, immediate. Some people changed without hesitation into secular dress. For others, the change was more gradual, beginning even before the Chapter, and grew out of the needs of actual situations, as one woman remembered:

'I changed from the habit at the beginning of the 70s. As part of a course, I went three years running to Valladolid for the film festival. The first year, we all wore the habit - there were about ten nuns. But to go to theatres in the city to see films, like Isadora Duncan, in the habit! We all agreed that we'd change it for the second year. And afterwards, in Madrid, where I was teaching in the school at Pío XII, I wore the habit to give classes - and then afterwards, straight away. I'd have to change it - everything, right down to underclothes, to go out. And trying to do something normal with your hair after it had been covered for a week - I didn't know in which situation I was in disguise (disfrazada) - in the habit or in secular dress.'

For others, the change was more spectacular. A teacher in one of the schools
remembers an occasion: 'I was at the university with [one of the nuns]. The day she and another nun arrived without the habit, everyone clapped.'

For many of the older nuns, the change was more difficult and slower. Some, particularly among those who remained in the convent communities, chose to continue wearing the habit, and this was generally understood and accepted. For one who did change when she was already in her late seventies, the gesture grew out of a respect for persons and a commitment to loving relationship that had never been removed from practical reality into the symbolic order: 'I didn't really want to change from the habit, but I thought that keeping it might look like a criticism of those who had, so I changed.'

This change from the habit, reinforcing the shifts in the attitudes and practices of the nuns which were already being effected by the move into smaller communities and flats, was probably one of the most significant of the developments that followed the 1970 Chapter. Related as the habit had been to the vow of chastity in its aspect of sexuality and the consequent need for that sexuality to be hidden and denied, the rejection of the habit by the nuns while maintaining their choice of chastity had clear implications for a reinterpretation of the meaning of this choice. As they themselves formulated it, the recognition and acceptance of their sexuality became for these women part of an ongoing active option to subordinate it to other freely chosen commitments.

At the same time, through their attempts after 1967 to reinterpret obedience and reaffirm chastity as the central feature of religious life, the nuns started in practice to realize some of the implications of their choice of chastity as control over their own lives. They began through their actions a process of rejection of the gender role constructed for them by their subordination in both the Church and Spanish society. This rejection was also a partial denial, at least in principle, of the asexuality that had been promoted by wearing the habit, and which, within the context of their traditional acceptance of their gender role, had acted precisely as the reverse side of their femininity. In other words, although feminine in the socially constructed meaning of the term, nuns were not to be available sexually, and this was the message to outsiders encoded in the habit. The habit therefore represented for the nuns a public self that defined them more in relation to the outside than necessarily to themselves. The rejection of the habit for many meant the elimination of a distinction between the public and the private self, and hence a rejection of what had for many been a false, or superimposed self.

Sexuality therefore became an issue for the nuns after 1967 in a way that had been avoided in their traditional convent life. For a number, though by no means all
of those who left the Congregation, their decision was specifically related to a desire to develop this sexuality. Many of those who stayed developed strategies to avoid the necessity of a continuous choice about whether they wished to be sexually available or not. Nevertheless, at the general level of daily life, sexuality for these women has remained subordinate to their experiences of autonomy, and the ability to make choices about their own clothes is very much a part of this. Keeping this in mind, it is an interesting aside that many of the nuns in Spain, when they changed into secular clothes also began again to wear earrings, that traditional Mediterranean symbol of femininity. So much a part of women’s dress is it in Spain, that many people did not even reflect on it. For at least one woman, ‘when I changed from the habit, the first gift that my family gave me was earrings.’ The fact that many of those wearing them are also among those who have been most active in effecting change in the Congregation would seem to indicate that the significance of even earrings can be removed from a particular symbolic code.

Part of this taking control by individuals of their own lives was also - and this will be seen to be central - the access to financial control. As part of the general changes in the Congregation, it was recognized that, implied in the question of taking work and professional competence seriously, was the matter of payment of salaries. Those working in institutions outside the Congregation were, of course, paid as ordinary employees. However, within the Congregation also the rationalization of resources, particularly when the schools began to receive a government subsidy after 1972, meant paying the religious as well as the secular staff. The result was the receipt of salaries by individuals. During the period of ‘experimentation’ and according to the guidelines indicated by the 1967 Chapter, two options were allowed in the Madrid Province. One was that all salaries were to go directly to the Province, and the Province would give back to each community what was needed. The latter was to be worked out in terms of community and individual budgets. The second option was for salaries to go directly to the community, and an agreed sum was handed over to the Province. Within both these schemes, individuals worked out a personal monthly budget, on the basis of such personal needs as clothing, transport, and toiletries, and were allocated this money to dispose of as they saw fit. Money in this scheme became negotiable, with an emphasis very much on decisions being made by the community as a group in response to their actual living situations. Practical

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13 This is not to say that the question of the appropriateness of wearing earrings has not been raised. It has, in fact, become a mildly contentious issue, with a number of those in positions of authority at the Provincial as well as the international level seeing it in terms of the vow of poverty.
questions were posed to which practical answers had to be given. As a means of involvement in the world, this question of finance was a fundamentally anchoring element. Indeed, it was as much on the question of who exercised ultimate control over disposing of money as on other concerns that the great experiment of the post 1967 and 1970 Chapters began to founder in the Centre-South Province. We have already seen that, by 1975, a reaction against the freedom offered to the novices in Spain was making itself felt, and a reassertion of control through the invocation of specific ideological representations was beginning. In other areas too, the shock sustained by the institution and individuals as a result of the proliferation of challenges and activities caused the voice of caution to emerge more strongly. What it all added up to was a growing realization of the implications for the expression of religious commitment as defined by the institution of an unqualified involvement in external social practices, where the nuns' actions were a response to practical events and not controlled by ideological interpretation. There were a number of clear areas where the threat posed by an attempted incorporation of the reality of individual charisma was felt in both Province and Society, and these areas may now be identified.

Charisma and institution: the threat to structures

In looking at the matters of greatest conflict in the Madrid Province it is possible to identify the areas of most immediate threat to the Society as an institution at both the Provincial and the international levels. It is in this process that the ambivalences that remained after 1967 and 1970 - between historical interpretation and symbolic interpretation, and between action and structure - become clear. In dealing with them, I will be to some extent anticipating developments that occurred after the Chapter of 1976, but they all derive from the pre-1976 period, and from the time of sanctioned experimentation, and therefore fit logically here.

There are at least five principal areas, and fundamental to them all is - again - the question of obedience. The first concerns the role of authority in the Congregation. Secondly, there are the direct risks to the institution posed by the style of living represented by the flats and by relations with families. Associated with this aspect is the question of financial and symbolic control, and of the threat constituted by the alignment of individuals and groups with other groups in the Church and in society, through their practical realization of poverty. Thirdly, there is the experience of confrontation with the Church as institution, a confrontation based on the challenge offered by the nuns to the prevailing relations of power. This
is related to the fourth area, that of being women in a patriarchal and hierarchical Church, and the fifth, the question of practical openness to the world, and the conflict that has resulted for the nuns between the call to service of the Church and that of service to the world. All five are inextricably interrelated.

The question of authority, and its relation to obedience, was, as we have seen, central to the concerns of both the 1967 and the 1970 Chapters. The need to transform this fundamentally structuring principle of religious life was recognized by the nuns, and the importance of the attempts that were made to do so can be assessed by the restructuring in practice that resulted. The question of 'responsible' obedience, of dialogue, of the centrality of community and of the role of the Superior as service to the community - all these were crucial changes in concepts. Further, the sharing of authority and of the possibility of choosing the Superior by elections removed from the person of the Superior the mystique of divine choice and hence of any direct and unequivocal representation of the divine will. There was also an important shift of emphasis in the documents from the question of 'vocation', of being called and chosen as spouse, to that of 'mission', based on a personal choice that involved being sent to fulfil a specific task. Even the use of the word 'called' itself occurred throughout both documents as a call to action, at the level either of group or - and very importantly - of individual. Prayer and contemplation were seen as fundamental, but within the context of service. The decentralization of authority from the central administration in Rome meant a much greater sharing of responsibility at the Provincial level, and this was manifested in the use of teams at all levels of planning and administration.

Nevertheless, the principal structures of authority, though altered, remained, maintaining contradictions and leaving open the possibility of an ultimate reliance on the invocation of a mystified (symbolized) obedience. The Chapter of 1967, for example, after setting out the principles of subsidiarity, decentralization, and participation, later - in the section on obedience - went on to quote Pedro Arrupe, the Superior General of the Jesuits:

But if one examines this modality, there is no room at all for collective government as such; it is solely an attempt to introduce a form by which the community and the Superior jointly, uniting their energies, seek the will of God; for the Holy Spirit manifests this through the Superior, the subjects and also through external circumstances and elements. We are not dealing with an authority diluted in collectivity, but of a real and positive help that the collectivity gives to the Superior with her dynamic and spiritual collaboration, in order that she may wisely fulfil her mission of governing the community for the greater service of God (Orientaciones 1967:50).

This mystification of authority and obedience is less far removed from the
traditional symbolic system than other sections of the document might lead one to think. Dialogue itself was explained in the same terms:

Dialogue, so understood and practised, will develop an ‘active and responsible obedience’: that of the Superior who, docile to the Holy Spirit, ‘takes the final decision’ in the light of a ‘discreet charity’; that of the religious who identifies herself with Jesus Christ, obedient unto death, death on the cross.

Thus, Superior and religious, overcoming a merely functional obedience, commune (comulgar) in this mystery of obedience that is a mystery of love (Orientaciones 1967:51).

In dealing thus with the role of the Superior at the level of the local community, the 1967 Chapter was clearly, and understandably, still influenced by the discourse of traditional religious life. Three years later, after the period of experimentation, the Chapter of 1970 emerged from the language of mystification and of hierarchy. Where the 1967 Chapter began its discussion of the norms of government with a revision of structures, that of 1970 concentrated on relation, and hence on community. At the local level of government it was to be first the individual, then the community - itself simply the individual members as a group - who is responsible, not for ‘finding the will of God’, but for making concrete an activity derived from the gospel and from social reality. The ‘Superior’ no longer existed - simply a person with responsibility (la Responsable), who does not ‘govern’ but who ‘represents’ the group of her community. There were some residual powers, but these remained firmly related to the situation of the community. This was all set out in the document itself:

*The religious of the Sacred Heart, as a member of the local community,* has the responsibility
to contribute to the communion of each group
to develop her capacities for the common good and in order to give a better service
to participate in the taking of group decisions and to take on (asumir) these decisions.

*The Community* is a project for life in common that is realized each day in prayer and in interpersonal relation. United in charity, it will tend towards the same apostolic end. For this, the religious as a group are responsible:
to choose their own style of life in agreement with the Province and in pursuit of (en función de) their apostolate
to create a climate of freedom and mutual trust that favours the complete development of all
to identify (discernir) the activities in which each one can witness to her religious convictions
to evaluate their apostolic community life and their experiments in the light of the Gospel and of the social situation
to take decisions that refer to the group.

*The Person Responsible* represents the Community, assures a deep spiritual stimulus to her sisters, unifies the diverse tendencies, demands and different aspects of community life. There are cases in which she will have to decide for herself:
when a 'consensus' is not achieved
when discretion demands that she personally takes a decision in order to reconcile the individual and the common good
and also when it concerns the wellbeing of a particular person (Capítulo General 1970:35-36).

The concept of power that derived from the relation to military and feudal systems, and that traditionally inhered in the role - and person - of the Superior, had gone from the 1970 Chapter. Indeed, the document spoke of small communities ‘with a person Responsible or without her’ (36; emphasis mine). Only at the level of Provincial and Superior General does the document refer to ‘government’ - and for both of them it stated that she ‘governs with a team’ (37-41).

Nevertheless, the very structures of government, and - crucially - their situation within the relations of power of the Church, dictated the maintenance in practice of a relationship of power and subordination within the Society itself that relied ultimately on obedience, and was a far cry from the intentions of the 1970 Chapter. What this Chapter had done, however, was to transfer power from the local Superior or person Responsible to the Provincial. With the concurrent decentralization of power from Rome, this meant that almost all significant power became concentrated at the Provincial level, a factor that allowed for much greater idiosyncratic developments in particular Provinces than had been possible previously. This gave much greater emphasis, within the structures maintained by the Society as a whole, to particular national or Provincial situations. This factor has been, as we will see in Chapter 9, critical for the Centre-South Province. The role of the Provincial and central administration in this scheme was envisaged within the option for the Society of internationality. Its role was to maintain communication and a fundamental unity in the diversity.

The implications of the transfer of this power to the Provincial level became clear even very soon after the Chapter. The Superiors Vicar had always played a central role, and had organized their Vicariates by whatever they saw as a necessary movement of personnel. This was generally done in consultation with local Superiors, after which people were informed of their move, or, in the traditional and very significant expression, ‘given their obedience’. The new element introduced into this arrangement by the 1970 Chapter was the unavoidable tension between this continuing system of administration and the concept of dialogue. It was precisely this tension that the first Provincial to be named for the Madrid Province after the Chapter found it impossible to sustain. As she explained:

'After a year, I couldn't go on. I couldn't because, for example, for me, giving what we used to call an obedience is something so contrary to my
way of looking at things, so contrary to my own conscience, that, frankly, I had a very bad time in this. The work itself I enjoyed – making plans, organizing projects – but the point of obedience has always been for me a point that, in this day and age, I don’t see as many people see it. I don’t see why, because you’re the Provincial, you can say to me, ‘Listen, leave this place and go to that.’ I see it in dialogue and it’s neither you nor I, but together that we seek what God wants.’

Another person who found involvement in the structures of government alien to her own developing understanding and practice was the woman who had been in charge of the novices. In 1974-75 she spent eight months on the Provincial team. At the end of that time - a term is normally three to six years - ‘I resigned. The only thing that I got out of all those meetings was that I knitted a jumper.’

These two women, one of the Civil War generation, the other post-War, were officially at that stage in a position to assume or to reject the implications of government. Others felt its effects more categorically. One person who chose finally to leave the Congregation was working in the barrio of Zaidín in Granada.

‘I’d just spent a year there – and they told me that I had to move to Galicia or to Sevilla. I told [the Provincial] that I didn’t want to – that I’d only go if they sent me a letter, obliging me to go for obedience. But by the time the letter arrived, I’d already decided that there are more important things in life than obedience. I have to be in charge of my life (ser protagonista), my only life.’

This statement is one of the clearest indications of the contradiction for members of the Province between obedience and the option for autonomy implied by chastity. What was at stake for this woman was not sexuality, but an understanding of the meaning of her religious commitment that she felt was trivialized by being subordinated to obedience. Her act of leaving was for her an affirmation of this understanding in the light of what she saw as an attempt by those in authority - this was after the 1976 General Chapter - to subvert it.

Other women, too, were changed to different places in a manner that was not necessarily arbitrary, and that may well have been an attempt to respond to the 1970 Chapter’s directive ‘to reconcile the individual with the common good’. Nevertheless, the system of authority acted - and was empowered to act - in a way that often, instead of reconciling, in practice subordinated the individual to a perceived common good.

The link is clear between this element and the second one that I identified as constituting a basic challenge to the Society. For those in positions of responsibility within the institution, the risks to that institution posed by an accelerating diversity were serious. As the dimensions of this form the heart of the next chapter, I will do
no more here than mention again the principal elements: the question of living in flats; the relations of people with their families; and the matter of financial control and of the interpretation of poverty and the shift in social relations that it implied. All of these aspects can be directly related to the response of individuals to the directions indicated by the 1967 and 1970 Chapters, and all can be interpreted in terms of the recognition by both Chapters, especially that of 1970, of the centrality of the individual’s personal ‘call’ to a particular apostolic task - in other words, of personal charisma. The question of the charisma proper to the whole Congregation was, however, also envisaged by both Chapters, and it is precisely at this point that, just as individuals within the Province have come into conflict with their own government, so the Society as a whole has experienced confrontation with the Church as institution.

Because of the internationality of the Congregation, communities do not come directly under diocesan jurisdiction. The essential conflict, then, has been experienced in Rome, and a gauge of the extent of alarm felt in the Church’s organization by developments in the Society was provided in 1982. In that year, the General Chapter was called to finalize the new Constitutions of the Society that had been required by the Vatican Council. Such Constitutions have then to be submitted to the Sacred Congregation for Religious if the Congregation is to continue as a juridically constituted apostolic body. The delegates to the Chapter met knowing that the Sacred Congregation would not ratify the Constitutions if they did not contain explicit provisions concerning specific matters such as the habit, a local Superior for each community, and at least one formal hour of daily prayer.

When the delegates arrived in Rome they found that, for the first time in the recent history of female religious orders, an observer had been appointed by the Sacred Congregation. In fact, there were two, both priests. The first lasted only a matter of days, and aroused such hostility among the nuns that he voluntarily left and was replaced. The second proved a happier choice, and, as the Chapter progressed, became a friend for many. Nevertheless the delegates were fully aware, as one of the from the Centre-South Province expressed it, that

‘this was a very significant matter (gordisima.) It was as much as to say that the Sacred Congregation had thought: They’re not sufficiently mature to form new Constitutions, they don’t have enough [true] spirit. We must supervise them...

Honestly, they really hate us terribly (a muerte)... As we say in Spain, they have us already judged. I think that because we were among the first who perhaps broke many things, that created an appalling image (imagen nefasta) of us in the Sacred Congregation - terrible, frightful. The priest who did come [to the Chapter] finally told us, after we’d become friends - in
fact he turned out to be a really good and delightful person - he confessed that, of course, he’d come with an idea of us, that we were - that we had no spirit, that religious life didn’t matter to us at all, that we never prayed. That’s the idea that they have of us. So of course he was very surprised when he saw that we prayed, that we had spirit, that we had very good warm and fraternal relations amongst ourselves; when he saw that we respected each other very much, saw the cultural level - these things left him very impressed.

But of course - [and this is the critical point] - I think that many of the things that weren’t discussed or that were accepted was with the understanding that we were in grave danger of dissolution.

That’s to say, that the Sacred Congregation - I don’t know if the Church would actually dare to do it, but certainly, that they wouldn’t approve the Constitutions, or that they’d do to us, for example, what they did to the Jesuits - impose on us a Superior General - I don’t know, something dreadful - someone from Florence! Or something like that - appalling. This was a condition that had enormous influence - including the groups who’d arrived at the Chapter with a more critical attitude, from Latin America, for example. When they saw the situation, its effect was to make them say: Look out, we’re at a very important point here, this is more serious than we thought, we can’t make judgements... Mind you, it united us very much - so that there was a kind of consensus not to create problems that were not, at bottom, fundamental, and in exchange, to leave the doors open. That’s to say, let’s pass all those things that we wouldn’t have passed in another moment, that we would have done battle over, but, given the gravity of the situation, that they’ve sent an observer, [we’ll hold back].'

As is more than plain from this account, the effect of confrontation between the Society, with its own charisma, and the Church as institution, was to force the members of the former into an acceptance of their subordinate relation vis-à-vis the official Church in order to survive. For the women in the Society of the Sacred Heart in 1982, this subordination, despite various shifts that the nuns themselves had made, still rested primarily on their lack of negotiating position within relations of power in the Church that remain essentially hierarchical and patriarchal. The radical effects of this position of subordination may be gauged when it is remembered that, in their developments since 1967, the women of the Society had not attempted to assert control over any other groups but only over themselves. This had led them to a realignment with other groups in the Church, particularly on the bases of claiming some right to interpretation and of poverty, and these were certainly factors in the confrontation with the Vatican. Ultimately, however, the power of the Vatican for the nuns rested less on its hierarchical than on its patriarchal interpretation of power,

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14I am not suggesting that only women have suffered in terms of the relations of power in the Church. Men’s orders also, especially the Jesuits, have suffered the ire of Rome. Nevertheless, men, because of the possibility of becoming part of the hierarchical Church, are in general in a better negotiating position than women. They are therefore better equipped to engage in resistance as a group. This may, of course, not be true of individuals.
and it was this that led to its official intolerance of the challenge presented by developments in the Society. The dimensions and destructive effects of this confrontation for individuals was apparent in those who had been involved in the central government of the Society after 1970. Many of the members of the General Council over this period had been ill, but people saw the Superior General herself, at the Chapter in 1982, as virtually destroyed, a fact that also considerably influenced the deliberations of the delegates. As one of them reported:

'The key to many things is the bad relation that we've had with the Sacred Congregation. It's just terrible, the persecution that Concha [the Superior General] has suffered from them. Her instability is because of the Sacred Congregation...

It was a factor that had a lot of influence in making us tread carefully, to see Concha, whom everyone loved - I've never known anyone so universally loved as Concha - just - destroyed, a person psychologically destroyed. We felt - we couldn't put those in government in such a confrontationist position with the Sacred Congregation. We felt that if, without closing any doors, or at least, trying to make things broad enough...'

This dimension of the stress of government, with the human cost to those involved, epitomizes the problem that the Society as a whole came to face, through its living out of new interpretations and practices in the world, of an actual conflict between its service to the Church and its service to the world. In responding so wholeheartedly to the call of the Vatican Council, and uniting their action to service of the Church and the world, as though these two were the same thing, the Society failed to see, could not have seen, that a disjunction between them was possible. But where the Church itself was divorced from the world, and continued to develop ideological representations that disguised an unequal distribution of power based on a continuing arrogation of the sole right to correct interpretation, conflict between the two calls was inevitable. It is clear from the opening address of the Superior General to the General Chapter in 1976 that, the stresses of government were perceived by those in government to be coming from the demands by members of the Society. Looked at from a more distant perspective, the pressure in fact was coming from the Church and its continuing efforts to maintain control over developments in the Congregation. With the vow of chastity beginning to be practically affirmed by individual members of the Society as the taking of control over their own lives, the strains of trying to confine this within the patriarchal structures of the official Church were obviously enormous. For those in Rome, however, great pressure was also being felt from another quarter - from those within the Society itself whose total rejection of change in the interests of a fully traditional religious life marked them as the wounded within.
It goes without saying that, in the whole process from the Vatican Council onwards, there were many individuals who saw change as a total denial of authentic religious values - to whom reinterpretation meant only rejection. Many of the former students of the Society (the Antiguas) belonged to this group. There were also many religious, and not all those who left after 1967 did so in the name of greater freedom of spirit. Those who saw no other alternative but to stay in the Society, in a spirit of often increasing criticism and bitterness - and the Centre-South Province has more than its fair share of these - have caused great problems in the attempts of some groups to achieve that form of community life offered as an ideal in the 1970 Chapter. Many of these nuns continue to identify with that group who, like the priests in Spain who may still be seen in the streets with their black soutanes (and round clerical hats), belong to the species soutanosaurus.15

While people like this are found throughout the whole Society, their most extreme representatives are to be found in the convent of Florence. It is not necessary here to go into the details of the course of events in this community, but its repercussions for the rest of the Congregation, especially in the Madrid province, have been of some importance (if for no other reason than to provide an extreme example for the delegates to the 1982 Chapter of the horrors potentially in store for them by the Sacred Congregation). Briefly, the community in Florence went into what might be called a gradual schism from the rest of the Society in the years after the 1970 Chapter. In order to distance themselves entirely from developments in the Society, they appealed directly to the Sacred Congregation for Religious for individual juridical status, and were - ironically - given permission to continue within the Society in a ‘mode (régimen) of experimentation’. Moreover, in order to promote the traditions that they saw as essential, they asked for permission to open a novitiate. This was consistently refused under Paul VI, but finally granted by John Paul II. While in actuality they have only had one novice, a German, who left after about a year, the granting of this permission by John Paul II was illustrative of the change for the worse in relations between the Society and the Vatican under this Pope.

In the Madrid Province, the influence of events in Florence has been limited but specific, as was pointed out by the woman in charge of these communities (the

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15 Among these may be included the family of General Armada, one of the main plotters in the abortive coup d'état of 23rd February, 1981. Two of his sisters are members of the Society. When General Armada was condemned to a long prison sentence for his part in the coup, an acquaintance commiserating with them was assured that it was not the General whom they worried about. It was another brother, a Jesuit, who actually lives in a working class district of Madrid and for whom the family always keep a soutane hanging on the back of the front door, so that when he comes to visit, he may be suitably dressed.
Regional). Two of the Spanish nuns who went to spend some time in that community, on their return to Madrid asked for exclaustration in order to depend directly on the Cardinal of Toledo. They have since been joined by two others, and form a community of their own in Toledo.16

This status of exclaustration places them outside the jurisdiction of the Province but gives them the option of rejoining the Society if they ever so wished. It also means that they continue to be nuns, with vows, but dependent upon the local bishop - in this case, the Cardinal - rather than upon the Society. The Province, however, does try to help them by sending translation work from time to time, and by providing occasional material help.

All these developments that followed on the Chapter of 1970, then, help to explain the alarm felt by many in the Province and in the Society, particularly those in government, that culminated in the General Chapter of 1976. This Chapter was seen by many as an opportunity to take stock, to stop and reflect on what had happened in the previous period and the implications of this for a redefinition of the Society's own reality. The result was seen by many in Madrid however, as the beginning of a process of 'involution'. I would suggest that this occurred because of a partial retreat from historical interpretation, a seduction by the symbolic order.

Withdrawal to the symbolic order: 1976

The experience of the Chapter of 1976 was, for at least two of the delegates from the Centre-South Province, a negative one. For one, 'It did me a lot of harm. The atmosphere of the Chapter seemed to me so removed from the concrete realities of the Provinces.' The same sense of unreality struck the other. She noted the concentration on present, isolated experience rather than on general, practical

16One of them acts as secretary to the Cardinal, who is one of the most conservative in Spain, exceeded possibly only by the Archbishop of Cuenca. In 1981, it was this prelate who forbade the then Minister of Justice from taking his traditional place in the Corpus Christi procession, on the grounds that he had been instrumental in having divorce legislation passed in the parliament. This procession itself sums up a great deal about Toledo. It is still led by the widows and daughters of men who were involved in the siege of the Alcázar in Toledo in the Civil War, a famous episode in which the Nationalists successfully held the Alcázar against much greater Republican forces. The relief of this siege was a great publicity coup for Franco, and probably cost him the early conquest of Madrid.

The nuns themselves in the Toledo community are an interesting group. One is a woman who, as a young girl, wanted to enter the convent, but bowed to the wishes of her parents and married instead. Her husband, much older than she, died very soon afterwards, leaving her with a small daughter. As the daughter grew up, her mother encouraged her to enter the Society, and then followed her, within a couple of years, into the novitiate. Her daughter was one of those who later left the Society and is now married with children of her own. Her mother blames the Society for having 'spoilt' her, and harbours feelings of great bitterness. With her in the community in Toledo is her sister.
concerns - touched on in the opening address by the Superior General - that had emerged from the years of change. What is interesting about this reaction to the Chapter is that, as a reading of the final document indicates, the discourse had not changed. Indeed, based on the 1967 and 1970 Chapters, it was developed. What does appear to have changed is the context within which the discourse was situated, and hence a certain change in content. The recognition of charisma was there, the call to mission and discernment, the relation with the world and with 'history' and hence the fundamental demand to work for social justice. Nevertheless, the 1976 document marked a definite change in emphasis in the light of previous developments. The principal and perhaps inevitable one was a shift in focus from the individual within the community to the community in the Society. The key word of the document was 'Mission' - this time with a capital M. History, too, was given a capital. Charisma was appropriated to the Society as a group, and defined in relation to obedience.

Responsibility - Obedience
Each religious has a fundamental responsibility that she may not abdicate, and that nobody can undertake for her: that of living, in the sincerity of her heart and her life, wherever that may be, the charisma of St Madeleine Sophie.

Obedience - Authority
In view of the Mission that we must live as a body, we accept freely, in faith, the service of an evangelical authority. In this way, obedience is lived as a search for the will of God, a dialogue with others, and as a free gift of our life that makes us available (disponibles) in face of the Kingdom (Capítulo 1976:19).

Charisma, in this presentation, was to be subordinated at all levels to mission, and mission was in effect not made an extension of chastity but drawn back under obedience. The recurrent words in the document in relation to both mission and obedience were availability (disponibilidad) and discernment - the latter often without an object, as for example, in the statement, 'The Provincial Superior and her councillors will together discern in order to serve the Mission and unite the province' (1976:25). Authority again made its appearance, as in the 'Provincial Superior', compared with the simple 'Provincial' of 1970. Moreover,

[the local communities] have the responsibility to help the discernment of the Province and of the body as a whole... They receive their concrete mission from the Provincial government. In order to live this mission within the body of the Society, each community ought to have an authority (25; emphases mine).

No longer was it to be the role of authority to help members to discern what their service was to be; it was the role of communities (not individuals) to give this help to Superiors, particularly at the Provincial level, and it is from them that they then
receive their mission. This very important change in emphasis provides the key to much of what happened subsequently in the Madrid province.

Quotes could be multiplied, but what becomes apparent on a reading of the document is two things. One is that, although the language of discourse appears to remain the same, central words like ‘History’ and ‘the world’ were removed from their practical context to become symbolic categories, for example, ‘To celebrate [the Chapter] presupposes that we be ‘sensitive and faithful to the Spirit of Christ which is alive and acts in History’’ (Capítulo 1976:42, Opening Address). In this statement, ‘History’ is invoked, not explained. The second characteristic of the 1976 document is the proliferation of those words that, having been generative of practice for the nuns, become mythicizing:

To discern with each community in order to name the person who ought to exercise in it authority, and the method of doing so, for the service of the Mission and according to the charisma of the Society (26) -

this being one of the functions of the Provincial team.

It is this proliferation of mystifying words that resituates the discourse of the 1976 Chapter in the symbolic order. Religious life tends to be again defined, not so much by historical interpretation as by the symbolic. Historical interpretation is not rejected, but it is resituated in a context that reduces it to equal partnership with the symbolic. This is the process of involution that was officially initiated by the 1976 General Chapter. It essentially reduced the commitment of those in the Society, not to five, but to two, principal options: that of retaining control of interpretation and continuing to respond directly to practical situations, with all the risks involved, and that of retreating to the symbolic order. Neither for the members of the Society in general, nor for the women of the Centre-South Province, has this been an unequivocal or unremitting choice. The experiences of the nuns in the Province have immensely increased the complexities of their relations with each other, with the Church, and with Spanish society, and their action is not reducible to any one base. Nevertheless, the tension between the two approaches to interpretation is felt by them all, and forms the basis for much of what has happened since 1976 in the communities in Madrid.
CHAPTER 9
The Two Options: Historical or Symbolic Interpretation.

The reinstitutionalization of charisma 1976-84

The processes in the Society after the 1976 Chapter indicate that the redefinitions of 1967 and 1970, based as they were on a return to a radical Christian meaning of incarnation, were too bold, too innovative, at the level of institution. A fundamental element in this new understanding of incarnation had been, as we have seen, a transformation of the meaning of ‘the world’. Intrinsically related to this had been a resituation of the biblical accounts, of both the Old and New Testaments, in their historical, temporal setting, a resituation that saw them therefore as essentially historical and therefore dynamic. In such an interpretation, they began for many of the nuns to lose their mythical status as timeless truths and hence as archetypical. The Church itself was seen by the nuns as subject to and acting in history, and hence influenced by, as well as influencing, the social formation.

The sense of relativity that this change in interpretation effected for these women, therefore, made a clear distinction between two kinds of interpretation: that which continued to use the Christian model as myth - outside the historical process, reduced to essences, absolute - and that which based action on an understanding of the incarnation as dynamic, present, and radically situated within history. The challenge posed by such an interpretation, however, affected the relations of power not only between the Church and society, but within the Church itself. The initiatives acted on by the members of the Congregation after 1970 proved to be too subversive precisely at the level of those patriarchal relations in the Church that defined the place of women. The same initiatives therefore presented a threat to the Congregation itself as institution, since the institution of the Congregation depends for its very definition on the institution of the Church. Moreover, to try to contain such subversion within the institution meant a threat also to the symbolic patrimony that had been definitive in the mainstream tradition of religious orders. In particular, the move to small, open communities as a consequence of the crisis in the collective judgement of the Society brought about by Vatican II created a tendency among members to identify their interests in relation to the Society as a whole as private as well as collective (see Bourdieu 1979:40).
The concern of those committed to the Society as an institution, therefore, was to reassert the sense of collective identity among members. This they did by re-invoking precisely the symbolic patrimony of the group in order to achieve cohesion. The period from 1976 to 1984, therefore, is the period that saw a re-emergence, at least at the level of official discourse, of the symbolic order as the main official principle of interpretation to which other possible principles (and codes) are subordinate. Symbolic interpretation has been used by those in official positions in the institution to set acceptable limits to discourse and practice, in order to create the correspondence between the objective classes and the internalized, social structures and mental structures which is the basis of the most ineradicable adherence to the established order (Bourdieu 1979:164).

Part of this process is that the essentially arbitrary (historical) nature of this correspondence has been lost sight of by some of the nuns who have attempted to make it again into the natural and taken-for-granted - the very dynamic of myth - by a reinvocation of and reinsertion into that powerful symbolic order that had defined traditional religious life for so long. From this perspective, there has been an attempt by some members of the institution to re-establish orthodoxy, that is, 'acceptable ways of speaking and thinking the world' (Bourdieu 1979:169).

This attempt by some in the Centre-South Province to impose official interpretation has, however, been neither a simple nor a unidirectional process. It has been opposed from within by a heterodoxy based on the transforming action undertaken by the newly oriented communities. The same transforming action, itself derived from the original ‘involvement in’ the world requested by the 1967 Chapter, has meant the access by different groups to ‘the material and symbolic means of rejecting the [official] definition of the real’ (that is, the universe of possible discourse) (Bourdieu 1979:169). Such opposition in the Madrid Province has been coming, as we shall see, from individuals and groups who are being increasingly marginalized within the Province. The alternative interpretations offered by such groups, although still permitted some minor input into the official interpretation, are being more and more limited as the latter has become more specific. Their gradual definition as marginal to the Province in terms of the latter’s collective self-identification has been very much in terms of what Bourdieu (1979:40) describes as being ‘unreasonable’, because of failing to identify their own particular interests with what is represented as the ‘general interest’. The success of those in government in the Province in gaining acceptance of this view by many communities indicates the triumph of official interpretation in the Madrid Province in achieving dominance.

Part of this success has been a logical re-emphasis on obedience, that has thus
re-emerged as a fundamentally generative principle of practice. I say logical, since obedience is the perfect response of orthodoxy in that it accepts, at the level of practice, the limits set by official definition of the ‘Real’. Further, it had been the main principle that had traditionally maintained the institutional dependence of the Society on the official Church. In reaffirming obedience, therefore, the Province and the Society reinforced this dependence, thus acting to reproduce the essentially patriarchal relations within the Church.

Although this reinforcement by the nuns of their subordination as women in the Church may in some ways be seen by an analyst as a betrayal of the initiatives of 1967 and 1970, the question must be raised as to whether there were in practice any other alternatives possible. Although the process of officializing came from within the Congregation itself, it was as much in response to an unyielding Church, embodied for the nuns in the Sacred Congregation for Religious, as in a concern to preserve their own institution. In other words, the partial retreat by the Congregation from 1976 on - the process of involution - may be also seen, as it is by some of the nuns, less as a betrayal than as a strategy, not only for survival within a continuing situation of domination, but also in order to maintain enough space within which to continue effective action in their own terms. The high cost in human terms of any more confrontationist strategy has already been looked at. Moreover, effective action by the Society, redefined over this period in terms of ‘charisma’ and of ‘mission’, became more and more clearly centred on its original commitment to education. It is within this sphere that much of the creative energy unleashed by the changes in the Society was able to be realized, as we shall see in the following chapters.

The ambiguities produced in the Centre-South Province by the changes, therefore, have become more obvious since the 1976 Chapter. This is because of the attempt at the level of institution to reimpose unity of interpretation, and of some related practice, on the self-generated diversity of individuals and communities. These ambiguities exist not only in the tension between officializing strategy and the independent interpretations of certain communities, but also within those individuals

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1 Such an attitude of pragmatic retreat was not unique to the government of the Society. One of the members of the Madrid communities, who was officially named by the diocesan Vicar of her area - a bishop - as area representative to the diocesan committee on the teaching of Catechetics, was deliberately excluded from meetings by her fellow delegates, all priests. She was told by a number of these men that they were prepared to listen to what she had to say in private, as a private individual, but not as the official delegate for her area. She decided to attend one meeting, to see what would happen, was permitted to enter to give a report, and then asked to leave. In view of such implacable opposition, she felt it would be a waste of time to fight the situation, and that her energies could be much better put to use elsewhere.
and groups themselves who have tended to promote or accept official interpretation. In the Province as a whole, as well as in individual communities, it is possible to identify the situations and relations that are generating such ambiguities.

The Province as medium of officializing strategy

A detailed analysis of the plethora of papers and documents that were produced and circulated in the Province over this period would, unlike the Chapter documents, give them an importance beyond that which they had for the nuns themselves. As the number of papers grew, individuals became more discriminating - and more cursory - in their reading of them. At the same time, they were granted some importance as almost all were concerned, directly or indirectly, with the writing of new Constitutions for the Society. These Constitutions - if approved by the Sacred Congregation - are to replace the original Constitutions of 1815 and 1826, and were to be submitted for approval after the General Chapter of 1982. This was the Chapter that provoked the appointment of an official observer from the Sacred Congregation to supervise this work (see Chapter 8).

The general framework within which this process was carried out can be summarized by its key dates:


February 1978: the Superior General of the Society passed on the request to all members.

June 1978: a new edition of the 1815 Constitutions was published in Madrid, as a basis for working on a reformulation.

1978-79: communities were asked to study the 1815 Constitutions along lines suggested by a study guide.

1979: a commission was set up in Rome for the work of the Constitutions.

1980: every member of the Society was sent a copy of the Scheme for the Constitutions of 1982, accompanied by a letter from the Superior General.

July 1980: a meeting of the communities of the Madrid region (not the whole Province) was held to explain the Scheme.

September - October 1980: visit to the Centre-South Province of the Superior General and another member of the Central team.

October - December 1980: individual communities worked on the Scheme according to questionnaires and other aids.

December 1980: each community sent the result of this study to the Province.

January 1981: Coordinating Commission set up in Rome (three people, one from the Madrid Province).
March 1981: Regional Assemblies.
August 1981: Provincial Chapter.
Summer 1982: General Chapter in Rome.

It is within the context of this intense focus on redefining the identity of the Society, in the light both of its original vision and of the changes, that the documents of this period take on an especial significance. One set of documents emanates from the Province itself and from Rome, and is concerned directly with the work on the Constitutions. The other is made up of a set of letters from the Provincial team and reports of general meetings of various groups that concern the Province or Region as a whole, and these were given much less attention by many of the nuns.

A number of increasingly central themes emerge from all these documents. One is their use of the General Chapter of 1976, rather than of 1970, as fundamentally orienting the later development of the Congregation. In view of what has been said about this General Chapter as beginning the process of involution, its use by the nuns in the subsequent period emphasizes those aspects that emerged in 1976 as essential to a renewed definition of religious life. Renewed importance therefore was given to contemplation and discernment; to community in its aspect as part of the broader Congregation; to charisma, but of the Society in general rather than of individuals, and, related to this, to mission, again of the Society. Charisma and mission were in fact presented by the Coordinating Commission in Rome for the work on the new Constitutions as ‘non-negotiable’ (intocables) in terms of their basic definitions:

Charisma: Union and conformity with the Heart of Jesus.

Mission: To show the love of God made Man through Education (General Circular to the members of the Society of the Coordinating Commission, May 1981).

The documents place emphasis, too, on the aspect of the situation of the Congregation in relation to the Church. As the Madrid Provincial expressed it in a talk to a conference of those Responsible for local communities (las Responsables):

Religious life is situated in the heart of the Church, with a specific Mission. The Church is the work of God, the initiative of God, it belongs to God... It is the Body of Christ. To reject the Church is to reject Christ (Report circulated to the Province, April 1981; emphasis mine).

The Superior General, in a visit to the Province in 1980, repeated the importance given to this relation for the future of the Congregation:

2The Centre-South Province is divided up into five geographical Regions: Eastern and Western Andalucía, Galicia, Canary Islands, and Madrid-Santa María de Huerta (Soria). Each of these Regions elects one person as Regional Representative to the Provincial Team.
The renewal of the Society has been an act of obedience to the Church. The Society did not begin this work on its own nor through its own evolution, but was faithful to what the Church had asked of all Congregations, that they turn more to the world and engage in dialogue from the perspective of a discovery of their own particular spirituality... [It] asked that they turn to the world and return to the Gospels (Report circulated to the Province on the visit to the Province of the Superior General and one of her Councillors, September-October 1980).  

Within this process of developing new interpretations, what emerges as the most discussed, the most vexed question of all for members of the Province is the concept and practice of obedience. The question recurs over and over again, for example in the report of a Conference of those named as Responsible for local communities (the local Superiors):

We saw that there exist certain obstacles to the question of local authority:
1. For lack of theological bases and understanding of the Mystery of the Church.
2. Lack of a making explicit of the thought of the Society on authority from the point of view of charisma.
3. A certain ideologizing influence by the environment. We have made the effort of involvement in (inserción en) the world, but not always with discernment, and it has infected us with a functional mentality (Report of local Superiors circulated to the Province, April 1981).

The rather oblique and turgid language used in this summary makes it difficult - as it did for other members of the Province at the time - to be completely clear as to the exact meaning of these statements. What is clear is that these local Superiors were attempting to reconcile the continuance of structures of authority in the Province with attitudes and practices that had emerged among communities - and of which they were very much a part - since 1967 and that challenged these structures. It is interesting that, at least in this summary, the Superiors focussed entirely on problems based on differences not, in practice but in interpretation - lack of 'understanding' of the Mystery of the Church, fuzziness concerning the 'thought of the Society', the regrettable development of a 'functional mentality'.

Such an emphasis indicates that, for the nuns themselves, the question of interpretation has remained a fundamental concern, and it is their concentration on this issue - basic to their ongoing religious commitment - that makes them particularly vulnerable to the effects of a mythologizing use of language. Such a use

\*From now on this Report will be referred to as Report of the visit. This visit was assessed as very important by members of the Province who saw the Superior General, a Spaniard originally from the Northern Province, and the Councillor who came with her as interpreting and applying the general concerns and orientations of the Society as a whole to the particular situation of the Centre-South Province.
is the reference in the Report of the local Superiors to ‘authority from the point of view of charisma’, or the blame implied in being involved in the world ‘but not always with discernment’. Through such statements, the Superiors elevated authority - and its concomitant obedience - to an absolute value in religious life to which individuals are required to adjust their own interpretation and practice. Their very concern suggests that other women in the Province were not doing this, that both interpretation and practice had escaped from official control. This concern, and an identification of its causes in terms that reflect the practical ascendency of historical interpretation in many communities and the desire of those in authority to reassert symbolic interpretation is expressed in another part of the Superiors’ Report:

The question of authority sometimes repels us because we identify it with ‘domination’, and not as a possibility of liberation and growth of persons. We have mythified praxis and have lost the sense of the symbol (April 1980; emphasis mine).

It is not surprising, in the light of these concerns, to see the Superior General, in her visit in 1980, presenting obedience in a way that attempted to relate it to a range of other central concepts: call, the Heart of Jesus, prayer, mission, and community. She also reasserted its essential relationship with the model of God as Father: ‘To obey must be a constant attitude, a continuity of the attitude of Christ obedient to his Father... Obedience [for Jesus Christ] is in the centre of his being Son’ (Report of the visit, September-October 1980). It is implicit in this understanding that obedience is an appropriate response from one’s position as child, an understanding that tends to accept both the exclusive masculinization of the image of God and the patriarchal relations in the Church that it supports. This is the context, in which relations are structured by authority, that has continued to define obedience for the nuns in Madrid, and has resituated it as a basic generative principle for practice.

The documents taken as a whole give an extensive presentation and legitimation of obedience, but there is a great silence on the question of chastity. Where it is occasionally mentioned in relation to the new Constitutions, what becomes clear is the extent of its taken-for-granted meaning for all members. In a Report of the Regional Assembly for Madrid-Santa María de Huerta, for example, the following points deal with chastity not as a separate issue but in a section concerned with prayer:

Chastity

Generosity in one’s gift, gratuity and availability were emphasized as the fundamental demand
to have a free heart
to relate to others freely without ulterior motives (sin utilitarismos)
to accept solitude voluntarily without seeking escapes or compensations
ongoing formation (1967 Chapter)
‘healthy’ relaxation...
to create a climate of sincere friendship; open to all and without exclusivity (Report of the Regional Assembly circulated to the Province, May 1981).

These points, unlike those of the local Superiors on the question of authority, were made at an Assembly that included very many of the women from the Madrid communities. They may therefore be taken as reasonably representative, though not necessarily a complete picture, of the general view of the nuns concerning chastity. This taken-for-granted meaning appears to have little to do with chastity either as sexuality or as a positive option for autonomy, at least at the level of discourse. At the level of practice, though, an increasing diversification among individuals and communities in Madrid attests to the importance for the nuns in their daily lives of their experiences of autonomy. It has been from the basis of these experiences that they have responded to the official interpretation of obedience promoted by the Provincial government in its attempt to reestablish control over members. This interpretation and its effects have been central to developments in the Madrid Province since 1976.

In analyzing the effects of the Provincial government on the communities of the Centre-South Province, particularly those in Madrid, I wish to make it clear that I am not suggesting that they were universal throughout the Society, nor that they followed inevitably from positions taken by the Congregation as a whole over this period. To verify this, one needed to look no further than the Northern Province of Spain where, as one member of that Province expressed it, the Provincial operated on the principle of allowing people to get on with their own lives, or even to the more unexpected Province of Chile where, in 1980, a decision was made during the Provincial Assembly to consider sending personnel to help in Nicaragua (report in the Society’s general magazine, *Vivir y Compartir* 1980(21)). Two members of the Province were subsequently sent.

Nevertheless, I would suggest that, although the structures of government and the interpretation of obedience developed in the Society from 1967 did not necessarily lead to such a result, what happened in the Centre-South Province was nevertheless a logical extension of the maintenance of authority structures based on hierarchical relations of power in the Church, together with their legitimation in an official interpretation that attempted yet again to fix meaning by reducing it to a single dimension. Such an attempt to disallow multiplicity of interpretation, made within and as a result of the Church’s relations of domination and subordination, brought
the official discourse of the Society at least partially back into the processes of
ideology.

Certainly a key to what has happened in the Southern Province was the person
who was Provincial from 1976 to 1984. This period covered the maximum two terms
in office for Provincials allowed in the Society. On both occasions, this woman was
elected with a very clear majority, a result that many people put down to what they
call the ‘top-heavy’ character of the Province. This refers to the large number of
older nuns in the Province, those of the Civil War generation whose strong formation
in the forms of traditional religious life has remained their fundamentally orienting
experience. Almost all of them live in the bigger convent communities and their
support for the Provincial, though not unanimous, is strong. An indication of the
intensity with which individuals in the Province outside this group felt her influence
was the frequency with which the question of government came up in conversations,
markedly often accompanied by the observation that ‘power corrupts’. One older nun
is reported to have commented in relation to the Provincial government, ‘It’s true
that power corrupts. If it doesn’t corrupt them, it certainly corrupts us.’

Such remarks in no way referred to misuse of material goods. On the contrary,
the Provincial’s commitment to a life of personal simplicity in the name of poverty
and her attempts to impose similar standards on everyone else - was acknowledged by
all. It would appear that what was implied in the phrase was an improper use of
symbolic capital. Although not expressed by the nuns themselves in quite these
terms, this is the sense in which many rejected what they saw as mythifying jargon or
‘slogans’, designed, as one person expressed it, simply ‘to complicate existence’. Part
of this exploitation of the group’s symbolic capital was the arrogation to the
Provincial team - generally referred to by other members as ‘the Provincials’ - of

the competence (in the sense of a capacity socially recognized in a public
authority) required in order to manipulate the collective definition of the
situation in such a way as to bring it closer to the official definition of the
situation and thereby win the means of mobilizing the highest possible group
(Bourdieu 1979:40).

In this, the Provincials were supported by the emphasis in the Society as a whole
after 1976 on the Provincial and international dimensions of the Congregation at the
expense of individual communities and their members. This emphasis could lead the
Superior General to state, in discussing the role of the Province and the community
in relation to the individual ‘mission’ of members:

The community doesn’t send, it does not have authority... In the change
of tasks, the person who sends is the Provincial, in the name of the
Provincial Community (Report of the visit, September-October 1980).
This position reveals one of the deepest ambiguities for women in the Province that resulted from the changes. The General Chapter of 1970 had placed its emphasis, as we saw in Chapter 8, on the *charisma* of individuals and of communities, and on authority as having meaning only within communities and in dialogue. Nevertheless, the decision of the Society to decentralize government, while at the same time reinterpreting the role of the local Superior, meant in practice a potential centralization of power at the Provincial level. It was a potential that was realized in Madrid, with certain drastic results, from 1976 to 1984. The effects of this realization can be analyzed at the level of individual communities. The resistance to its demands by certain groups is an indication of the strength of alternative interpretations and of the vitality of those members committed to them.

**The Madrid Communities**

The communities in Madrid itself are perceived by members of the Province, in relation to the Province, as running along a spectrum according to their degree of acceptability or otherwise to 'the Provincials', or, as one person put it, 'those with the blessing of the Provincials, and those without their blessing'. This acceptability is very much in terms of the extent to which communities themselves accept official interpretation and practice - a practice that includes the control and disposal of financial resources. Central, too, are the kinds of strategies that different communities tend to emphasize in their practice, and here the spectrum as delimited by this practice, though not expressed by the nuns in these terms, is one of improvisation. This is an improvisation that works as creativity in terms of social relations, because it is actively subversive of official practice and representation. In other words, the nuns, through their improvised action, do not accept the limits set as officially acceptable because their practice exposes the arbitrary nature of these limits. They continue to challenge, at the level of practice, the boundaries of the taken-for-granted.

The communities in Madrid (240 people), apart from the Provincial house itself, are made up of seventeen groups. Of these, seven live in flats; two - one small and one relatively large - live in separate parts of the Chamartín complex of buildings; and eight live in what were formerly the community quarters of Chamartín and the University College of Rosales. As well, there is a fluctuating number of individuals living at home in order to care for aging parents. Each of these women remains attached to a specific community, however, and normally spends some time each week with her companions.

From the point of view of lifestyle, these seventeen communities fall into two
clear groups: the flats and the smaller of the Chamartín annexe communities (attached to the Residence for working girls) on the one hand, and the other annexed Chamartín group together with those living in the two large houses. These latter, although the lifestyle of individual members varies, may be described in terms of a more traditional convent life in which flexibility is limited by the domestic organization necessary for a large number of people. These are the groups that tend also to follow a more traditionally organized timetable, especially with relation to prayer. On the one hand, being major foundations of previous years, they have their own chapels. This means daily Mass, as well as a formal setting for personal prayer. On the other hand, these are the communities in which there is a large concentration of older nuns, a proportion of whom continue to wear the habit and who, with limited commitments outside the community, can conform to a fairly regular allocation of time. Considerable provision is, of course, made to care for those who are ill, and the houses also act as centres for visitors from other parts of the Province or the Society. Access to these groups is through the main entrance of the building, where there is always a receptionist on duty.

Although each of the latter communities is autonomous, they share the dining-room where meals are at a fixed time, the chapel, the infirmary, and to some extent the television. An important part of their time is, therefore, spent in common. As separate communities, each has its own meetings, for example, three times a week for an hour in the evening, and its own community room. Each has a person formally named as Responsible, and the annual Community Programme (el Proyecto Comunitario) is worked out independently. So, too, is the community budget, but a very significant part of this is concerned with the running costs of the house, which all the communities share. Because of the problems of coordination, in fact, each of the two houses has, as well as those named as Responsible for individual communities, both a Superior and a treasurer of the whole house. Regular meetings are held between this Superior and those named as Responsible for each community, who therefore act as a council for the Superior of the house in matters of general concern. This Superior also holds a general meeting with the members of all the communities of the house each month.

In financial matters, as the woman responsible for the Madrid Region explained, these communities are experiencing considerable difficulty, since many of their members are retired, and, because of the way in which the Social Security system works, they are not eligible for the old age pension. There is a Social Security retirement pension for which the Province as a whole has applied. This, however, is a recent move as people were registered only in May, 1981. This was a moment when
all women's religious institutes and enclosed orders, all of whom depend on the
Ministry of Justice and have to be recognized by this Ministry in order to be able to
act as religious congregations, registered with Social Security as corporate bodies.
Moreover, the complexities of the system required that they registered as autonomous
bodies, that is to say, that members who had worked in the Society's own
organizations were defined as employers rather than as employees. This meant that,
at the time of joining the Social Security system, the Province had to pay an
enormous lump sum of money to the Department, in return for which all those who
were already 65 or over began, six months later, to receive pensions. Those not yet
65 (and there are many close to this age) were required to join the normal pension
scheme, which means that they have to continue paying contributions for ten years
before they are eligible for a partial pension. (To receive a full pension, one has to
have been paying contributions for at least thirty years).

The result of this situation is that these communities are not self-supporting,
and depend upon the Provincial fund - the 'community of goods' (comunidad de
bienes) - that includes as an important component the salaries of other members of
the Province. The difficulties of the financial situation are therefore not felt by these
communities, but, perhaps more importantly in practice, they are not required to
make the same sorts of decisions about the allocation of money as those living in
flats, virtually all of whom are still employed in salaried work. The question of how
this money is used by some of these communities is one of the sources of contention
with the Provincial, and raises the very important issue of the tension between the
official representation of poverty, that continues to draw on the traditional
interpretation - more part of the symbolic than of the material patrimony\(^4\) - and
what certain communities see as a more radical practice of poverty. One community
in particular is a clear example of this.

The community moved in 1975 to a flat in a working-class area that had a
popular reputation for being very political and radical. The area was chosen because
one of the members of the community was already working there with a group of boys
who were wards of the State. A flat was rented in the personal name of one member
of the group. This happened with a number of the flats during the period of
'experimentation', a practice that was subsequently stopped by the Provincials. Also

\(^4\) The Province has ample funds to engage in such works as, for example, major alterations to
the already existing building of Rosales in order to ensure the total separation of the
Provincial community (3-4 people) from the other communities of the house; or to pay for the
accommodation of a group engaged to audit the Provincial accounts in the most expensive hotel
in Santiago de Compostela. Both of these events were condemned by many of the people in the
Madrid communities.
during the period of experimentation, as we saw in Chapter 8, two types of financial organization were allowed in the Province. The first was that all salaries went directly to the Province, to the ‘community of goods’, and individual communities were given back what they asked for on the basis of an annual community budget. This is the type of organization that has subsequently been opted for by the Province, and all communities have been required to conform.

The second type of organization was that salaries went directly to the support of the community, with an agreed surplus being handed over to the Province. The community under discussion has retained this kind of organization - according to the Provincial, the only one of the Province to do so - and its members are under great pressure to submit to the common practice. It has been something that has come up every year at the time of the Provincial’s annual official visit, but in 1984, just two months before she was due to be replaced, she made two visits to the community, and presented her demand as ‘definitive’. All salaries were to go to the Province’s community of goods. The major allocation that the community set aside each year to go to various charities did not escape. A limited amount for such use could be included in the yearly budget, but nothing more. The explanation given by another member of the Provincial team in a different situation is obviously held to apply universally: ‘The option for the poor is an option of the Order, not of individuals.’

This observation perhaps throws light on the Province’s efforts to define all practice in the light of official interpretation, because the pressure on the community in the matter of money bears no relation at all to the lifestyle of its members. This is among the poorest of all the communities. Of its five members, one actually lives with the group of State wards with whom she works. The other four share the three-bedroom apartment, with one tiny livingroom-diningroom, a very small kitchen and bathroom and no washing-machine. All their washing is done by hand. Their television set is an old black and white one. Such a practical interpretation of poverty, however, confers no symbolic profits on the Province as a whole, since it does not command ‘the approval socially conferred on practices conforming to the official representation of practices’ (Bourdieu 1979:40).

This community - which, it must be pointed out, maintains very good personal and social relations with many other members of the Province - has been told by the Provincial that they are ‘selfmarginalizing’ themselves, that they are merely ‘tolerated’ by other communities. This is a position that seems to illustrate perfectly the attribution of ‘unreasonableness’ by the official representation to those within a group who, as we saw earlier, fail to identify their own particular interests with what is represented as the ‘general interest’. The fact that those particular interests in no
way deviate from the directions taken by the Society itself in 1967 and 1970 seems to
bear out that developments after 1976 have had more to do with the
reinstitutionalization of charisma than with furthering the earlier initiatives.

The same may be said if we look at other ways in which the Province, basing
itself on the communications coming from the centre of the Society in Rome, has tried
to reassert control through both interpretation and practice. These involve some of
the time-honoured concepts of religious life, the codes that gave it overall meaning in
the traditional context, such as prayer, spiritual direction, the use of space and time,
the international dimension of the Congregation, as well as such more recent
projections as the concept of ‘mission’ and the practice of individual community
programmes.

Prayer as an activity, for example, is seen and accepted by all as essential to
their lives, both individual and community. It has nevertheless again begun to be
defined by fixed times. In a Provincial Assembly held in Holy Week in 1983,
‘community prayer’ was presented as prayer in common at a regular time. With
regard to personal prayer, there has been active encouragement for people to set aside
time in the early morning, a requirement that has placed considerable strain not
necessarily so much on those who take it seriously as on their companions. In one of
the big houses, for example, a person sent to the school with the specific task of
helping with the supervision of the children out of class hours declined to undertake
the 8.30 a.m. period. When asked to do so by the school Principal, her answer was,
‘Don’t count on me for that. I have to finish my prayer.’ This re-elevation of the
spiritual to priority over the practical means that three of her companions, all of
whom live in flats at considerable distance from the school, have, as one of them
expressed it, ‘to travel in early, come cold or heat, rain or snow, to get there by 8.30’.
The judgement of this same person on the situation was unvarnished:

‘There are many others in that house, but they’ve got nothing to do with
the school, and I respect that. But this person has come specifically to work
in the school, and the first difficulty is this. All I can say is that, to me,
that prayer isn’t valid. I think that, before praying like that, it’s better to
have a little more charity or thought for others’.

This judgement comes, however, from a member of one of those communities
‘badly regarded by the Provincials’ and indicates, among other things, the extent to
which those in flats are being seen as exceptional in relation to re-established norms,
in this case a set time for morning prayer. It is precisely these norms that are being
officially presented as characteristics that define religious commitment in the Society.
In other words, the Province’s official representation of the identity of the
Congregation is excluding, not just a marginal few, but large sections of the Province, many of whom were among those who responded most generously to the call for change.5

A further example of the way in which prayer is being used in this sense is to be found in a letter, sent by the Provincial team to all communities at the end of 1983, that talked about the need for ‘continuous formation’. In discussing this concept, the letter states:

In order that we may awaken in ourselves a sensitivity to and a need for ongoing formation, it is urgent that we work to acquire a discipline that allows us, with all our multiple occupations, to rescue a long stretch of time every week - three or four hours a week,... if possible in a block.

The impossibility of this requirement, even as a suggestion, for those living in flats is summed up by a member of one of them:

'It can’t be done except in Chamartín, where you know you’re going to be in one place all day. But if you’ve got to go to Mass in the parish, clean the house, correct homework, talk to people a little, relax - this just isn’t possible. I mean - they leave you right up in the air. At least, it gives you an idea of the rhythm of life that you’d have to have to do this, you’d have to have the rhythm of life of one of the big houses, where the infrastructure is carried out for you.'

The emphases are mine, in order to indicate the ideal community envisaged by the Provincials. It is one based on a use of time - ‘the rhythm of life’ - dictated principally by ‘religious’ needs. This is so not only in relation to prayer. In the report to the Province on the visit of the Superior General in 1980, the following statements made by members of the Province in general discussion were recorded:

We lead a very active life, not because of an excessive workload but for lack of [clear] priorities...
It is necessary to reflect seriously on our priorities in the use of time... It would be a good idea, as an exercise, to write down the time that we dedicate to each one of our activities (Report of the visit, September-October 1980).

5The impact of this was commented on by a person who belongs to the Northern Province but has been very involved also with those in the Centre-South. Having come to live for a period in the South, she arrived prepared to believe that the stereotype concerning the conservatism of the South was a typical exaggeration. After six years, she was forced to admit that there was no exaggeration. Her comment was that people who, in the North, would be regarded as the most normal possible, in the South were having to suffer enormously and unnecessarily.

The fact that this distinction reproduces a very long-standing difference between certain areas of the north of Spain, particularly Catalonia and the Basque provinces, and Madrid and the South is very interesting, and probably part of this whole scenario. Madrid has always been regarded with horror as impossibly conservative by Barcelona in particular. The relation between this general tradition and the situation within the Province is, however, outside the scope of the present discussion.
It is the communities who present a clearly ordered timetable, therefore, with specific times set aside for prayer in common and especially meetings, who have the approval of the Provincials. This is so whether they are living in flats or in the big houses, and makes a further distinction along the lines of approval and disapproval among those communities in flats. The formalization of time is invoked also in a concern with the setting of fixed, regular times for meetings of the community. This concern acts to differentiate the flats according to their day to day practice, and to place them yet again on either side of the distinction of 'inside' and 'outside'. As one woman in a group of three said, 'When they ask us, What time do you have meetings together? I say, When I arrive home.'

A related criterion is the use of space, in particular whether those in flats have set aside a special area, however small, as a chapel. A summary of the experiences of some of the apartment communities is instructive. One community, now of three members, has a three-bedroom flat with a lounge-diningroom, kitchen, bathroom, and balcony. The Provincials wanted them to rent a room from their neighbours to use as a chapel, putting in an extra entrance. The community refused. Two other communities, also in three-bedroom flats, have also made the choice not to have a chapel. Of the rest of these communities, most have double flats that have been made into one, with between five and seven people. All have a chapel. One group bought their adjoining flats in 1976 in a barrio where they have no particular involvement ('no concrete mission', as they themselves phrased it) but is one of the most populous in Madrid. The group of seven that began there had been looking for three requirements that they regarded as essential: individual bedrooms, a sufficient number of people (seen as no fewer than five and no more than eight), and room for a chapel.6

Of this second group of flats, all have undergone structural (in the building sense) modifications in order to adapt them to the symbolic requirements of the Province as well as their own practical needs. This criterion places the flats not along a spectrum of acceptability, but on either side of a very clear dividing line: three small, family-style flats in which the communities have adapted their own lifestyle to the simple, functional space available, and the rest of the flats, where space has been redefined - to a greater or lesser degree - in order to adapt it to the accepted symbolic representation. Let me make it clear that I am not suggesting that such

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6A secondary requirement was a spare bedroom for visitors, but this did not rank with the other three as a sine qua non. This flat also has a separate laundry, a rare and wonderful exception in any accommodation in Madrid.
reorganization of space has redirected the practical lifestyle of the communities concerned into the more traditionally convent style of life of those in the big houses. What it has done is to accede to the symbolic re-ordering of the Congregation’s identity in the wake of the 1976 Chapter. Not only does it create a symbolic centre for each flat, that is, the chapel, but it acts to re-create that sense of separation fundamental to the traditional definition of religious life. The three groups that do not have a chapel are in a number of important, though not all, ways (they are not families, for example) indistinguishable both in their numbers and in their use of space from their neighbours. All the others, while maintaining a perfectly simple lifestyle, can be clearly so distinguished - on the one hand as a ‘community’ as opposed to an informal group of adults sharing accommodation, and, on the other, in their organization of space.

The reintroduction of a sense of separation from the world in a practical as well as a spiritual sense is illustrated by other developments in the Province, one of which caused something of a scandal among many members. This was the amount of money used in the Provincial house - part of the Rosales complex of buildings - to give it an entrance quite separate from that used by the other communities, and to build its own chapel. This happened in a building already provided with a common chapel. The move meant that official representation was given concrete realization, and the move to reassert identity in terms of traditional religious values has been offered as a model for the rest of the Province.

The other development has been the proliferation of formal contacts between members of the Province and other religious orders. The Congregation is not only a member of the Federation of Religious Congregations (the CONFER), but maintains a strong presence at the level of office bearers in this organization. In 1983, for example, the Provincial, who had been involved in the organization at the level of Major Superiors, was elected as national President. This was a move that was greeted with considerable relief by many women in the Province, who felt that it would give her something other than themselves to worry about. At the Madrid diocesan level, the president is also a member of the Society, as are two of the representatives from the different diocesan vicariates.

The reincorporation of individuals and communities into a more formally unified group has other dimensions also - all of which have been given new titles that

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7It is very indicative of the feeling of members of the Province about the Provincial government that this house is commonly referred to as ‘the Curia’ - taken from the body in the Vatican that acts like the Vatican’s government cabinet.
mystify the effects of practice. One of these is the reintroduction of spiritual
direction, now called ‘accompanying’ (acompahamiento). This was defined by the
Superior General as

the possibility of talking with someone, not only by way of relaxation, nor
only by way of friendship (talking with someone whom I trust), but with
someone whom I bring into my life so that she may come to know me; not in
order to guide me, because the person who guides us is the Spirit, but
certainly in order to help me see if I live [my] response to the living Jesus
Christ...

It is normally impossible that the person who accompanies you should be
in the same community. It is better that the person who accompanies be a
member of our own Congregation (Report of the visit, September-October
1980).

As one person commented in relation to this new emphasis on the need for individual
interpretation: ‘You hear them talk of spiritual direction, you listen and say, It’s
different. And then you think about it, and it’s exactly the same as before.’ What
she was referring to was that individuals were being asked to follow a line of
spirituality defined and reinforced by the Congregation itself. While she did not
reject this spirituality in principle, her active involvement in the parish and with a
variety of concerned groups outside the Congregation offered her a range of options in
approaches to spirituality that would have been severely restricted within a spiritual
direction that conformed to the requirements of the Province at this time.

Another aspect of the formalization by the Provincial of otherwise constructive
practices is the use made of the Community Programme (el proyecto comunitario).
This is a project that all communities are asked to carry out each year, along with
their annual budget. It involves a review of the present situation of the community,
and its plans, both spiritual and practical, for the coming year. It may take the form
of a restatement of the principal orientations and goals of the community, or their
reformulation in the light of developments throughout the year. Such a review in
common can obviously be very constructive, and is regarded by many in this light.
Central control over this exercise is maintained, however, in that communities are
asked to submit a copy of their programme to the Provincial team. Failure to do so
is seen as reprehensible, as is made quite clear by a letter to all communities from the
Provincial team in November, 1980. The reason for the letter is stated at the
beginning:

We dedicated the meeting of the 1st and 2nd of November above all to
looking at the Community Programmes for this year (curso). You will be
interested to know something of our reflections.
We have read them all with a view to discovering:
the characteristics that define the style proper to the Community,
a) what methods it has discovered to promote:
Prayer - Contemplation - Discernment,
Formation and reflexion in common,
interpersonal relations in the heart of the Community,
relations with other persons and with groups,
the relaxations and diversions necessary,
evaluation.
b) How the Community expresses and wants to live its Mission.
c) What criteria it has for the use of goods (circular letter to members of the Province, November 1980).

A disjunction in the view taken of these programmes between the Provincials and at least some members of the Province is indicated by the assessment that follows in the letter:

We would not be honest if we didn’t also say that:
There are some communities (very few) who have not taken the trouble to do them.
Some Programmes have not arrived in time.
We have also seen the odd Programme apparently done in order to avoid problems (salir del paso)...
Without wishing to judge the mind (interior) of anyone, we do wish to say that [these matters] struck us because they may presuppose a lack of LIFE and of DEPTH... Is not a community that draws up its Programme to ‘fulfil’ a duty acting superficially or in a legalistic spirit?
Doesn’t the fact of not doing the Programme presuppose a lack of group consciousness, an impoverishment in the sense of belonging to the Society? (November, 1980).

The interpretation presented here by the Provincials clearly presents the importance of the Community Programme not only in terms of individual communities being officially assessed on the basis of their Programme, but also as it relates less to the community than to the Province as a whole. The locus of representation and practice has been definitively shifted from the individual community as envisaged by the 1970 General Chapter to the body of communities as a whole, whether this be at the Provincial or at the international level. This shift has taken place in the name of what is being increasingly stressed as the Congregation’s very reason for existence: its mission.

We have seen already the reinterpretation and development of this concept that was carried out in the General Chapter of 1976. The principal practical result of this re-emphasis was, as we will see in the next chapters, a renewal of the Congregation’s commitment to the work of education. From the point of view of the communities in Madrid and their relations with the Province, however, the results have been less happy. This has been because the policy of the Province as experienced by members has been to subordinate virtually all other considerations to a practical identification
of ‘mission’ with the works of the Congregation itself. One of the results of this policy has been, for example, an active discouragement of people taking the government exams (oposiciones) that allow them entry into the government system of education and therefore restrict them to working in the Province’s or other private schools. The practice resulting from this identification has also relied heavily on an invocation of the symbolic patrimony of the Congregation - authority again legitimated in spiritual terms. This legitimacy has not been based on an unequivocal return to the traditional hierarchical concept of authority, nor to an understanding of Superiors as direct representatives of the divine will. Rather, the relations are more subtle but are nonetheless decisive. Authority is officially interpreted as representing to individuals and communities the body of the Society, and, in this view, it is the Society that has received its mission from God, in and through the Church. Individual missions are subordinate to this. A prepared schema on the Constitutions (Textos Orientación) presented to the Provincial Chapter in 1981 make this clear:

A group of persons freed from their own interests by faith and prayer has to find itself in the discovery of what God wants. If this does not happen in this way, and one of the religious were to see her mission differently from the way it is seen by the rest of the Body, it is authority that represents this Body, that assumes responsibility for the final decision with respect to the mission of the person within the Congregation.

In this interpretation, ‘discernment’ is no longer a dialogue in which the members of a community together work out their individual and collective roles. The role of the ‘Body’ in cases of differing interpretations presupposes, as one member expressed it, that ‘it is the person who is mistaken concerning herself’. The same position, though not quite as bluntly, was put by the Superior General when she visited the Province: ‘If a person in the community has a difficulty with obedience, the community certainly has a voice in helping her’ (Report of the visit, September-October 1980).

This pale ‘voice’ of the community seems to have little relation to either the vigorous dialogue presented in the 1970 General Chapter, or to the practice of co-responsibility that that Chapter formulated. Few outside the comfortable circle of those approved by the Provincial are under any illusion as to the fate of co-responsibility. As one person observed. ‘These days, when they talk of structures, of roles, they tell you, No, no, we are co-responsible. And it’s a lie.’ Even the Madrid Regional Representative, who is on the Provincial team, and who plays a very

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8It is interesting that the new Constitutions, produced by the General Chapter in 1982, distinguish between ‘mission’, which is to manifest the love of God, and ‘service’, which is the Congregation’s work of education.
important personal role in maintaining ties between the different communities, is seen by other members from this point of view as no more than the ‘spokesperson’ (la alta voz) of the Provincial.

This situation was seen by many to reach something of a crisis in the summers of 1983 and 1984, a crisis that illustrates the effects of official interpretation on the members of the Province as well as the way in which such interpretation tended in practice to reduce the question of obedience to the annual moves. The number of what appeared to many to be arbitrary changes imposed by the Provincial during those two summers without consultation were interpreted by some as her last opportunity to ‘clean up the Province’ before she was replaced at the beginning of the new school year in September, 1984. By others, this reductionism was seen as a diminishment of their own understanding of obedience. One person, for example, commenting on the changes of the summer, said,

‘When they talk to you of obedience they say that you can enter into dialogue with the Superior, that that is... what they require...
But then, in the moment of truth, it doesn’t help you much. After this last summer, what use has all that been?’

Another, looking at obedience more broadly, and in the light of earlier General Chapters, lamented the extent to which the practical interpretation of obedience had fixed its meaning in terms of the moves each summer:

‘Obedience is so beautiful, so full of meaning, because it truly means to carry out the plan of God. You have a plan that you want to realize, don’t you, a project, as a Christian, and I have a project, and it seems to me that obedience should be that, to help us to realize that plan, that building up of the world. You have to contribute, and so do I... And yet, always, or nearly always, when we say ‘obedience’... we mean to say that, come the summer...’

This person, whose views on obedience had been expressed in earlier months, was herself the victim of an ‘obedience’ in the summer of 1984. Her case serves to illustrate a number of the aspects involved in the application of obedience in the Province. Herself a former Provincial, whose role and early resignation were looked at in Chapter 8, she had been teaching in the school in Chamartín for some years, but wished to retire from teaching at the end of the 1983-84 school year. She had discussed this matter with the Principal of the school and with the Regional representative. Her community was not in the same building as the school, but in the other big house, in Rosales. This had been a choice that she had made herself some time earlier, after the experience of living in two different flats. Her reasons for her choice are illuminating. Not a young nor a physically strong person, her teaching day
leaves her very tired. In one of the flats, the community was made up entirely of other teachers from the same school, as well as the Principal - and this was over a particularly difficult time in the school. The evenings, therefore, tended to be a continuation of the working day. In the second flat, the community was very actively involved in the parish, and there were many evening activities for which this woman did not feel she had the strength. While this was understood and respected by other members of the community, who were happy for her to have the necessary relaxation, it made her feel, as she phrased it, like ‘the señora of the house’. In Rosales, on the contrary, a house full of old nuns, she felt that she could be of use in many little ways that were within her physical capacity - talking with an old nun who was confined to a wheel chair, going out with another who needed a companion. While she was fully aware of tensions in the house, and of the hostility of others to many of the changes that she herself had welcomed, this rhythm within which she was able to make a positive contribution meant that she was happy there. Moreover, the very conservatism of her community offered her an emotional balance between what she recognized as her own conservative tendencies, grown out of her personal history, and her intellectual commitment to change. As she herself said, in a lovely Bourdieu style comment on the decisively orienting character of dispositions, ‘My own emotional character (sensibilidad) is of the old style. Sometimes, I can accept things with my head, but they don’t feel good emotionally.’

This carefully worked out commitment to a particular group of people was shattered in five minutes over a lunch period in mid-June, 1983. She was called out of the staff room by the Regional representative, and told - not asked - to change not only her work, but also her community. She returned stunned from this conversation.

‘They’ve given me my obedience. In this way! In the corridor, in a free five minutes! My work is to change to the school in Torroja. But they also want to change my community! It’s so totally unexpected, but - what can I say? That I don’t want to change? That I’m perfectly happy where I am? They want to change me to [the one annexed to Chamartín]. They say that I can help a lot there. But I don’t know... The thing is, with the old nuns, I can respect them with my heart.’

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9 A teaching day in Spain is from 9.00 to 5.00.
10 After the election of the Socialist government in 1982, she discussed this problem with her sister, in the light of what they remembered of their experiences as children in Barcelona during the Civil War. These centred on years of sudden moves and of fear, as their father was being sought by the Republicans: ‘the Reds’. Both women recognized that these experiences continued to colour their attitudes towards the Socialists.
11 The secondary school in the same grounds as Chamartín. A change to administration in this school had already been discussed with her.
This case, and it was far from isolated over those two summers, perfectly illustrates two things. One is the brutal way (the word is not too strong) in which the Provincial was able to invoke people's fundamental commitment to the Society by exploiting the dispositions generated within the traditional symbolic order: the use of what Bourdieu labels 'symbolic violence' (1979:190-97). Virtually all of those who were wrested from works or communities where they were deeply involved - in some cases this entailed the breaking-up of groups that had lived and worked together for twelve, thirteen, fourteen years - were women who had been profoundly formed by traditional religious life. While they had welcomed the changes, and taken all sorts of initiatives while this was officially sanctioned, defiance of the official representation was literally unthinkable. Moreover, the result of this interference in people's lives is to create an atmosphere of extreme nervousness for many people each summer. One woman's story of how she got involved in giving a course in the summer of 1983 illustrates this perfectly:

'The Provincial called me a few days ago. When I answered the phone she told me that she had a proposal for me. My hair stood on end! In this very dangerous period of obediences!! Whe she only asked me to give a course in language to the young professed [nuns], I was so relieved I said, 'Yes, yes, yes'! And I don't want to give it at all!'

As one person observed, commenting on another move - this one of a person very involved in work with illiterates in the province of Huelva, in order to make her the receptionist of the Provincial house (the Curia) in Madrid: 'Our great problem is the formation that we give, that people are not capable of saying, I won't do it.' The penalty for those who did dare to say no was, as we have seen, official relegation to a symbolic Siberia.

The other aspect that the case of the former Provincial outlined above illustrates is the role of the Regional representative, a person very much liked and respected by all the Madrid communities. But as they themselves see it,

'At the level of discussion, we can say anything we like to her. But it seems to me that, when it comes to the level of having responsibility as delegate, she's not given very much... She's more on the basis of - relationship - of relationship, and more - this summer, I know for a fact from various specific cases that they've rung her to say, 'Tell Fulanita that

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12 This same woman had been invited to go to the United States in the summer of 1981 to see a very close friend whom she had not seen for some time. The friend wanted to pay the fares. The Provincial put considerable pressure on her to get her to refuse voluntarily. When this did not succeed, she laid down an ultimatum in terms of her vow of obedience. The trip did not go ahead.

13 The Spanish feminine equivalent of Joe Blow.
she's got this obedience.' And she goes and says, 'Fulanita, you've got this obedience, the Provincial's decided it' ...

In other words, for her, the [jobs] that she gets are very uncomfortable jobs.'

Looked at over all, then, the return to authority, both practical and symbolic, in the Madrid Province after 1976, has been part of a more general move in the Society to contain those changes that offered the greatest threat to the institution. This has been done by a return to a symbolic interpretation which has allowed the re-emergence, in somewhat adapted form, of an official representation based on many of the traditional characteristics of religious life. This reinstitution of personal and community charisma has resulted in Madrid in a practice that, at the level of the Province, has relied on obedience to reinforce general policy. The result of this on the attitudes of individuals has depended very much on where they stand in relation to the 'inside' 'outside' division. For those on the outside, the effect of developments in the Province since 1976 is summed up by a woman who was one of the Provincial delegates to the General Chapter of that year. Commenting on that experience, she said, 'That was when I was at my peak in the Province, when I believed in transforming things, and in being involved in order to do so. Now I realize that it's completely useless.'

Nevertheless, this aspect of confrontation between communities and the Provincial, while an important constant in people's perception and experience, gives only a partial view of the situation. In the daily life of communities, especially of those in flats, the weight of the Provincial usually rests quite lightly. Indeed, the more 'marginal' the community, the less her presence impinges, and is in general reduced to the one formal visit she makes annually. The Regional representative is welcomed, and tries to visit each community every one to two months. Meetings of various sorts are held in Madrid fairly frequently, and people are encouraged to attend, but may (and often do) choose not to.

Within this general framework, however, most communities get on with their lives and work. In the flats, domestic chores are shared, people spend time together at meals and in the evenings, chatting and relaxing. All communities - those without the Provincial's blessing as well as those with it, and this point is very important - have times together for more formal discussion and for prayer. Informal networks among various communities, both of the Society and with other Congregations, are vigorous. Some communities are deeply involved with parish-based groups, for example a group of married couples who form an ongoing nucleus for the parish. The group provides the basis of ongoing friendships in which sharing pleasure together is
as important a component as more serious matters. Some individuals are members of *Comunidades de Base:*\(^4\) groups within the Church seeking forms of Christian commitment and prayer outside the formal hierarchical structures. Many communities try to spend some vacation time together during the summer - for example, at the beach or in the mountains, a time that may be spent just in relaxation or perhaps in making an annual retreat.

The communities in flats, even where there is no direct involvement in the *barrio,* have relaxed, informal relations with their neighbours and share the life of their block. People drop in without ceremony. One group organizes a party for the neighbouring children each year on the feast of the Three Kings,\(^5\) and one of its members dresses up as Baltazar, the black king. People visit their families, if they are in Madrid, and many spend Sundays, or part of each Sunday, and the month of August with them (a practice, it must be said, frowned on by the Provincial). In short, improvisation is an essential aspect of life in the flats.

It is at this level that one must look to see the ongoing effect of the changes, and the influence of transformed practice in generating new dispositions for the nuns. This is manifest in their everyday action. It can also be seen even in that area of obedience that has been most invoked in the Province’s return to symbolic interpretation. One community, for example, that is on all other counts the most acceptable to the Provincials of those in flats flatly refuses to have a local Superior. They are threatened with one every year, and the Provincial has made it plain that she wants one. On one visit, one woman reported,

‘We were telling her how well we get on without a Superior - everyone shares some of this responsibility - one person for spiritual matters, another for whatever. And [the Provincial] said that that was all very good, very good, and that as a reward for how good we were, she’d give us a Superior.’

The person who recounted this ‘curious’ event as she called it, went on,

‘After that, we’ve had a black cloud on the horizon, but no one has said anything further. They wrote to me one summer, and asked if I would be Superior. I wrote to them and said no. In the first place, it seemed to me disastrous to take this liberty of naming me without any consultation with the community, and secondly, that I didn’t agree with the line of government being taken... and that I felt no call to take on this kind of official position.’

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\(^4\)These communities, made up principally of lay people but often with active involvement by priests and religious, have been very important in the Church in Spain, particularly in the seventies, and in Latin America.

\(^5\) *Los Reyes Magos* on January 6th, the traditional gift-giving day in Spain.
This woman is not typical of the rest of her community. Her views on the matter of a Superior are nevertheless perfectly representative. While most of them are happy to accept authority at a distance, where it doesn't limit their autonomy practically - and this, I think, is the key - they do not want it involved in their everyday lives. It is not therefore an attitude of rejection of authority. On the contrary, the community, though very unwillingly, accepted the loss of one of its central members in the summer of 1984 when this was demanded by the Provincial. But the community life that they have developed over some eight years is one that they perceive as based on a total freedom and equality of its members, a freedom and equality that they see as threatened, because of bad experiences in the past, by the naming of any one of them as Superior.

The restructuring of practice has therefore obviously been of immense significance for the experience of individuals in the Province. The matter must now be raised as to the process of the formation of appropriate dispositions among new members of the Society, a matter that brings us to the fundamental question of the reproduction of the institution, and so to the novitiate.

Formation and reproduction: the Novitiate

In her visit to the Province in 1980, the Superior General made the following observation: 'Today, a girl wants to enter or join a group of people, not who do something, but who have meaning and make it visible in something. For this, a better definition will help us' (Report of the visit, September-October 1980). This sense of seeking a 'better definition' has been central to developments in the Society since 1976. After the rapid changes of the previous period in which such enormous dispersion had taken place, with individuals and groups moving in practice to test the limits of their new interpretation of religious commitment, there was a felt need, in the 1976 Chapter, 'to stop', as one delegate put it, 'and just see where we are'. Part of this pause was inevitably a re-emphasis on the importance of initial formation for new members, and it is in the novitiate, therefore, that it is possible to see more clearly the redefinition of identity that has been chosen by the Congregation.

The basic guidelines for this reassertion are found in a document produced by a meeting of Mistresses of Novices in Rome in 1977. This document, Guidelines on Formation (Orientaciones sobre la Formación), addresses the question of formation in general, that is, from the time of first entering the Congregation until death. In other words, there is a clear recognition of the need not only for the development of dispositions that determine the commitment of the individual to this particular institution, but also of the value of effective reinforcement throughout life. By this
definition, therefore, although the possibility of individuals leaving the Congregation is addressed, membership is essentially for life. In view of the numbers who had left in the previous decade, and the circulation of related ideas about the possibility of religious institutions moving to accept formally the idea of ‘temporary vocation’, this renewed emphasis on the total nature of membership is significant. The formation in the novitiate must be seen, therefore, in this context - as creating the habitus for lifelong commitment.

The ‘stages’ reformulated by the Guidelines are, first, that of ‘candidacy’, ‘a period of knowing each other through contact with a community’ (1977:6). This period is to be one, normally of six months to a year though this is not specified in the Guidelines, in which the candidate (often still referred to by the nuns as the postulant) lives with a normal community and continues to lead a normal, active life while under the spiritual direction of (‘accompanied by’) a member of the Society.

The second stage is ‘initial formation’, that is, the novitiate, which the Guidelines describe as ‘essentially an introduction to the religious life in the Society of the Sacred Heart. In this search for Jesus present in life, insistence is on the interiorization and deepening of the faith (8)’. The duration of this period is from two to four years, and ends with the ‘first commitment’, made in the form of a promise.

The third period, also seen as part of the initial formation of members, may last from three to nine years, and is characterized as ‘a deeper knowledge of the mission of the Society’, with priority being given to ‘experience of the apostolic life’ (1977:10). At the end of this period, and at the discretion of the Provincial and her team, she makes her final vows.

The period after final vows is divided in the Guidelines into three stages: active involvement in the ‘mission’ of the Congregation, preparation for retirement, and ‘the third age’. The whole period is characterized as ‘intensification of the dynamism of the following of Christ, made concrete today in the commitments of the 1976 Chapter’ (12).

This focus on the 1976 Chapter - no mention is made of either 1967 or 1970 - underlies the entire Guidelines. The introduction states:

The General Chapter of 1976 has sought how to enter today into the heart of life with the same attitudes as those of Jesus, and has responded with these words:
- contemplation
- communion
- a sense of being educators (sentido educador) and the search for justice
discernment (1977:4).

It is these orientations that provide the framework for the novitiate.
In Spain, this has been in Granada since 1977-78, a decision made on the basis of the availability of what was seen as an excellent evening theology course run by the Jesuits. The novitiate is for both provinces, the North as well as the Centre-South. In 1983 there were six novices, three from each province, ranging in age from 19 (the minimum age for entering) to over 30. Among them were two qualified teachers, a second year medical student, and a former member of the Department of Social Anthropology in one of the universities in Madrid. Of the other two, one had completed the first year of a university course, and the other had worked for a year or two after completing high school (B.U.P.) before entering.

In charge of the novices is not a team, but a Mistress of Novices, who is helped by one other person. The novitiate house is new, a renovated building on the outskirts of the city, looking out from its chapel windows over a tranquil view of cultivated fields to the Sierra Nevada. The rhythm of life is also essentially tranquil, although not entirely withdrawn from the world. Nor is there any question of the novices wearing a habit.

In the mornings, people get up at the time they need to in order to get ready for work. This is a deliberate choice on the part of the Mistress of Novices, who explained, 'They get up when they want to, whenever appropriate - so that they get used to - that it's not necessary to pray, or to get up at 6, but it depends on work.' The use of time, therefore, is seen not as a code but as determined by work. This is only partly true, as the novices work only in the mornings. The three from the North (and this is very symptomatic of the difference between the two Provinces) are involved on four mornings in works, such as a refuge, that do not belong to the Society and are directly concerned with the poor. The three from the Centre-South give classes on the same mornings in the school run by the Congregation. This is at the express wish of the Provincial, who thinks that 'it is important that they have experience in our schools'. The Mistress of Novices and her assistant also teach in the school. On Fridays, the day is spent in the novitiate. From 9.30 till 11.00, people study the writings of the Foundress or other material on the Society. From 11.00, they share the cleaning of the house and other domestic chores.

At 1.30 on the days of going out to work, all return to the novitiate, where they eat and do the washing-up together. From 3.00 till 4.30, people are free to attend to their own concerns. From 4.30 till 6.00 is 'formation' - time spent in personal study.

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16 This woman, in her early thirties, had first entered with another order of nuns, but left after about six months. She found them still very closed and conservative, and felt unable to express her own freer understanding of her religious commitment within such narrow limits. Her time in the Novitiate of the Society, by contrast, had been very happy and satisfying.
or together with the Mistress of Novices and her assistant, studying themes outlined by the Mistress of Novices:

\"the vows as presented in the Constitutions, mission - that is, to teach the love of God, discernment, formulation of the charisma of the Congregation, the Bible.\"

Twice a week, they recite Vespers together, have supper, and go to the Jesuits' evening theology classes from 8.00 till 10.00. Once a week, there is a meeting to discuss such matters as those concerning the Province. Each person spends about half an hour in personal prayer each day, and one afternoon a week has more time - an hour to an hour and a half - set aside for this purpose, with a community Mass every fortnight. On Saturday, the novices give catechetics classes in the parish or help in the hospital. Sunday is free except for the recital of Lauds in the morning (at 9.45) and Vespers in the evening.

Several times a year, normally during the more important liturgical seasons, such as Advent and Lent, a full day is set aside for prayer. In the summer, the novices make an eight-day retreat, based on the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. A week to ten days is spent with their families, and they are then involved for the rest of the summer working in various activities. Part of this is regarded as 'service to the Province': helping in the communities of older nuns, or in the summer holiday programmes (colonias). For the rest, as the Mistress of Novices explained, 'we try to let them work with people who are more marginalized: the handicapped; difficult rural communities. Each one goes to a different place - it gives them a good balance, gives them perspective.'

It is clear that the time of novitiate is carefully structured in order to achieve the integration of what are seen as the essential activities of the Society: prayer and work. But, according to the Mistress of Novices, 'there is a clear option for interiorization... There is value in their work, but not so much from the point of view of involvement (por la inserción) because this is not the moment. The very house tells you this - I would never want a young person to live like this. But for the novitiate, yes. It's not an isolation... Absolutely not'.

The resistance of the Mistress of Novices to any sense of isolation, physical or intellectual, is indicated by her choice to send the novices for their theological studies to the Jesuit centre, in spite of the fact that there is another institute in the city run by the Dominicans especially for nuns. Novices from fourteen other novitiates go there every afternoon. As she explained this choice:
'It seemed to me a formation that has little to do with education and is very traditional... I prefer the theological line of the Jesuits, because it seems to me more fundamentally serious. That's in the first place. Second, I don't believe in theology 'for nuns'. Theology is for everyone, and each one applies it for herself. For that reason, to set up a theological formation just for nuns - normally there are some who always undervalue us, who think we're stupid, that we're a separate species (gremio).

It's not that I disparage the Dominicans' course, but it seems to me that the context - or - what shall I say. In concrete terms, we had a meeting with the novices from other orders, and there was an enormous infantilism. It's true that we run the danger of self-sufficiency - but between self-sufficiency and infantilism, I'd prefer to have to correct self-sufficiency. It's a choice - because the other seemed to me to have no hope of correction... It's horrible.

To me, the type of morality that they're given seems very important - political morality, sexual morality - there are so many things that are important. So [to talk of] 'the psychology of religious life' - that doesn't say anything to me. If you say to me 'human psychology', that I understand. But that we should be a species apart, even including our psychology...'"

The orientation of the novitiate towards prayer and study means a great emphasis on the community, and the central importance of this aspect of religious life came through very strongly from the novices themselves. In talking about their reasons for choosing to enter religious life, this sense of community - as the place by which, within which, supported by which, they chose to express their religious sense - came through as definitive. Also clear was their sense of 'mission'. This emerged as they talked about being 'called' to this life, a 'call' that grew out of a 'discovery of the person of Jesus', as several of them put it, and about being 'sent'. Work for them, as they said, is 'not just work but mission'.

In this environment of commitment to work, in community, it is interesting that for these women even the vows seem to be of secondary importance. For earlier novices, those between 1970 and 1976, the formal interpretation of the vows, even of final vows, was very unclear. This seems to have made no difference at all in practice. People just as happily made what was defined as a promise as a vow. For the novices in 1983 also, the taking of vows was, in a sense, extra - not fundamental to their initial choice, but part of a later initiation into a more complex elaboration of religious life. As one of them said, 'We haven't dealt with them yet'. This is not to say that they had no ideas on the subject. On the contrary, they were clear as to how they understood both poverty and chastity - or virginity, as they preferred to talk about it. It is vastly illuminating that obedience emerged as the least assimilated, and mostly seen in its effects, a situation that reverses the elaborate symbolizing and legitimizing of authority and obedience in the official representation. For this reason, it is worth quoting what the novices had to say on these two vows (in the sequence determined by my questions).
On virginity, for example, one said,

'I see virginity as - for Jesus. That you want a universal love... Not just to limit yourself to certain specific people, to an exclusive love - but with a capacity to [love] each person without appropriating him or her to yourself...'

Another commented,

'I think that, for one thing, it blooms (brota) from the relation with the Lord, you feel loved. I don’t think there’s anything more than that... Your capacity to love becomes greater. Greater in the best sense of the word - more personal, and in that sense it’s liberating.'

On obedience, the observations were much less worked out. One of the novices explained,

'I haven’t really thought about it much - I suppose more than anything in the sense of the effects of obedience. It seems to me that obedience is necessary..., especially in relation to mission. What doesn’t persuade me much is the way of carrying out authority in certain cases. To me - it doesn’t traumatize me, but I don’t like it much.'

Another said, 'To me it seems that, inasmuch as we’ve chosen to live religious life in a specific Congregation - there exists the mediation of authority, in order to live.'

This basically practical and contingent view of obedience is that consciously fostered by the Mistress of Novices. Her view is that

'when you make a vow of obedience, you make the vow to God. And one of the means in religious life is that it is personalized in the Superior. Whether that Superior is the Provincial or not... That is to say, that it depends a little on people. The novices are given a formation in accountability (el dar cuenta) and integrity (honradez). They are not given a formation to be submissive. Absolutely not... They should be sufficiently free to know what it is to obey - that sometimes it means saying ‘yes’, and other times it means saying ‘no’. It’s not so clear that it always means saying ‘yes’. We have to seek the will of God. In this sense, I believe that we must try to form people who are free, people who can say ‘no’. That they should be at peace because of their integrity, not because they go along with someone.'

Looking at this aspect of the novitiate training it would appear that the commitment to practical as opposed to symbolic interpretation is dominant. Other aspects make it less clear that this is so. Even the understanding of obedience is

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17 The word honradez interestingly begins to appear in the documents of the Society after 1976, usually in relation to areas that have proved to be the areas of greatest conflict and most difficult resolution. I would suggest, from the contexts in which it is found, that it is part of the move towards mythifying language in the Congregation that is attempting to reimpose a cohesive interpretation on actuality.
situated, and therefore given meaning, in relation to other aspects of interpretation
that appear to accept much more directly the official representation - and this, I have
suggested, is being generated once again in the Province largely within the symbolic
order. Explanations by the novices about the vow of poverty seem to bear this out.
Poverty, in the interpretation suggested by them,\textsuperscript{18} was concerned primarily with
attitudes. At the same time, what also began to emerge was an attitude towards the
poor that had been hinted at in the 1976 Chapter, and this is part of the mythifying
process that had slipped insidiously back into the official discourse. It is the view
that seems to attach certain specific characteristics to the state of being poor - a view
not dissimilar to that surrounding the poor schools in earlier years. Poverty was
explained by one of the novices as follows:

‘For one thing, your own relation with Jesus makes you very poor in that
it takes you very much out of yourself. So many of the plans about yourself,
and about your assumptions about life and the way of relating to others -
they collapse...

As well, if you live the mission that we live, and you find yourself with the
poor... I'm certain that the poor, in some manner, have very spontaneously
\textit{(a flor de piel)} - I don't know - many of the values of the Kingdom that we
don't have so spontaneously - for example, solidarity, sensitivity towards
others. It's through this relation with the poor that you are converted.

Of course, there's also material poverty.’

While it is probably inevitable that the immersion of the novices in a lifestyle
designed to promote ‘interiorization’ of the values of the Society should lead to a
certain rarified approach to issues, there did seem evidence of a retreat to the
symbolization of language that formed a basis of official discourse after 1976. The
use of ‘mission’ by the novices is part of this. ‘Discernment’ and ‘vocation’ were also
firmly within the accepted official limits. But perhaps even more illustrative was the
translation that had to be done by the Mistress of Novices to one of the questions in
the discussion. The question concerned their views of those aspects of life in the
Province that they felt would help them continue to make concrete their initial
religious experience after they left the novitiate. Despite their original experience as
postulants of living for six to twelve months in ordinary communities, a blank silence
ensued until the Mistress of Novices rephrased the question to ask what would help
them in ‘fidelity to their vocation’. Whatever the problems with the initial question,
they were solved, not by further explanation, but by being reinterpreted in terms that
derived their meaning from the symbolic order.

\textsuperscript{18}It must be pointed out that all these observations were made in a fairly formal interview
of an hour and a half, which means they were obviously very limited and partial. I do not
wish to present them, therefore, as though they represented the total views of the novices.
Nevertheless, the sorts of comments made, by people used to self-reflection and articulation,
may be taken as at least indicative of basic attitudes.
This constant return by the nuns to invocation of the symbolic patrimony in order to give meaning to their actions and relations is part of a process that is reinforcing official representation in the Province at the expense of alternative interpretations. Alternative interpretations continue to exist, as we have seen, particularly at the level of everyday life. Nevertheless, with a broad acceptance of official discourse by the novices as they develop dispositions deemed appropriate to religious life,\textsuperscript{19} certain orientations are likely to emerge that will act to reproduce the existing social relations. Whether this direction will be maintained I cannot say. Only future developments in the Province can show that. What I would like to look at very briefly are two matters that seem to indicate that the imposition of orthodoxy, while being aimed at officially, is still far from being achieved. One, at the level of discourse, is the formulation of new Constitutions in the General Chapter of 1982. This may be seen as an attempted resolution of tensions and ambiguities. The other, at the level of practice, concerns the general elections in Spain, also in 1982, and the Pope's visit a few days later. Both may be seen as an evaluation of the two options - historical or symbolic interpretation - by the members of the Madrid Province.

Resolution and evaluation

The new Constitutions, 1982

I do not wish to analyze in great detail the text of the Constitutions here. Their long-term effect on the Madrid communities has yet to be worked out, an effect that will certainly be influenced by the replacement of the Provincial under whom the directions of the 1976 Chapter were implemented. We saw in Chapter 8 the constraints that were placed on the Society by the Sacred Congregation for Religious in drawing up the Constitutions, and the extent to which delegates to the Chapter chose to avoid direct confrontation while trying to 'keep doors open'. The Constitutions, and especially some of its more specific requirements, must then be read in this context. What I wish to do here is simply to indicate the reaction of people in Madrid to their first reading of the document.

The feeling among many communities was one of relief, that the Constitutions had in general avoided spelling out specific requirements that would affect the choices they had already made in their everyday lives. The extent of the relief was a measure of the anxiety generated in the Province by the developments of the preceding period.

\textsuperscript{19}Though it is obviously important that people enter the novitiate with dispositions already determined by other factors: that is, they are not pristine.
Along with relief went cautious optimism. The optimism arose from a formulation of ends and means that was sufficiently open to allow diversity of interpretation. This came, at least in part, from a recognition in the Constitutions of the internationality of the Congregation in a sense not only of imposing unity of practice but also of welcoming 'the richness and diversity of our cultures' (Constituciones 1982:Art. 156). It is to be ‘through the varied richness of our countries, cultures, and apostolic tasks [that] these Constitutions will be for us a link of love and of unity’ (Art.180; emphasis mine). This acknowledgement of diversity reopened the way, in the light of the ‘urgency of the needs of the world’ (Art.12) to direct action in response to practical situations. Moreover, the relation with the Church itself is presented as encompassing, very positively, the possibility of alternatives by laying stress also on ‘the local Churches': ‘The urgency of the needs of the world and the call of the local Churches demands from us creative responses according to the diversity of our cultures’ (Art.12).

Another basis for optimism concerning the Constitutions was the relative simplicity of language and presentation - a simplicity that echoes the 1970 rather than the 1976 Chapter. The Constitutions rest, moreover, on a sense of history that looks not only backwards but forwards as well. While recognizing their inspiration in the original Constitutions of 1815 - ‘the Chapter of 1982 recognizes the Constitutions of 1815 as the foundation text of the Society’ (Introduction:3) - the new text shows the same willingness as did the documents of 1967 and 1970 to respond to new needs in a changing world.

The optimism of many of those in Madrid was however, as I have mentioned, cautious. The qualifications that people felt were based on a number of quite specific aspects of the Constitutions. All of them are related to the concerns that I have already discussed, which suggests that these are most certainly the concerns nearest to the hearts of members. A number, however, appear not in the main text of the Constitutions but in an Appendix (Libro Complementario - from now on referred to as Lib. Comp.). This is of great importance, as the Appendix, while also subject to scrutiny by the Sacred Congregation for Religious, is not officially considered definitive in the same sense as the main text. The effect of this difference is that changes may be made by the Congregation to matters in the Appendix without reference to the Sacred Congregation. This is obviously crucial for future developments in the Society, and may be seen (though I don’t know whether this is how it was viewed by delegates) as a strategy for fulfilling the requirements of the Sacred Congregation while leaving the way open for circumventing them in the
It is important then, when indicating the concerns that were felt by people in Madrid, whether the point of specific concern is to be found in the main text of the Constitutions or in the Appendix.

One such concern was the allocation of a specific amount of time to prayer: an hour and a half daily. The exact length is, however, mentioned in the Appendix. The text, except in relation to novices, speaks only of 'a prolonged time each day for prayer' (Art.23). Another is the question of spiritual direction, but again it is the Appendix that is specific:

The Society offers its members the means necessary for their life of prayer, among others:
- spiritual direction
- being accompanied by a religious of the Congregation (Lib. Comp.: Art.23).

The main text is less concrete, and speaks of 'each one of us [assuming] the responsibility of discerning with another person the modalities of her life of prayer' (Constituciones:Art.56). This is, however, to be 'in agreement with the Provincial'.

Some people were disappointed at the stated option of the Society to 'own and administer goods' (Constituciones:Art.56), although this was not unexpected in view of the known stipulation of the Sacred Congregation for Religious in this matter. The 'person Responsible' has gone altogether from the text, which speaks throughout of 'the Superior'. Nevertheless, the role of local Superior is presented in a simple and uncomplicated (unmythicized) manner:

The local Superior is at the service of the life and the mission of the community. She will be attentive to fostering among all in the community, discernment and co-responsibility, and to stimulating their apostolic commitment, in a relation of reciprocal confidence. She will realize her task of inspiration (animación) with love and simplicity (Constituciones:Art.36).

What rang alarm bells in Madrid, however, was the assumption that all communities should have a local Superior. What is stated in the text is that she is to be named by the Provincial (Constituciones:Art.146), not chosen by the community. Some of the alarm was allayed, however, when communities realized the possibilities contained in the gloss in the Appendix, that 'Small communities may have a Superior who does

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20 This is not suggest that these matters might not be implemented immediately. There is obviously much room for interpretation - one of the reasons why the choice of Provincial is critical.

21 One women's Congregation was refused official approbation because their revised Constitutions specifically rejected the right to own property (Interview in Granada in October, 1983, with a member of the Province who works with a nun of this order).
not live in the same community' (Lib. Comp.:6). Offered this escape clause, a number of communities opted for the Regional representative as their local Superior, thus keeping her at a livable distance.

Many aspects of the Constitutions, therefore, suggest a direction of openness and flexibility in the Society's final redefinition of itself. Nevertheless, underlying all is - yet again - a fundamentally orienting reinforcement of relations based on obedience that derive directly from the nuns' position within the hierarchical and patriarchal relations in the Church. This is made clear in the very first article of the Constitutions which reads:

The Society of the Sacred Heart is an apostolic institute of pontifical status (derecho).

With the same love that St Madeleine Sophie felt for the Church, and like all religious Institutes, we recognize that each one of us, because of our vow of obedience, must obey the orders of the Holy Father (Constituciones:Art.1).

The status of this declaration is indicated by one of the women who was on the Central Governing Team of the Society between 1976 and 1982, and who was therefore present for the preparation of the Constitutions of the Chapter. She wrote: 'Every religious Congregation is obliged to include the article about obedience to the Pope - otherwise it would not have been there!' (1985: personal communication).

The affirmation of obedience, therefore, was directly imposed by the Society's subordinate position within the relations of power in the Church, and is clearly at variance with the wishes of the women themselves. At the same time, the centrality of obedience is developed throughout the Constitutions:

We shall attempt in faith to accept with mutual confidence the authority of Superiors (Constituciones:Art.47).

Each one of us is committed, by the vow of obedience, to obey the decision of Superiors, according to the Constitutions (Art.48).

[The professed] shall periodically give an account to the Provincial of our prayer, our fraternal relations, and of our apostolic commitments (Art.222).

The Provincial is the one who sends religious to their apostolic service and to their community (Art.151).

The quotes could be multiplied, but were summed up for members of the Madrid communities in a matter that many found the most disturbing of all - a further change in sequence of the vows from chastity, poverty, and obedience, to obedience, poverty, and chastity (e.g., Constituciones:Art.40). Curiously, delegates to the Chapter seemed to place no particular significance on this change, and it was 22I.e., one who has taken final vows.
not apparently discussed at any great length in the Chapter itself. The ostensible reason was that this was the sequence in which the Foundress had originally expressed them. I say curiously, however, because this lack of concern ignored totally the context from which such a change took at least part of its meaning. This was the previous change in sequence made by the Second Vatican Council, in which, as we saw, chastity was placed first in order. It was this displacement of chastity that people in Madrid found particularly disturbing. Members of one community made the following observations in a general conversation:

‘[The change in sequence] really struck me too... The thing is, when they changed chastity and poverty, they underlined that it was a change of order for a fundamental reason.’

‘The change then gave obedience a very important emphasis.’

‘Not just emphasis. It's more than emphasis. What I mean is, for example, it’s very different to read chastity [first], that seems to me to have a dynamism, and a source of - of life. Whereas to read obedience, underlying it are many lines that are going to create dependence rather than liberty. So that will be how it is. It's more than a change in sequence. The change in sequence is just the appearance. For me, if they change the sequence, but underneath I don't see this line that is going to create dependence in place of liberty, it wouldn't worry me.’

This observation says it all - the subversion of chastity: liberty, by obedience: dependence. The Constitutions certainly seem to reinforce this orientation. What remains to be seen is the extent to which this will be realized in practice; and certainly, the Constitutions are, as most people agreed, very dependent upon interpretation. Official representation is one thing. Even in 1982, in the months immediately after the Chapter, the Madrid communities demonstrated that practice could be quite another.

The general elections and the Pope’s visit, October-November 1982.

I have suggested that these two events may be seen as an evaluation by the nuns of the alternatives open to them. This becomes even more true in view of the fact that both took place within two to three months of the circulation of the new Constitutions that begin, it must be remembered, with an officially required affirmation of obedience to the Pope.

The general elections were of enormous significance for the whole of Spain: they brought a Socialist party into government for the first time. Just as importantly - and this is an area that particularly affected the nuns - the Socialists had, as an important part of their platform, policies in opposition to the official Church. Among the more bruited of these were the recognition of divorce (already passed into law under the previous government), the depenalization of abortion, and
a strong commitment to public education. The nuns in Madrid who voted for the Socialist party coincided almost exactly with those who tended to be outside the ‘blessing of the Provincial’. At the same time, there were enormous differences among the attitudes towards those who voted for the Socialists by those who did not, a difference largely defined by whether communities lived in flats or in the big houses. In the flats, for example, the community that scored positively on most counts with regard to the Provincial decided to have a meeting before the elections in order to try to evaluate for themselves, through looking at policies, the positions of the major parties. These were almost all women of the Civil War generation. In other words, although most of them did not vote for the Socialists, they displayed a preparedness to address the issues as openly as they could. In the big houses, the main tendency was to dismiss ‘the Reds’ out of hand. It became clear in conversations that, for many, political perceptions were still determined by the events of fifty years earlier.

The visit of the Pope some few days later demonstrates, except on one centrally important point, the same range of attitudes. Many of the nuns were enthusiastic about the visit, and joined the crowds who celebrated not only their religious but what are still, for many, their inextricably related cultural and social values. This is not to say that, for the nuns or for Spaniards in general, enthusiasm for John Paul II necessarily included a reaffirmation of the identity of values between being Spanish and being Catholic. For a minority of groups, it did, as indicated by the appearance of masses of national flags, slogans such as ‘Long live Christ the King’, and the yoke and arrows of the Falange. There was also a concerted attempt, which people attributed to Opus Dei, to manipulate the entire visit. What is perhaps more interesting than anything else about the visit is that, for reasons associated with changes in both the Church and Spanish society, the attempt did not succeed.

Among many of the nuns, however, attitudes towards the visit ranged from indifferent to disapproving. Disapproval was related to a number of issues, such as the expense of the visit; the involvement of the Pope, through some of his speeches (especially his sermon in the public Mass in Madrid), in what were seen as political matters such as divorce and education; the general sense that the schools were expected to be formally involved in something that was seen by many as a waste of time. In two of the schools, it was the lay teachers rather than the nuns who showed any interest in the visit.

23 The election was in fact originally called by the government to coincide with the Pope’s visit, a decision calculated on the prospect of immense political advantage. The Spanish hierarchy, however, after some hesitation, advised the Pope to postpone his visit.

24 An historical slogan now used by an extremist right-wing political group.
On one point, however, there was unanimity of practice among all the nuns, regardless of their place of community. For those (the vast majority) who no longer wear the habit, there was no question of acceding to John Paul II's repeated directive that religious wear the habit. This papal obsession relates to both male and female religious, and the women were not forced, as were the men, to make a choice about whether or not to attend the meeting with the Pope on the basis of being prepared or otherwise to don a habit. For his meeting with theologians, wearing a soutane was made a condition of attendance, and a number of men opted not to go. The same formal requirement was not laid down for the meeting with religious women, possibly, as one nun suggested, because of the presence of women from secular institutes. Nevertheless, all the nuns were perfectly aware of John Paul's views on the matter, and the pressure that he has been putting on women's religious Congregations to conform. All this was treated with blithe disregard by everyone in the Madrid Province - including the Provincial. The only concession that I was aware of was made by the nun, a member of the Society, who was actually to read the address of welcome on behalf of the Major Superiors. She wore a skirt instead of her usual jeans.

This decision by the nuns, despite the call in the Constitutions for obedience to the Pope, cannot, I think, be classified as defiance. It actually seems to enter more the realm of what has become for them through their practice the entirely unthinkable. The habit is not even mentioned in the Constitutions, perhaps because, as suggested by a former Superior General, the team of government of the Society in Rome 'fear massive disobedience'. Even 'obedience to the orders of the Holy Father' reluctantly affirmed in the new Constitutions seems to be open to interpretation, a factor that opens up other possibilities for alternatives if practice is permitted to become the generative principle of decisions in the Province.

Conclusions

A number of conclusions may be drawn from the material presented in this chapter, but for the moment I wish to confine myself to two principal observations. The first, obviously, concerns the role of obedience in the Province. From the situations we've looked at it is possible to say that obedience - and with it the invocation of the symbolic order - is central because of its effects. That is, it interferes with the control by these women over their own lives that I have suggested is implicit in the choice of chastity. Nevertheless, this autonomy is now realized for the nuns in the sphere of everyday life and practice and these women do control, at this level, their own lives. Moreover, living in community is seen as fundamental to
people's personal commitment, and there is general acceptance that the work of the Society requires a certain amount of personal flexibility. The nuns in general, therefore, recognize the modest nature of personal charisma in this situation. But obedience acts to withdraw control from individuals, even the control that comes from freely accepting a 'mission' not of their own making. This is a situation that comes primarily from the relation of the Society to the official Church. Hence the need to legitimize, and the excess of symbolic legitimization of obedience in contrast to the vow of chastity. In a sense, the reinterpretation of all the rest doesn't matter for the nuns: separation, prayer, spiritual direction. But they do in practice matter because, through obedience, they have become part of an attempt by the Province to re-establish symbolic codes in which meaning is determined by their relation to each other, and especially to the generative principle of obedience that underlies them.

The contradiction basic to traditional religious life therefore remains for the nuns. At the level of daily life, the generative principle of practice is chastity. At the formal level, it is obedience. For most of the members of the Province, therefore, who concentrate on living their daily lives, chastity is a successful practical strategy and leads to personal fulfilment and happiness. It is not, moreover, drawn into the symbolic order, because its implications - not yet brought into the level of discourse - do not need to be explained away. On the other hand, for those who want to continue invoking the symbolic order, the daily life offered in most communities, even in the big houses, leads to frustration and unhappiness, precisely because the codes that determined meaning within traditional religious life, and within which their actions had automatic meaning, have changed.

This ongoing contradiction between chastity and obedience in the Province continues to rest on the position of the Society in relation to the Church, and reflects its unchanged patriarchal character. Nevertheless, the fact that the nuns have refused to accept a particular interpretation by the Pope and rejected the very idea of a return to wearing the habit indicates that these patriarchal relations are no longer solely definitive for them. By diversifying the bases of their position in the Church, the women have identified themselves with other groups, and thus become part of different sets of power relations. The most important of these are the relations based on ownership of property and goods - what are essentially class relationships.

For the women in the Madrid communities, there is an ambivalence as to their place within these relationships. On the one hand, there is a sense of commitment to the poor in society, and a conscious desire to identify with the challenges posed by this group to existing social relations. On the other hand, except for a few instances, there is little real poverty in the communities in Madrid. Simplicity of life, yes.
Sharing of goods and living in common, yes. But the Society's very ownership of goods means that, as one outsider put it, even in the flats 'they don't really live the life of ordinary people, because they don't have the same risks - economic and otherwise - that ordinary people have'. Some people within the Province would agree with this observation, and have themselves suggested that the values by which they live remain, as one person put it, 'bourgeois'.

Perhaps it would be truer to say that the alignment of most of the Madrid communities in practice is not with the group who want to challenge the set of social relations based on property, but with the group of middle-class professionals. In practice, therefore, the nuns' membership is in the dominant, not subordinate, social group on the basis of class, if not of gender. This alignment is determined by their work of education, and is based both on the way in which the nuns see this work and on their own status, through work, as professional women. Over the whole period of change, and despite differing approaches, the women of the Society have remained clear that the work of education is their central task, and that they are essentially defined by this work, the 'mission' of the Society, rather than by any other consideration. It is to their realization of this mission, and its relation with their understanding of their social and religious commitment, that I wish to devote the final sections of this thesis.
CHAPTER 10
Autonomy and Transforming Action: Education and the Nuns in the World

The work of education in the Society has always, both before and after 1967, been central for the women who were involved in it. This was so at the level of the Congregation as an organization, and it has continued to be regarded by its members as essentially defined by this original commitment. It was also so in the experience of individual women, who were able through this work to realize professional satisfaction. At both levels, involvement in education has always confronted the nuns with the social and practical exigencies of the world outside their communities and demanded some response by them. The importance of the work of education in the Society, therefore, has been both personal and collective.

Even in the rapid diversification that followed in the Madrid Province after 1970, people in general remained involved in education. This may have been partly because of lack of training in other fields, but as a rule this does not seem to have been so. The situation of those who chose to go to Castillo in the Canary Islands (see Chapter 8) demonstrates a profound commitment specifically to promoting better access by children to schools, and this situation was representative, though more radical than most, of the position of members of the Province as a whole. Very occasionally, women made a choice to work in other fields; one person, for example, got a job in a factory, but this was exceptional.

What did change from 1967 was the interpretation of what was meant by education, and it is therefore again in the matter of interpretation, and the practice that it generated, that alternatives emerged in the Province that were to constitute an obstruction to a total re- imposition of official interpretation.

In the matter of education, however, conflict with attempted official interpretation was generated more directly by the limits imposed at the Provincial level after 1976 rather than at that of the Congregation as a whole. This was partially due to the person of the Provincial who, as we saw in the last chapter, placed particular emphasis on involvement in 'our' schools. There were also, however, other important factors. One was the situation in Spain itself, in which
education had been seen by both Church and State, from the time of the Restoration (1874) on, as a battleground for differing ideologies (see Chapter 4). The distinction between public and private education, therefore, was based even more firmly than in many other countries on a commitment to reproducing particular ideas and beliefs and their associated social relations. It was a tradition into which the Society in Spain was firmly locked, both by its identification with the position of the Church in Spain itself, and by its own historical origins and development (see Chapter 2).

The new Constitutions of 1982 talk of the response of Madeleine Sophie Barat 'to the needs of her time' (Constituciones, Introduction:1). What happened to the Society right from the beginning however - what was indeed fundamental to the vision of both Léonor de Tournély and of Joseph Varin - was the acceptance of an interpretation of these 'needs' that was imposed by the Church. In other words, the Society's initial commitment was to an elitist education based on class divisions - a practice that resulted from the very way in which the schools were constituted, since nowhere in the original Constitutions is the need for this type of education specified. The orientation was based on the Church's commitment to a particular social formation. The role of the Church within the official representation of the Congregation has always, then, been central. It is a role, moreover, that has ensured a concentration on the reproduction of a system of beliefs above all other considerations, and seen education as primarily a tool for evangelization, while at the same time reinforcing, in the very structures of its educational system, the social relations that constituted the broader society. One of the possibilities that emerged within the range of alternative interpretations embraced by members of the Province after 1967 was for the nuns as a group to make education primarily a response to particular social needs that they themselves saw as essential, or to continue to allow the official Church to act as the primary agent of interpretation, and therefore of practice.

There are four major strands in the Province's interpretation of education. One relates to factors in the Province itself. A second is based on developments in the Congregation as a whole, and in the Province within this general process. A third is the position of the Church, specifically as it has developed in Spain. And finally, there are the structures of Spanish society itself, and the role of education within the social formation. I wish to look first at the question of developments in the Society as

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1 Durkheim (1977) saw this as fundamental to a specifically Jesuit model of education.

2 That these are specific is indicated, again, by a comparison with the Northern Province, where the other three influences are basically similar (although regional differences within Spanish society itself are also significant).
a whole, since these formed the basis and general context for at least the initial reorientation of the Province.

Education as mission and service: 1967-84

Two directives were fundamental in inaugurating changes in the Province's policies on education. One was the Chapter of 1964 which, within its overall call to a more realistic practice of poverty, required an end to the separation between fee-paying and poor schools where the latter still existed. This meant the closure of the poor schools and the incorporation of their students into the fee-paying schools, with certain modifications to the latter in order to accommodate them. It was a change that was not without its problems, but was accomplished in the Centre-South Province, with one exception, by 1968. The second, and more definitive in its impact, was the Chapter of 1967. It was this Chapter that initiated the reinterpretation of the Society's role in education by reinterpretting the concept of education itself. It was also the first to talk about the Congregation's work of education in terms of its 'mission'.

[Christ] confided to us a Mission: 'As my Father has sent me, I also send you.' Education, to which we are consecrated, is our mission par excellence... Education helps man to discover himself and makes him capable of forging his own destiny (Orientaciones 1967:52).

In Chapter 7, I looked at the extent to which this renewed emphasis on education was essentially situated by the nuns in the context of social justice. The awareness was part of the Chapter's attempt to reinterpret the 'needs' of the world, and the dimensions of these needs were clearly set out: a world in which humanity has become more aware of its own value; a world in which interpersonal relations have acquired a growing importance; a world of scientific and technical progress; that aspires to universal brotherhood and is constructing the unity of the human family; a world in which it is urgent to combat ignorance and hunger (Orientaciones 1967:52-55). Such a world, as the Chapter saw it, requires a much broader concept of education than simply teaching in educational institutions.

This broadening of the concept of education was given impetus by the Chapter of 1970, with its greater emphasis on education as a commitment to the poor, and, even more significantly, to actually working to change the social structures that produce poverty (Capítulo General 1970:13-15). It was to be a work of liberation (14), that challenged the very conditions of poverty. Interestingly, the Chapter of 1976, where it talks specifically of education, does not at all change or even mythify this focus. Education was central to the concerns of this Chapter also, still in relation to justice, to liberation, and to the poor and the marginal.
The culmination of the process of rethinking education was a meeting of Provincials from the whole Society in Mexico in January 1979. This meeting was an attempt to bring together the thinking and the experiences of all parts of the Society. It was, as one Provincial (not Spanish) observed, 'the first time that North and South, and East and West, had been able to talk and to listen to each other... It was a big step forward in Congregational dialogue.'

The meeting produced a document that was, according to even the most sceptical members of the Madrid Province, 'wonderful' (precioso), and its subsequent influence in many parts of the Society has been significant at the level of Provincial policy. In Madrid, perhaps the most important aspect of its influence has been to give some legitimacy to those alternative interpretations that have come under pressure from the Province.

At the same time, the Province itself, especially up to 1976, had been actively involved in trying to develop new ways of living out its commitment to education within the demands of the general education system. The period from 1970 to 1976 was a period of profound self-examination in this respect and of posing fundamental questions about the nature of the Province's involvement. Some individuals and groups answered such questions by moving out altogether from schools run by the Society. Many of these entered the government school system; others joined other Church or private schools, or child-care centres. Within the Society's own schools, this was the time when the possibility of new approaches was raised, possibilities among which figured such words as 'socialization', 'shared partnership' (cogestión), even 'self-determination' (autogestión) - a word that was to become a major source of conflict when introduced in the legislation of the Socialist Government (the LODE) in 1983. All referred to the partial or total democratization of the schools - a handing-over of control from the Province to other bodies, of various combinations of parents and teachers, in which the Society might or might not participate directly.

In the Provincial Chapter of March 1976 that preceded the General Chapter, all these questions were raised, together with a range of possible alternatives that took into account the realities of the existing social, legal, and financial situation. The Chapter looked at three concrete possibilities for dismantling its own control in schools: to become a limited company (sociedad anónima), a cooperative, or a foundation. The option of more State subsidies (these had been introduced in 1972) that would allow a reduction in fees, and of more active involvement by parents in financial management were also canvassed.

Four months later, in July, a special Provincial meeting was held that was dedicated entirely to the question of education. One of the speakers invited was a
Jesuit whose radical views had already upset many of the parents and lay teachers in the school at Chamartín (see Chapter 11)—an indication that the Province itself at this stage remained very open even to ideas that might demand a total restructuring of its educational institutions. Part of this reflection concerned the relation of education and society, and the conference addressed questions such as ‘the system of education, reproducer and result of the diverse interests that make up the social structure’ (Summary of the meetings, Encuentro de reflexión educativa, día 1o 1976, circulated to schools in the Province). The traditional commitment of the Congregation precisely to the reproduction of a particular social formation meant that the matters raised by this reflection were particularly pertinent to the question of how change might be brought about. It also raises, however, at the more broadly theoretical level, more general questions about the place of education in society, questions that were dealt with at some length by the delegates to the meeting, and the terms of which have had a decisive influence on setting the limits of possible action for the schools. Moreover, for a group committed to education as liberation, within a transforming dynamic of the gospels, the extent to which it may be condemned to merely reproducing existing social relations is obviously crucial. The physiognomy of these relations is sketched in Appendix D.

**Education and the State: 1970-84**

The Province’s schools as they now function have been directly affected by three major pieces of legislation: the General Law of Education of 1970, which restructured the entire educational system; the regulatory Law of the Statute of Scholastic Centres, 1980-81 (the LOECE); and the Law of the Right to Education, 1984-85 (the LODE). These specific laws are all now subject to Article 27 of the Constitution of 1978. This Article, worked out on the principle of consensus by all political parties in the first stage of the ‘transition’ after Franco’s death, needs to be quoted in full, as it has become the major point of reference for subsequent legislation, and both the LOECE and the LODE were challenged by the then Opposition on the grounds of unconstitutionality. This meant a protracted legal debate in the Constitutional Tribunal for both pieces of legislation before they could be passed into law. The crucial Article 27 reads:

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³It was, however, one of the most vexed articles in the entire constitutional debate. The Socialist deputy, Gregorio Peces Barba, at one stage walked out in protest from a meeting of the committee that drew up the preliminary draft (Oficina de Información Diplomática, Reportaje num.11 n.d.).
1. Everyone is entitled to education. Freedom of instruction is recognized.
2. Education shall have as its objective the full development of the human character compatible with respect for the democratic principles of co-existence and for the basic rights and freedoms.
3. The public authorities guarantee the right of parents to ensure that their children receive religious and moral instruction that is in accordance with their own convictions.
4. Elementary education is compulsory and free.
5. The public authorities guarantee the right of everyone to education, through general planning of education, with the effective participation of all parties concerned and the setting up of teaching establishments.
6. The right of individuals and legal entities to set up teaching establishments is recognized, provided they respect Constitutional principles.
7. Teachers, parents and, when appropriate, pupils, shall share in the control and management of all centres maintained by the Administration out of public funds, under the terms to be laid down by the law.
8. The public authorities shall inspect and standardize the educational system in order to guarantee compliance with the law.
9. The public authorities shall give aid to teaching establishments which meet the requirements to be laid down by the law.
10. The autonomy of the Universities is recognized, under the terms to be laid down by the law.

What is enshrined in Article 27 is the compromise reached by the political parties of which an essential - but ambiguous - part is the recognition of the co-existence of State and private education and the freedom of parents to choose between them. Part of this freedom relies on the Constitutional guarantee of public funding for schools, although the actual relation of this in private schools to the guarantee in Paragraph 4 that elementary education be free is not spelled out.

The Constitution, then, provided only a general framework within which specific legislation might attempt to implement particular policies. The actual organization of the education system is based on the earlier General Law of Education of 1970. This law was a very important departure from previous policies of the post-Civil War period (1938, 1943, 1945, 1953) in which major emphasis had been placed on secondary and tertiary levels of education. The law of 1970 was in response to the economic and social changes of the 1960s, and was an attempt to create a coherent system that would meet these new needs. That this restructuring

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4 This translation is taken from the English text published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1979.
5 See Durkheim:

Educational transformations are always the result and the symptom of the social transformations in terms of which they are to be explained. For a people to feel at any given moment the need to change its educational system, it is necessary that new ideas and needs have emerged for which the old system is no longer adequate (1977:92).
was by no means too soon is indicated by a survey done in 1967 that found that a staggering 94% of the workforce still had a level of education of only primary school or less (based on Durán Herás 1972).

The main features of this organization as it affected the Province’s schools was that Basic General Education (E.G.B.), from Year 1 to year 8, that is, for children between the ages of 6 and 14, was made compulsory. When subsidies for private schools were introduced in 1972, it affected only E.G.B. Preschool up to the present in Spain is neither compulsory nor subsidized. Nor is secondary education, which is further divided into three years of *bachillerato* (B.U.P., 15 to 17 years), and one year of university preparation (C.O.U., 18 years). There also exists an alternative stream of three years of secondary education - Professional Formation (F.P.), with the option of moving across to B.U.P. left open. In the Centre-South Province, however, there is no formal involvement by the Congregation in this stream of education.

This basic organization has been modified by subsequent legislation, particularly a restructuring of the eight grades of E.G.B. into three cycles, beginning with the 1981-82 school year. The change was basically pedagogical, however, and did not affect the general structure of schools, which continues to be based on the General Law of 1970.

The LOECE (*Ley Orgánica de Estatutos de Centros Escolares*, Law on the Statutes of Scholastic Centres) was not directly concerned with the academic organization of schools, but with their juridical status and hence administrative organization. It was a further implementation of the 1970 Law, and was projected along with another law that would regulate the economic status of schools (the *Ley de Financiación*). When it was passed by the government (then UCD - *Unión Centro Democrático*) in 1980, however, the Socialist Party challenged it on the grounds of unconstitutionality. Their main objection - and it was in this area that the law most affected the Province’s schools - was to the formal recognition of the right of private schools to establish an *ideario educativo*: a document that sets out a

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6The first cycle (*ciclo inicial*) is made up of preschool, 1st, and 2nd grades; the second (*ciclo medio*) of 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades; and the third (*ciclo superior*) of 7th and 8th grades. The *ciclo superior* was delayed by the Ministry in its implementation, to give schools more time to assimilate the changes in the other two cycles. This decree also reduced the number of required formal evaluations each year from five to three.
specific philosophical and ideological framework for each school (LOECE 1980-81: Art.34), and which determines the extent of freedom for individual teachers (Art.115). The Socialists argued that this set unconstitutional limits on the freedom of ideology and religion guaranteed in Article 16 of the Constitution, and on the freedom of thought, ideas and opinions guaranteed in Article 20. The challenge was dismissed by the Constitutional Tribunal in a judgement handed down in February, 1981, a judgement that underlined, yet again, the specific ideological distinction between public and private education. As a result of the law, all private schools were in fact required to submit an ideario to the Ministry of Education and Science within a year, setting out not only their philosophical and ideological framework, but also their administrative organization. This ideario had to be approved by the Ministry and, when accepted, was to become the formal basis for future developments in the school.

The LOECE was quite important, particularly for the private schools. It did nothing, however, to tackle the more urgent problems of the education system as a whole. These are considerable, perhaps the most striking indicator being the alarming rate of failure in E.G.B., which is based on internal assessment within officially set norms and is consistently higher in government than in private schools. The following table (Table 10-1) demonstrates this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Government schools %</th>
<th>Private schools %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>29.22</td>
<td>21.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>34.68</td>
<td>24.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-79</td>
<td>31.74</td>
<td>27.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10-1: Failure rate of students in Basic General Education, 1974-79, by type of school. (Based on FOESSA 1983:214.)

The use of the word ideology in this law, and other formal uses both by the Ministry of Education and Science and by schools in the Province, is different from the concept I have proposed throughout this thesis. As used by people in the Province, ideology refers to a total and coherent system of beliefs (this is the use decided also by writers such as Ortner and Whitehead (1981)), and is not essentially situated in the context of asymmetrical relations of power in society. I will suggest in Chapter 11 that it is precisely the failure of the nuns in the school in Chamartín to take this crucial context into adequate account that makes ideology in their own terms into ideology in the terms that I am using.

Other articles of the LOECE were also challenged in the case to the Constitutional Tribunal, on such grounds as incompatibility with the laws relating to the Autonomous Regions, but these issues were subsidiary to the question of the ideario.

In fact, they disappeared into some bureaucratic file, and no formal notification of approval was sent out. Schools simply assumed, if they heard nothing, that the ideario had been accepted.
The reasons for this high failure rate are obviously complex, but in terms of the difference between public and private education, one reason is undoubtedly the large amounts of money channelled into private schools in subsidies - in 1982, this reached 70 billion pesetas (Graham 1984:273) - and a corresponding limitation on spending in government schools. When subsidies were introduced in 1972, it was partly because they were seen as the most efficient means available for a speedy improvement in the education available for lower income groups. This was because of the high involvement of private schools in all levels of the system - in 1981-82, for example, private schools were 36.5% of the total in E.G.B. (FOESSA 1983:194) - and the regulations included a provision for three different levels of subsidy based on economic need. The system, however, never worked efficiently, even - or perhaps especially - in schools that were 100% subsidized. This was because the amount of money allocated was based on the number of classrooms and therefore teachers' salaries necessary, and included no extra provisions at all, even for general running costs or maintenance. Neither government nor private schools, therefore, benefitted adequately from the yearly education budget.

It was this situation, among such others as the plight of rural schools, that the Socialist government set out to remedy in its very controversial law on the Right to Education (the LODE) in 1983. The Minister for Education, José María Maravall, outlined the four principles underlying this law: the establishment of a scholastic network that would harmonize public provision with subsidies to the private sector; to grant to all an appropriate school place, that would guarantee radical equality within the system itself; an education in freedom that would assure pluralism in the system and in each centre; and the attainment of a system in which the norm would be the participation of all the members of the educational community (Report in El País, 26/5/1983).

In practice, the points that the law proposed which aroused greatest opposition from the private schools concerned the rationalization of subsidies, and, with it, a greater accountability of those schools that received them, together with their acceptance of the same organizational norms that prevailed in the government system. The law proposed a fundamental distinction in the private sector itself

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10 When passed in the Cortes in July, 1983, it was immediately challenged by the Opposition and taken to the Constitutional Tribunal. The challenge, except for one item concerning the right of all private schools to establish or maintain their own ideario, was unanimously dismissed by the Tribunal in June, 1985.

11 The LODE also included other proposals, such as extending the length of obligatory schooling, from 4 to 16 years.
between those schools that accepted State subsidies (centros concertados) and those that did not. The choice as seen by the private schools, then, was between receiving government aid and limiting what they saw as essential freedoms, or maintaining those freedoms without government aid. The latter choice meant for many the raising of school fees, thus forcing them back into education for the rich, a requirement that, for many members of the Province and other schools run by religious orders, they saw as unacceptable.

The LODE, in effect, attacked the very basis on which the private education system had developed from 1874 onwards, that is, in the sphere of ideological autonomy and control. If schools were to accept subsidies, they had also to accept the same administrative organization as government schools. Fundamental to this projected organization was a Principal elected by the School Council (Consejo de Centro) (Art.38). The School Council, vested with this critical power of election, was to be made up of the Principal, three representatives of the controlling group of the school (el titular), four representatives of the teaching staff, four parent representatives, two representatives of the older students (in E.G.B. from grades 7 and 8), and a representative of the auxiliary personnel of the school (Art.57). This was also to be the body with the responsibility of hiring and dismissing teachers. What in effect this meant was that the body that owned or ran the school, for example, a religious Congregation, would no longer control either the naming of the Principal nor the decision-making process in the school. It was on this point, and on its related aspect of the right of private schools, even when subsidized, to retain their own ideario, that most of the opposition to the LODE came.

The basis of this opposition was the freedom of parents to choose the type of education they wanted for their children, a freedom that was interpreted as applying not just to type in general but also to a particular school. Those opposing the LODE also saw a threat in the law’s attempts to achieve pluralism within as well as

12 Also included was the implementation in government schools of a policy of participation based on the concept of the ‘public’ school. This concept, to be distinguished from that of ‘government’ education, had been espoused by the influential Colegio de Doctores y Licenciados from 1975 on. Where State education (enseñanza nacional) had been entirely dependent on the Ministry of Education, ‘public’ education was to involve public participation: parents, teachers, Neighbourhood Associations, municipal councils. The LOECE had changed the name of government schools from ‘national’ to ‘public’, and introduced the School Council (Consejo de Centro), but the change was basically only in name.

13 The reference to specific articles of the LODE is based on the draft law of July, 1983, that was circulated by the Ministry of Education and Science.

14 This was obviously an urban concern, and reflects the main locus of opposition to the LODE, which was urban, Church-based, and largely middle-class.
among schools, and in the criteria for admission to particular schools, which were to be the socioeconomic situation of the family, the closeness of where the family lived, and the presence of brothers and sisters already enrolled in the school (Art.20).15

The battle over the LODE then - foreshadowed as it had been in the challenge to the LOECE - was, as is very often the case in general and has certainly been consistently and obsessively so in Spanish education, fundamentally ideological. Economic concerns were subordinate: there was no immediate threat by the government to remove subsidies. In fact, the option for schools was to move from a lower to a full subsidy. What was demanded, however, was acceptance, along with the government grant, of government policy. It was this that outraged the main supporters of the private system and led to the mobilization of massive opposition to the law.

The opposition was spearheaded by the two principal bodies that formally represent the private schools: the CECE (Confederación Española de Centros de Enseñanza) and the FERE (Federación Española de Religiosos de la Enseñanza). Behind both was the very considerable weight of the Episcopal Conference, the official body of the Spanish bishops. Because of its status, the Conference both in its own right and through its Commission on Education represents the official view of the Church on education. The CECE is not a Church organization, although its longstanding president, Angel Martínez Fuertes, is an Augustinian priest (and was formerly a deputy in the Franco Parliament). It officially represents the interests of all owners of private schools, both secular and religious, although membership is voluntary. The FERE is the organization that represents specifically the religious orders, both male and female, involved in education. Its particular concern is therefore Church schools, which make up some 23% of schools at the level of E.G.B. (FERE 1982). Membership in the FERE is also voluntary. None of these three bodies has any formal links with the other two, not even the FERE with the Episcopal Conference, although there are obviously many informal ones. On the question of the LODE, however, all three were unanimous in their public opposition, although it was the CECE, along with the Catholic Confederation of Parents' Associations (CONCAPA), that was most active in mobilizing public support, including massive demonstrations. The FERE tended to operate more at the level of meetings of Principals of schools or of parents, and in circulating material to schools.

15In a city like Madrid, where school transport is a major business, this was a critical factor. School buses literally cross the city from one side to another, meaning for some children a journey each day of two to three or more hours, in order to take them to the school of their parents' choice.
The unqualified alarm felt by both these bodies was reflected by the Episcopal Conference. The importance of their opposition was recognized by the government who agreed to meetings with the president of the Conference, Gabino Díaz Merchán. For the women of the Province, the same opposition was represented most immediately by one of their own members who is the secretary-general to the Conference’s Commission on Education, María Rosa de la Cierva. Apart from her more public statements as, for example, in an interview published in Actualidad Docente (1983 (69):37-41, the journal of the CECE), which argue a coherent and total case against the LODE, and intensive lobbying at public meetings both in Madrid and elsewhere, María Rosa de la Cierva was also invited by the Province to a series of meetings with all its school Principals. This action by the Province was indicative of official support for her position. It was a position that saw the LODE as basically ‘a law of conflict, not of peace’ (Actualidad Docente 1983(69):37), as completely political rather than educative in inspiration, and as discriminating against the Church in what was seen as its legitimate role of ‘transmitting a Christian education, the values of the Gospel through education’ (41). It was a position clearly based on a model of the Church as kerygmatic (see Chapter 7): the herald of the Good News whose task is proclamation.

This position of the Episcopal Conference as promoted by María Rosa de la Cierva (‘su Eminencia’ as she was referred to by some others in the Province), although basically accepted by the Province as a whole, was not embraced by all its members. In Granada, for example, in a public discussion (mesa redonda), she represented the case against the LODE, while another member of the Province argued the case for the public school. One of those most resistant to the imposition of the official view was the Principal of the school in Aluche. Her assessment of the LODE was published in a magazine produced by a group of the Society in Rome for all its members, and attempts to situate the LODE in the broader perspective of education in Spain as a whole:

When I was a child, I lived in the village of [X]. My father was a doctor. I was the eldest of five children and I began learning at home. When I was five years old, the problem of my education arose, and, because my parents did not want to send me out of the village, I attended the village school for two years. I can remember it very well. It was a big old school with one long room and crumbling walls. We were at least eighty children with ages

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16 In the Northern Province, there was widespread support for the LODE, with hesitations only on those points of the law that people felt were inadequately spelled out. These were matters such as the question of the direction (titularidad) of schools, with the problem of who would take final responsibility for decisions made in common; and the vagueness concerning the actual methods of financing schools.
between 6 and 12. Our teacher, Don Ricardo, without any means at his disposal, struggled with us, in the true sense of the word. That was in 1950-51. The year after, I was sent to the boarding-school at Chamartín. The enormous contrast between the two schools has left a lasting mark on me...

Possibly because of these experiences, and without absolutizing them, I can’t consider the LODE as a violation of the freedom of education... The problem of education in Spain has ancient roots and has not been adequately resolved...

One of the first things we have to look at is that education, in the LODE, is not the privilege of the few but the right of all... For a long time, the Church replaced the government in running the schools, in order to respond to a real need. I don’t think that education is an essential responsibility of the Church; it is the essential responsibility of the Church to announce the gospel. To do it through education is to respond to a temporary situation. Little by little the secular arena can take charge of this function, as well as various other functions. The Church needs to be glad of this and to search for other forms for its presence (RSCJ 1984 (1,2):17; emphasis mine.)

Although the language used in this reflection to define the role of the Church is the same as that called on by earlier statements - that is, the Church as herald - the context that gives it meaning could not be more different. It is symptomatic of the whole approach of this Principal, who has helped to make the school where she works - Beata Filipina in the barrio of Aluche - a place where ideology does not dictate the educational needs of the students. In looking at this school the question that needs to be analyzed is, given the specific structures within which people have to operate - structures imposed by State, Church, Congregation, and the general society - what are the limits of creative action? The school in Aluche demonstrates that these are much broader and more flexible than the official representation of the Province allows, and that such flexibility in no way diminishes the goals set for themselves by members of the Congregation committed to ‘education for justice through faith’ (Ideario de los Centros Educativos, Religiosas del Sagrado Corazón n.d.).

Out of ideology: Aluche

The school in Aluche began in 1965, a year after the 1964 General Chapter had called for a renewed emphasis in the Congregation on poverty and projected the closing of those schools that had been attached to the fee-paying schools with a view to providing education for the poor. In Madrid, the three free schools (externado) that existed in fact no longer served this function. Because of demographic changes, and the geographical situation of the schools, by the middle sixties, these ‘poor’ schools catered to a heterogeneous group of lower ranking civil servants (funcionarios) and military, young professionals in areas such as teaching, and other sectors of a newly emerging middle and lower middle class. Such a change, given the
structure of the Congregation’s two-school system, only served to emphasize the elitist character of the fee-paying schools.

An invitation to the Province, therefore, to begin a school in one of the developing areas on the outskirts of Madrid, was readily accepted by the nuns as an opportunity to respond to the directives of the 1964 Chapter and to redefine the type of education offered by the Congregation. The barrio of Aluche moreover, part of the rapidly expanding periphery of the city, was in 1965 one of the areas with the greatest lack of schools (FOESSA 1967). The district as a whole - that of Latina - had begun to expand with the building of the major highways out of Madrid in the 1950s. It is described in the official plan for the city as follows:

Situated in the southeast of Madrid between the highway of Extremadura and Carabanchel, the district of Latina, the most densely populated in Madrid, is a large and very heterogeneous residential area, composed of disconnected pieces - old dwellings (barriadas), new housing estates, large military installations, inner areas of unoccupied land, rural borders...

To sum up, the district of Latina is one of the ‘dormitory suburbs’ of Madrid, made up of a disordered conglomeration of barrios that are unconnected and congested, and contain areas of enormous density. It is seriously affected by through traffic, while at the same time lacking sufficient connection with the central districts (Ayuntamiento de Madrid 1982:174).

The area is, in other words, a glaring example of the unplanned and unchecked explosion associated with the economic development of the sixties. It contains, moreover, a number of features that give it a special character. One is the military airport at Cuatro Vientos, and the associated Air Force personnel. Another is the large number of military installations, including barracks which are ‘exceptionally abundant and occupy great areas’ (Ministerio de Obras Públicas y Urbanismo 1982:86). A third is the important prison of Carabanchel which, ‘although it has the name of the neighbouring district, is situated in Latina, and structures and conditions an important part of Aluche’ (86).

The invitation to the Congregation actually came from a workers’ cooperative - ‘Jesus the Worker’ (Jesús Divino Obrero) - that had been set up by a developer to ensure an adequate workforce for his construction plans. Workers were offered a flat of their own as part of the general building scheme. This was to be at very good rates after they had been members of the cooperative for one year. The first group to move into the area, therefore, were the workers themselves, along with a few others such as gardeners. In the second phase, those who came were mainly council employees: street cleaners, bus-drivers, firemen. It was these families, through the cooperative, that asked for the Society to set up a school. Part of the land belonging
to the cooperative was set aside for the building\textsuperscript{17} and ceded to the Province, and one of the conditions of entry to the school was that priority be given to the families of the cooperative.

In accepting the invitation, the Province was able to avail itself of certain conditions under the then education law. These allowed a coexistence, in the same school, of teachers paid by the State and private teachers. This was a system known as a \textit{Patronato}. It meant that a group such as a religious Congregation could operate in a limited way within the government system. Teachers who had passed their government entrance exams (\textit{oposiciones}) and been accepted into the government school system, could be given their official place in this particular \textit{Patronato} rather than in a government school. This in turn meant that, although their salaries continued to be paid by the government, and their promotion and retirement structure was that of government school teachers, they were not tied to a particular town or school, nor were their moves decided by the Ministry of Education but by their own \textit{Patronato}. The advantages of a system such as this for an organization like the Society are obvious. In the days before subsidies, it allowed the Province to benefit from public monies without losing its flexibility in relation to its own personnel. It was the Province, therefore, that set up a \textit{Patronato} with official positions in Granada, Sevilla, and the Canary Islands, as well as in Madrid. These positions in Madrid were originally in the free schools. When the free school in Rosales was closed in 1965, four of these positions, along with four recognized class units (\textit{unidades}) were officially transferred to Aluche.\textsuperscript{18} Four more were transferred from Chamartín in 1969, and the number was gradually increased until the introduction of the subsidy scheme in 1972, although private teachers were also employed.

With the introduction of subsidies, the school was given the choice of becoming a full government school (which meant the Congregation’s losing the right of naming the Principal) or of becoming a wholly private school with 100% subsidy. The latter choice - the one made by the Province - meant that the existing \textit{Patronato} could continue, but receive no new members. As present members retire, their position reverts to the private system, and they are replaced by a private teacher. Although the latter continue to be paid by the Ministry of Education under the system of

\textsuperscript{17}Built by the original workers themselves. The school therefore has all the same construction problems as the earliest flats.

\textsuperscript{18}The complexities of the Spanish education system are a challenge to any outsider. I am trying, therefore, to include no more than is essential for understanding the situation in the school in Aluche.
subsidies, the implications of this redefinition in terms of conditions of service are important, and will become clearer when we look at the present staffing structure in Aluche.

In 1965, the school, named Beata Filipina after Philippine Duchesne, one of the early companions of Madeleine Sophie Barat, began in some prefabs in Aluche while everyone waited for the school to be built. This step, however, was further complicated by the Province's own negotiations with another body, pertaining to the Archdiocesan of Madrid, that was to provide the funding for the actual building costs. This was the Fundación Viértola, a foundation set up in 1908 under the will of Doña Feliciana Viértola in order to fund a school for poor children.19 The foundation was administered by the archdiocese which also, by 1965, had become aware that the geographical siting of the original school meant that it no longer carried out the intentions for which it had been set up.

The archdiocese therefore requested permission of the government body under which they were officially defined as a charity to sell the original buildings and move the schools elsewhere (letter from the Archbishop of Madrid-Alcalá, 30th March, 1966). At the same time, an approach was made to the Province to take over the running of the new school under the legal patronage of the Archbishop.

Thus the school in Aluche became a diocesan school run by the Society on land granted to the Province for the children of the cooperative 'Jesus the Worker'. Money for the building of the school came from the Fundación Viértola from the sale of its original buildings and the cooperative provided the labour for the construction. In May, 1977, the cooperative declared its conditions for the setting up of the school completely fulfilled, and transferred any residual interest to the Fundación Viértola (statutory declaration by the President of the cooperative, 26th May, 1977).

Legally, therefore, the school now comes not under the Province but under the Fundación Viértola, and, through it, under the Archdiocese of Madrid. Financially, it is entirely dependent on the Ministry of Education and Science, since the Foundation now has virtually no liquid assets. Its teaching staff (in the 1982-83 school year) was made up of nine teachers who belong to the Patronato and twenty-two who do not. Of these thirty-one teachers, eleven are members of the Congregation, and one is a religious of another Order. Three of the teachers are

19The actual terms of the will on this point are as follows:

The object of this Institute will be the free school of moral, social, and domestic religion for poor boys and girls, inculcating in them the faith and virtues of our Holy Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Religion, and the instruction that is basic and useful for life (Aluche, Colegio Beata Filipina: Documentos Fundación Feliciana Viértola 1908).
involved in Special Education classes for forty children. The total number of students in the school is 920, made up of three classes in each of the eight grades of E.G.B. and one preschool class which is not subsidized, as well as the three classes in Special Education.

The official structures within which the school has to function are, therefore, varied. Firstly, there is the Ministry of Education and Science, not only because of the school's being formally recognized within the general education system (and therefore subject to regular inspection) but also because of the Patronato and the subsidy. The establishment of Special Education classes is also under a special provision of the Ministry. This is therefore the most constraining of all the influences. Secondly, there is the archdiocese, through the Fundación Viértola, which acts as the legal owner (titular) of the school. Any legal matters go to and through the Foundation, and the Principal keeps it informed of developments in the school. It also pays the basic annual insurance on the school and some minor matters of maintenance. The Foundation has little direct effect, however, on the actual running of the school, acting more as a point of reference in certain areas. Finally, there is the Province, in its capacity as the body formally responsible for running the school. Up to the present, this responsibility has been primarily expressed in the naming of the Principal of the school, and in providing some of the teachers, both through the Patronato and privately. It has also given some financial aid in specific circumstances such as the urgent reconstruction of the gymnasium in 1982-83 (half a million pesetas out of a total of three million. The aid was a gift).

In relation to the Province, however, Aluche has an ambiguous status both because of its legal constitution under the Fundación Viértola and of the way it has developed over the past ten years - a period that coincides with the arrival of the present Principal in 1974-75. The effect of this ambiguity, and of certain decisions made within the school, has been to allow the school considerable autonomy, within the overall constraints of the education system, in its own internal organization and practice. It is an autonomy clearly marked by a refusal by the Principal to subordinate practice to the official representation, whether of the Church or of the Province. It is an autonomy, moreover, that, forced to accept the general constraints of the education system as defined by the Ministry of Education, has extended the limits of creativity through inventive improvisation. A number of the developments of the past ten years serve to illustrate this.

When the present Principal arrived in 1974-75, she found a staff not only divided according to who belonged to the Patronato and who did not, but also including a group of teachers who had been students in the Society's externado. A
number of these had gone on to do their teacher training in the Province's Teachers' College in Pío XII. One of them, in discussing the effects of this perpetuation of social divisions in the externado on the children who experienced it commented,

'It's the most dreadful thing that the Order did. To present the free-school students (las externas) to God himself as second-class citizens seems to me.... But the thing is, during all those years, from when I was 4 till when I was 18, it didn't occur to me that the situation was so horrific. It was when I was 18 that I had to rethink everything for myself. It was a total change in looking at things.'

The resentments generated by such an experience were not mentioned in the first years of the school in Aluche, but they formed the unexpressed basis for a souring of relationships that affected the whole staff. Added to this were strongly marked differences between the religious and the lay members of the staff, and between the government and the private teachers. These different categories were not discrete. The Patronato included both nuns and lay teachers, as well as some of the former students in the free schools. The situation that resulted was a staff whose unity of purpose was undermined by a lack of perceived common interests. The process of creating a unified staff began with the common recognition of the divisions originally caused by the Society itself through its system of free schools. In a staff meeting soon after her arrival, the Principal brought this situation out into the open and forced people to discuss it, and its implications for relations among the staff and therefore, in the long run, with the students. This move was a major step in a process of unmythified confrontation of the actual problems and situations germane to running the school. It was also the beginning of a move towards unifying the staff so that the interests of students in terms of their overall development might be better served.

This process was enormously helped by the stability of the staff over this whole period; after 1971 the changes were minimal. But its basis was the opening-up of the decision-making process to participation by all members. The importance of this development cannot be over-emphasized. Made possible by the fact that the school is not under the direct control of the Province, it gave the staff a power of negotiation that might not otherwise have been possible. The result was a decision, worked out over a series of staff meetings, that the staff body as a whole - the Claustro - should have the ultimate power of decisions concerning all matters to do with the school. The Principal is elected every three years by the Claustro but functions as part of a team of three (el Equipo Directivo), the other two members being elected at the same time. The financial management of the school is in the hands of a Financial Committee (Junta econômica), one of whose members is elected by the Claustro,
other by the Parents’ Association. The Claustro, which meets formally at the beginning and end of each term, is kept informed of the financial situation, and the annual report is presented to and signed by all.

Decision-making in the school is therefore collective (colegiado), a situation that -ironically in view of later developments under the LODE - caused some problems when the Law of the Statutes of Centres (the LOECE) was implemented. The staff spent the whole of 1979-80 working on the Statutes and ideario, attempting to reconcile what they were already doing in the school with the requirements, not only of the Law itself, but also of a basic framework (estatuto marco) worked out by the Province. The seriousness with which the Aluche staff undertook this task is indicated by a fifty-page document in which each article of the Province’s suggested statute is annotated, modified, and signed individually by members of the staff (not all members signed all amended articles).

One of the characteristics of the Province’s draft - made clear to the Principals of all the Congregation’s schools in a special meeting to discuss the matter - was that certain items were ‘non-negotiable’ (intocables). This was not accepted by the Aluche staff. As the Principal pointed out in a letter to the Commission coordinating suggestions and amendments from different schools of the Province:

You’ll see that we’ve ‘touched’ some of the points indicated as ‘untouchable’. This is for two reasons: we had already touched them, and we believe that it’s possible to continue to safeguard the principle concerned even if the letter of the article is modified; also we don’t believe that one should begin by putting up barriers to dialogue (Aluche, Official school documents, 14th December, 1979).

The points ‘touched’ by the school were, of course, those concerned with the question of collective decision-making.20 One of the central points of the Province’s draft statutes was that certain positions were to be individual (unipersonal). On the position of Principal, for example, the draft stated:

Principal. The Principal is the ultimate authority to whom corresponds the direction, coordination and supervision of all functions of whatever kind that affect the life of the Centre. She is its legal representative (Aluche, Official school documents 1979).

The amendment suggested by the Aluche staff challenged the very basis on which the Province rested its claim to authority:

20 This aspect of the school’s statutes was also rejected both by a committee of the Archdiocese who, through the Fundación Viertola, was required to check the legal implications of the document, and by the Ministry of Education and Science itself. Both bodies insisted on the presence of individual (unipersonal) positions for at least the Principal and the Treasurer.
Management Committee (Equipo de Dirección)

1.1) It will be made up of three people, who will act collectively, sharing functions. To one of them, specified in article 1.2, will correspond the legal and official representation of the Centre, and the final responsibility.

1.2) She will be designated by the collaborating body (entidad colaboradora) after previous dialogue with the Claustro and the presentation by the latter of a list of three names also approved by the School Board (Consejo de Centro) (Aluche, Official school documents 1979).

By rejecting the Province’s commitment to maintaining control of those schools that it still retained, the staff of Aluche were also rejecting the necessary imposition of the ideology that went with it. By rejecting the ideology, they extended the limits of their own action, both in relation to each other, and to the students entrusted to their care. It was, as one member of the staff pointed out, ‘the act of drawing up [the statutes and ideario] all together, of hiding nothing, of having solved the ‘non-negotiable' problems, that we finally achieved real unity among the staff’. Such unity affects not only the staff, but also the students, and the process of participation in a system that has traditionally relied heavily on relations of authority between staff and students is seen by the staff as fundamentally educative.

The same view is taken in the school of religious education. While religion is taught in all classes as a formal subject under guidelines laid down by the Ministry of Education and Science, the practice of religion, seen as appropriate to the confessional character of the school, is informal and voluntary. There is no formal chapel in the building, but in 1983 a small annexe to a room that is used mainly for meetings was set aside as a place for quiet reflection and prayer. It also provided the possibility of Mass being said there for small groups. In general, time is allotted for each class to have a Mass in the parish church about once every three weeks. This is prepared by the students themselves, and is seen, again, as an educative as well as expressive experience. For the smaller children, some of the mothers who are interested are brought in as catechists, in an attempt to reinforce the basic principle held by the staff that the responsibility for education in faith rests primarily with the parents, and with the school only secondarily. The active reproduction of ideology is again rejected by the staff.

This is made very clear in the ideario that was produced at the same time as the statutes - an ideario that does not deny the confessionality of the school, but does not equate it with a particular or closed interpretation. Again, the keynote is openness.

21 This is legally the Congregation, since the owner of the school (el titular) is the Fundación Viértola.
The school Beata Filipina, of the Fundación Viértola, aware that there are different ways of promoting the whole development of the person, wishes to set out in this *ideario* its own way of approaching education so that parents, the first and necessary educators, may have sufficient information about these areas that the School considers basic.

**Declaration of Principles**

1. The School *finds its inspiration in a Christian vision of life* and, with its roots in the community, acts for and promotes social change through education, helping to build a democratic and just society.

2. Its idea of this society is expressed in the following values:
   - a) The transcendent destiny of the person.
   - b) The equality and liberty of all men.
   - c) Solidarity with others through cooperation, respect, and dialogue (*Ideeario, Colegio Beata Filipina n.d.*).

It is this ‘solidarity’ through ‘cooperation, respect, and dialogue’ that does, in practice, underlie the social relations in the school. It does so because these ideas have been interpreted at the level of practice, that is of a real sharing of decision-making power among all members of the staff in a way that makes no distinction between nuns and lay staff. The sense of shared participation is constantly reinforced at the informal level. In the absence of a staff-room, people use the Principal’s office as a meeting-place in the little free time - morning break and after lunch - that there is each day. The Principal herself continues to teach for several hours each week, on the grounds that, as she said,

‘It seems to me that, in the act of giving up classes, you lose contact and distance yourself from the very reality that you’re supposed to stimulate (*animar*). You’re no longer in direct contact with real difficulties and the problems, so that you end up formulating a type of ideal that’s unrealizable. I always think that the better is the enemy of the good - I prefer to go little by little, not making wonderful plans that are never going to be realized.’

This strategy of pursuing the good before the better reflects the Principal’s commitment to action based on a firmly practical assessment of situations embedded in historical interpretation, and is the basis on which educational policy in the school works. This is reflected in the classrooms, where contemporary social issues as seen by the students are given an important place in discussion. In 1982, for example, the national general elections were included as an important project in the Social Science classes for seventh and eighth grades. The teacher involved in these classes is the Principal. She organized different groups in the class to choose different political parties and they followed the reports in various newspapers in relation to different

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22 This particular phrase echoes one found in the Statute for Diocesan Schools approved by the Council of Bishops in October, 1977. What makes its use particularly significant in the *ideario* is the absence of the words that follow in the Diocesan Statue: *‘and in the light of the teaching (Magisterio) of the Church’*. 

themes. Not only was this an innovative programme for political education in a country where free elections have only been held in recent years since 1977. It was also a significant method of including matters from the public sphere in the classroom in a way that expected active involvement by the students.

Another question that was also raised, and demonstrates the long way many of the nuns have come from the days of their support for National Catholicism and all that it stood for was the issue of abortion. This was brought up by the students of at least one eighth grade class when abortion law reform was under review in the Parliament. The teacher in this class was another of the nuns. Her response to the discussion that followed was one that, without abnegating her own conviction that the issue was one with an important moral dimension, nevertheless accepted that the question was ultimately one of personal responsibility. The effect of this kind of approach in the school, not universal but predominant, is to foster a strong social and moral sense among the students without tying it to any one fixed system of interpretation. It is the latter that the teachers consciously attempt to leave open to the students, and they do so within limitations that include stringent financial constraints.

Because of the way in which the subsidy operates, that is, for the teachers of formally recognized grades only, there is no money for extra activities. Nevertheless, the school manages to employ a secretary, an art and a gymnasium teacher, and a fulltime caretaker. These extra costs, as well as cleaning and maintenance, are paid for in a number of ways. For schools who receive the so-called full subsidy, a small amount - in 1982-83, the set amount was 480 pesetas per month per student - may be levied, but the maximum is fixed by the Ministry. Another small amount, 225 pesetas per month, is charged by the Parents' Association. As well, one of the nuns who works only part time does not receive a salary (this is at her own request), and this time, together with the time given to class by the Principal, releases enough money to pay the extra teachers. The Principal's salary also goes in full to the school, although it is used for what are regarded as non-essential items so that this arrangement does not become essential to the the school's financial organization. It needs to be pointed out also that the inefficiencies of the subsidy system mean that the financial situation of the school is always very precarious. Nevertheless, the staff remain committed to maintaining those services for the students that, however humbly, increase their power of access to the cultural capital of society. The emphasis in the school is, therefore, not only on academic success - though this is certainly stressed - but also on other activities that are seen to be important in raising what teachers refer to as the 'very low cultural level' of the students. This
description generally refers to the lack of reading material, including newspapers, in their homes and the inadequacy of the active support given by many families to the academic values of the school.

The staff places great importance on the new library and its use by students, and, in the absence of a librarian, all the teachers collaborate by giving extra time. In a school day that goes from 9.00 till 5.00, this is no small matter. Newspapers are actively used in the teaching of social science to the upper grades in the school as, for example, in the project on the general elections. The art classes are included as an essential, not extra, part of the curriculum, reflecting the staff's practical commitment to a philosophy of education based on developing the creative as well as the socially reproductive aspects of the students' capacities. This is part of the process of what Bourdieu (1977:488) describes as the necessary development of 'cultured dispositions' that increase the possibilities for individuals to share in the symbolic wealth of their society. As well as visits to art galleries and museums by the students, for the past two years the art and gymnasium teachers have collaborated in producing an end-of-year entertainment in which the simplicity of presentation has belied the excellence and originality of performance.

While the school fulfills no dazzling role, then, in shattering structures of social differentiation, there is evidence - though unfortunately no firm statistics - that the girls who have gone through the school at Aluche have benefitted in terms of the goals that the school has set itself, and also in gaining access to the 'code' stipulated by Bourdieu as necessary to decipher cultural goods (1977:488). As the staff remember it, ten years ago, the majority of students gave up study when they finished E.G.B. Now, the situation is reversed. At the end of the 1981-82 school year, about 60% of the students went on to Bachillerato, and most of the rest to Professional Formation. Only about five or six finished altogether with study. At the end of the 1982-83 school year, figures were kept. Forty-six of the students (51.7%) went on to Bachillerato or other secondary studies, thirty-five (39.3%) to Professional Formation, two to other kinds of study (2.2%), and two got jobs. Four stayed at home.

The other measure of academic success - tied so closely to the selective process - is, of course, final gradings and the failure rate of students that determine whether or not they can go on to higher education after E.G.B. At the end of the 1982-83 year, this failure rate was alarmingly high: 57.4% in 6th grade, 53.2% in 7th grade, and 26.7% in 8th grade (the final year of E.G.B.) The national failure rate in 8th grade, however - 28.62% in private schools in 1978-79, and 37.76% in government schools for the same year (FOESSA 1983:214) - suggests that these results have more to do with
the general system of education, with curriculum and the method of evaluation, than with any problem intrinsic to Aluche itself. The school’s position within this system is certainly the area of greatest constraint, and it is in its relations with the Ministry that most frustration is experienced.

These relations, as already indicated, take various forms. One is the different conditions of service of the government teachers in the *Patronato* and those of the private teachers. Government teachers officially work twenty-five hours a week in the classroom, are paid more than private teachers, are automatically registered with Social Security, and officially take the same holidays as students. Teachers in the private system work thirty-three hours a week, of which twenty-five are spent in the classroom and five in the school in related work. Social Security is not automatic, although the present Principal has enrolled all the school staff, both academic and non-academic, in the Social Security system, and the teachers are officially entitled to only one month’s holiday a year. The problems caused by such a wide difference in conditions of service for teachers in the same school are obvious, and one of the outcomes of the staff’s work under the LOECE on their statutes was to decide that all teachers would spend twenty-eight hours in formal teaching, and that Wednesday afternoons would be pupil-free and devoted to work related to classes. This arrangement was agreed to by the School Inspector then in charge of the area, but when a new Inspector was appointed, problems began. Her attitude typified a concern with the petty fulfilment of legal minutiae so common in the school’s dealings with the Ministry - an attitude compounded in 1982, as the Principal commented, by a fear of the forthcoming general elections, in which bureaucrats feared a closer review by a new government. Not only did the Wednesday afternoons come under threat, but also certain classes that the children from Special Education were undertaking outside the school. This was on the grounds that the twenty-eight hours’ attendance legally required for students meant attendance in the school.

Such obstructive tactics by the Inspector were, however, only part of a much broader scene of bureaucratic gloom. The Principal summed up her role in tones of dismay:

‘At the moment, I see my role as awful, dreadful. For the simple reason that, for the past two years, we’ve been swallowed up by bureaucracy. More and more often, the Ministry is asking for more papers, in triplicate and quadruplicate - for everything. As far as I can see, it’s just to be annoying.

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23 As the children and many of their fathers go home every day to have their midday meal, there was no protest from the mothers about this arrangement. Most of them are required to be at home anyway, or had already make alternative arrangements, usually with neighbours.
I've never seen any result that they've achieved with them. But they keep asking - from the number of square metres in each classroom up to the number of students - anything you can imagine... The result is that I feel I'm not doing anything as Principal - in an educative sense, I mean... I see my role as Principal much more as the stimulation of activities outside what is strictly laid down. To allow initiatives to emerge, to visit the classes... not by way of supervision but giving stimulation. And I see myself shut up in my office when I'm not actually teaching.'

This sense of frustration was not, contrary to what some of the staff had expected, alleviated by the introduction of the LODE. Despite the new law's stress on collegiality and self-determination, both principles of decision-making for which the school had fought, the LODE raised many uncertainties because of a lack of clarity in relation to the subsidized schools. It was, for the Aluche teachers, yet another example of 'the mistake of the Ministry of Education - it always does things from above, without consultation and without explaining things properly', as the Principal commented. Problems over the introduction of the law at the beginning of the 1983-84 school year, also, meant delays in the payment of the first subsidies and confusion as to what arrangements would finally be made.

This coming to terms with bureaucratic demands and inefficiency is, certainly, part of the school's response to the challenge of 'their involvement in the world' - that is, of adjusting to external social relations. It is one of the main principles that ties the school to the past as well as to the present. The limits that it places on action bear the weight of more than a century of political and educational developments. Other influences rest more lightly on the school, and leave ample room for creative response by the members of the staff, particularly by some of the nuns, a particular group of whom continue, within the overall participation by all teachers, to form an important informal nucleus. Because of the way in which the school is set up, and despite - or perhaps because of - the multiplicity of legal levels involved, neither Church nor Province has been able to impose any one, particular interpretation that determines practice. Even the socio-economic background of the families of the barrio has not formed a major constraint for the action of the school.

The school in Aluche, then, demonstrates a number of the points already indicated as central to developments in the Province after 1967. One is the effect on practice of the opening up of interpretation, both religious and educational, by the nuns, and of the realignment made possible for them within the system of social relations. The nuns who teach in the school come from a number of different

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24 Subsidies were meant to be paid each term, but were invariably late. The beginning of 1983-84, however, was particularly bad.
communities, and reflect a range of approaches. Nevertheless, they are seen by the other teachers as falling into two main categories. One of these is based on the group of nuns who live in a flat close to the school. This is the community that is the most acceptable to the Provincials of those who live in flats.

A number of these women, mostly belonging to the Civil War generation, have been in the school since its early years, though not from the beginning, and are part of the Patronato. Although very active in the school and in the parish, and by no means homogeneous as a group - there are five who teach in the school - they tend to be seen by the rest of the staff as socially and politically conservative, a view that is borne out by their own statements and actions. Four of them come from families deeply committed to the Nationalist cause in the Civil War, and tell stories - when asked - of their fathers being in prison or in hiding. The fathers of two of them were in the military, and both men were actively involved, one of them as an aide, in the unsuccessful coup attempt by General Sanjurjo in 1932. The differences between these two women, however, illustrate the complexities of the processes of overall formation. One of them is very politically conservative though somewhat less so in religious matters. The other is very open in many of her personal and political attitudes and in her own lifestyle. She is also supportive of change and critical of developments in the Province since 1976.

Another member of this community, a former coadjutrix Sister who is not directly involved in the school, was herself imprisoned in Madrid for three months under the Republic. This was before she entered the convent, and was a result of the general political and social instability that characterized much of the period. Her alleged offence was to have had a lampshade covered in yellow and red, the colours of the monarchist flag that had been replaced by the new government. Her unemotional description of the appalling conditions that prevailed in the jail - a former convent - make it easy to understand her unqualified support for Franco and his regime.\(^{25}\)

The daily newspaper that they continue to buy is the Catholic Ya. They also refer to themselves without any problem as 'las derechas' - the rightwingers - as on one occasion when all the copies of Ya were stolen from the local newspaper vendor. One of the nuns told how 'I had to buy El País, because all the copies of Ya had been stolen. They don't want us - the rightwingers - to read it.'

This group is important in the school in terms of their impact at the level of

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\(^{25}\)I must add that I had excellent relations with this community and had lunch with them on a loosely regular basis (two or three times a term). As one of their own members described them, 'We are very different, and have very different opinions. But we respect each other deeply'. This sums up very well my own relationship with them.
teaching individual classes. Their influence as a group or as representing the Province in the overall policy of the school is, however, not particularly remarkable. The women who are central to this policy are also nuns. One is the Principal, who comes from the community that also runs the Residence for working girls. Two others come from this same community. A fourth lives in the community described in Chapter 9 as the most marginalized in the Province of all the Madrid groups. These four exercise a profound and cohesive influence that is recognized by all the other teachers as being the basis of the most important developments in the school. Not all are in positions of official responsibility. The Principal clearly is. One of the others is with her on the elected Management Committee (Equipo Directivo) of three, and was due to be replaced in the 1983-84 school year. The other member of this Committee, also due for replacement, is a secular teacher. A third nun in this group had been elected to the Finance Committee (Equipo económico) of whom the other member was one of the parents. The fourth is simply a class teacher.

The community and generation alignments that distinguish the two groups of nuns are fundamental. It is precisely and clearly the understandings worked out by these women as they translated the changes in religious interpretation into practice that they are expressing in their work of education. On the one hand is the group who have in principle - and this is not without certain qualifications - remained within the limits of official interpretation set by the Province. They are older women with childhood memories of the Civil War and its effects on their families. Their educational practice, traditional and academic, tends to reflect this. At the same time, their experience of living in a flat and their involvement in the school and the parish has given them a basis for control over their own lives that allows them to create the terms of their own choices. This is the community that refuses, despite all the pressure by the Provincial, to have a local Superior, even from among themselves. It is symptomatic of the fundamental importance that the experience of personal autonomy has come to have in their lives that the person most wholeheartedly resistant to the imposition of a Superior is one who had chosen in the period before the changes a private motto that she now rejects with horror:

‘Disimular, sufrir, y callar,
Es a Jesús amar.’

26 In fact, the elections for the Management Committee were not held in the 1983-84 school year. This was decided because of the principle adopted by the full staff that the Principal also should be elected. With the Provincial due to be replaced in the summer of 1984, and ‘cleaning up the Province’ before she left her position, as one of the nuns expressed it, it was felt to be wiser not to test this principle until the staff saw who was going to replace her.
‘To conceal, to suffer, to be silent,
This is to love Jesus.’

The other group of nuns, on the other hand, are younger - an important variable as we have seen. Though now in their forties, and also from Nationalist families, they have no personal memories of the Civil War, and its effects on their families are for them anecdotal. All four were at university in the late sixties or early seventies when student unrest broke out of the regime’s control for the first time under Franco and students began to join forces with other dissident groups (de Blaye 1976:245-48). Their interpretation of their religious commitment has put them, since 1976, at odds with the official interpretation of the Province. Their expression of this in educational practice has placed Aluche beyond the reach of direct Provincial control.

The importance of this situation for the way in which the school has developed since 1974-75 when the present Principal arrived was voiced by the secular teacher on the Management Committee when the Principal mentioned that she was thinking of not standing for re-election the following year. The teacher was horrified because, as she said, ‘You are the only one who can protect us from the Provincial!’ In view of the fact that the Provincial had been the previous Principal in the school, and the teacher in question was then already on the staff, this shift in the matter of control of the school has obviously been crucial.

The effects of the shift are easily identifiable. The most important has been the active involvement of all the members of the staff in the processes of responsible decision-making. Related to this is the relaxed and informal atmosphere of the school, in which matters are assessed to be of importance on the basis of the educational and social requirements of the students. Religious formation is seen as an important part of this, but not as the principal goal. The outside reference for educational practice is not the Province, nor the Church as represented by such organizations as the official federation of teaching orders, the FERE, but the Ministry of Education and the need to extend practical opportunities for the future of the students.

For the nuns themselves who teach in the school, their professional status gives them advantages attached to membership in the dominant class in contemporary Spanish society, the middle class. These advantages are used however - and this is true for both groups of nuns - to further the interests of the working-class girls whom they teach. Education in Aluche has become a means not of fixing the students in a particular social place, as had happened in the poor schools, but of broadening their options and offering them possibilities for mobility. It is this action that makes of
their educational practice, despite the limitations imposed by other factors, a basically transforming action and identifies it with the processes of education as liberation.

I wish now to turn to another school of the Province where the commitment to transforming action has also been vigorous, but the obstacles arising from much greater alignment with the interests of the middle class and closer ties with both Province and Church have been correspondingly greater. It is time to look at Chamartín.
CHAPTER 11

History, Structure, Ideology, and the Limits of Action

In May, 1959, the schools and community at Chamartín de la Rosa celebrated the centenary of their foundation. In May, 1984, another celebration was held to mark the school's 125 years. The general outline of the two programmes was not dissimilar: Masses, speeches, reunions of different groups associated at different times and in one way or another with the schools, a theatrical representation of the history of the foundation. The similarities between the two celebrations are important, and indicate the extent of continuity between Chamartín's present and its past. For the people who love it, who wish to wrest new meanings out of that heritage, the past is both a challenge and an incentive. A challenge, because they see much to be rejected; an incentive, because in caring for the school, and the tradition that the great old building represents, there is an urgent desire to distill the essence of the spirit that created it, and to use the energy thus recaptured in reshaping the relations that define the reality of Chamartín today.

Thus the similarities between the two celebrations. The differences are dramatic. In the twenty-five years since 1959, the changes in Chamartín, as in the Society in general, have been profound, and have shattered that illusion of a proud immutability faithfully reflecting eternal and untouchable verities. As one nun commented, the celebration in 1959 took place at a high point of a wave of triumphalism in both Church and State, a comment instructively borne out by looking at some of the differences between the two centenary programmes.

Probably the most striking difference is in the date chosen as the focus for each celebration. While the process of foundation went on throughout 1859, the actual arrival of the first nuns to the new convent took place on the 8th of June. The boarding-school received its first pupils on October 29th, and the free school some time later.1 None of these dates was invested with special significance in 1959. Instead, the symbolic centre of the occasion was May 11th, the anniversary of the

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1 Proclamation of the centenary by his Excellency, Don Alberto Martín Artajo (Memoria del Centenario) 1959:22; hereafter referred to as Memoria.
burning of Chamartín in 1931 - or, as it was expressed in the official centenary programme:

At six in the evening,
   The time at which, on this same date, in the year 1931, the revolutionary mob handed over the School to the flames:
   Solemn EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION, in the garden, in a homage of REPARATION AND LOVE to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. His Excellency, the most Reverend Apostolic Nuncio, Dr Hildebrand Antoniutti, will, at the end, celebrate Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament (Memoria 1959:37).

The ‘thickness’ of meaning implicit - or less than implicit - in this short statement, reflecting relations to both official Church and to State, and of these to each other, is made more explicit in the rest of the centenary programme by the presence of senior government officials, such as the then Minister for National Education, and the presentation to the school of a civil decoration that carried with it exemption from certain taxes:

the reward established by Article 6 of the Royal Decree of 29th July, 1910, in order to recognize those who have distinguished themselves in an extraordinary degree in the practice of charity, making an appropriate contribution to the morality of customs and the progress of studies (Memoria 1959:37).

As well as these representatives of the civil power and distinguished ecclesiastical guests at different functions, the High Mass for the former pupils of the boarding-school was said and sung by the community from the monastery of the Valley of the Fallen, and the last official act of the eight-day celebrations was a pilgrimage, by pupils, families, and other associated groups, to the statue of the Sacred Heart at the Cerro de los Angeles (see Chapter 3) - both places intimately identified with the ‘war of liberation’ (Memoria 1959:36), and with the victory and regime of Franco.

This entire panorama was not only quietly sidestepped, and hence dismissed, by the choice of a different central date in the 1984 commemoration; the difference is also indicative of the school’s attempt to reinterpret its meaning while reclaiming (redeeming) its past. The date chosen as the focus of this later celebration was May 25th, the feast day of St Madeleine Sophie Barat, emphasis being thus given to the ongoing educative role of the school within what the nuns see as the fundamental perspective of a Christian commitment. Absent was the pomp of 1959, absent, too, the public figures, whether civil or religious, and not only because of the lesser importance of being a partial rather than satisfyingly rounded centenary. The note of the festivities was informality and intimacy, in a spirit of sharing rather than of
impressing - a spirit that encompasses the processes that have been and are at work in the school, in both redirecting and revitalizing the structures inherited from its history.

The most important of these structures were produced by the orientation of the members of the Society in the traditional period of their religious life, and may be briefly outlined. The first set belong to the physical siting of the school, which clearly continues to affect the type of pupil who attends it. The second set is the result of the internal development of the school since its foundation.

The siting of the school is perhaps the most tricky, because the most intransigent, of the problems posed by its renovation. The original gift of land by the Duke of Pastrana has placed the school in what has become a residential-luxury area on the north of Madrid. While historically the area is part of the natural residential extension (Ensanche) outwards from the original Centre of the city, it has passed through a number of interestingly distinctive developments (Ministerio de Obras Públicas y Urbanismo 1981:12-18). The first expansion, from 1875 to 1930, saw the growth of a number of working-class settlements. This character was changed after the Civil War, when

the new suburbs ... that were created no longer had at all the working-class character of the original settlements; they were basically destined for the emerging classes of the new regime (Ministerio de Obras Públicas y Urbanismo 1981:14; emphasis mine).

While subsequent developments, particularly after 1963, have modified this to some extent, the overall character of the area has remained affluent. A table (based on male occupations), contrasting the socioeconomic situation of the population of the area of Chamartín with that of Madrid as a whole illustrates this (see Table 11-1).

Using a different basis of analysis, that of level of education, the same result is found (see Table 11-2).

While not all the students at present in the school at Chamartín are drawn from the immediately surrounding area (this accounts for some 70%), and although an effort was made in the 1970s to extend the type of family using the school, the present composition of students continues to reflect the upper socio-economic character of the area. The results of a survey carried out by the school itself in 1983-84 on the basis of fathers' occupations show that 72% of the families come from the upper socio-economic group, 26.65% from the middle and lower middle, and only 1.6% from the lower group. (These categories were defined by the Province itself in a questionnaire circulated to all schools.)
Table 11-1: Distribution of occupations in the area of Chamartín as compared with the general distribution for Madrid as a whole. (From Ministerio de Obras Púliccas y Urbanismo 1981:21).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Chamartín</th>
<th>Madrid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative &amp; contractual</td>
<td>38.17</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Professions</td>
<td>22.63</td>
<td>8.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service sector</td>
<td>14.27</td>
<td>13.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-agricultural business</td>
<td>8.66</td>
<td>7.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled &amp; unskilled workers</td>
<td>8.08</td>
<td>26.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Forces</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrarian business</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>41.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11-2: Level of education in the area of Chamartín compared with the general level in Madrid as a whole. (From Ministerio de Obras Púliccas y Urbanismo 1981:21).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of education</th>
<th>Chamartín</th>
<th>Madrid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cannot read or write</td>
<td>9.73</td>
<td>12.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary not completed</td>
<td>18.22</td>
<td>27.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary completed</td>
<td>22.46</td>
<td>29.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower secondary or equivalent</td>
<td>13.54</td>
<td>11.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher secondary or equivalent</td>
<td>16.05</td>
<td>8.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Formation</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>11.33</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The privileged nature of the district is also indicated by the fact of its being perhaps the best-served area of Madrid as regards educational establishments. In 1979, for example, the number of school places in E.G.B. for children between six and fourteen (the ages of obligatory schooling) exceeded the actual school-age population by more than 12,000. Of these, 85.2% belonged to private schools. The situation is similar for B.U.P. and C.O.U. (14-18 years), while for technical formation (Formación Profesional) there is a deficit of 1,806 places (Ministerio de Obras Púliccas y Urbanismo 1981:70-73). In the immediate vicinity of the school at Chamartín, the area that it regards as its school ‘zone’ for purposes of meetings between Principals on matters of general concern, there are twelve girls’ schools run by religious, three Catholic boys’ schools, and two government schools, as well as a number of other private schools (interview with the Principal, October 1982).

The geographical siting of Chamartín is therefore heavily influential in
determining the type of student who attends the school, and therefore the scope of activities of the teachers, and there has been less change in this sphere than the nuns themselves had hoped. More readily apparent are the changes associated with the second set of structures inherited from the past - those derived from the internal history and development of the school.

**History and development**

It is appropriate to point out at this stage, I think, that to speak of 'the school' at Chamartín is in fact to telescope a complex development that includes a number of different schools and stages. The building that now houses the preschool and E.G.B., a number of communities of religious, and a Residence for working girls, formerly comprised four sections: a full boarding-school (*internado*), the free school (*externado*), one very large community of religious, and the novitiate. The boarding-school, of about two hundred, drew its pupils from all over Spain, with many children from the landed families (the *latifundistas*) of the south, particularly from the area around Jerez de la Frontera and from Extremadura, whose parents regarded it as desirable that their daughters should go to the capital for the last years of their education. Indeed, in about 1965, a survey was done of the social level of schools in Madrid, and the boarding-school at Chamartín ranked as the third highest (interview with former Principal 1983). The free school drew its students (300-400) from the remnants of the working-class areas that still survived around Chamartín.

In 1960, a second school was opened by the Congregation on land that was part of the original Chamartín de la Rosa estate but that had been cut off from the school by the building of a road. This school, Pío XII, was never completed according to its original plan, but functioned for seventeen years as a complete and independent school, and, for part of that time, as a teachers' college as well, mainly to train teachers for the Province's own schools. The fact that the initial plan for the school was never fulfilled was due to two factors: the changes within the Society itself, and changes in the urban planning for the district. The first meant the closing, in 1970, of another of the Province's schools, Caballero de Gracia, in the full centre of Madrid, and the dispersal of its pupils. The second involved a rezoning of the district and threatened Pío XII with unpayable land taxes, and the reappropriation of more land by the City Council in order to build a freeway. At the same time that these events were determining the future of Pío XII, the changes within the Province that resulted from the General Chapter of 1964 meant, first, the closing of the free school in Chamartín and absorption of its pupils, and, second, the closing of the boarding-school. The changes and gradual fusion of all these different sectors can best be indicated schematically (Figure 10).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Caballero</td>
<td>Preparatory</td>
<td>Free school closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>University Year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Boarding school closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968-69</td>
<td></td>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>Middle &amp; higher school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Novitiate closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>Decision by the Congregation to close down gradually either Pío XII or Chamartín. Because of the problems of rezoning of Pío XII, the decision to retain Chamartín was made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>from Caballero</td>
<td>from Caballero</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>New applications reduced so that students from Pío XII could be gradually accommodated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>So E.G.B.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-79</td>
<td>Last three classes of E.G.B.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>School closed.</td>
<td>B.U.P.</td>
<td>Prefabricated classrooms in the same grounds, but continuing to function as an independent school (Marqués de Torroja)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10. Relations between and gradual amalgamation of the Province’s three schools, Chamartín, Pío XII, and Caballero de Gracia, 1967-81.

Chamartín itself as it now exists, therefore, consists of one school only, of over 1,000 students, and includes only preschool (non-obligatory, 4-5 years) and the eight grades of E.G.B. (6-14 years, obligatory). A separate school, but situated in the same grounds, is the school of Marqués de Torroja, which is what remains of Pío XII and which consists of the three grades of B.U.P. (14-16 years, non-obligatory), with over 400 students. The two schools maintain informal and somewhat uneasy relations.

A third school, La Casita, uses buildings that also belong on the property, but maintains no relations with either of the other two schools except that it is run by a nun from one of the Chamartín communities. Occasionally students from either Chamartín or Marqués de Torroja transfer to La Casita, but it does not enter this study.
These were the external changes that affected Chamartín. At the same time, a related, but distinct, line of development was occurring within the school that drastically altered its character, to a point in the 1970s where the walls of the formerly very select school for young ladies was painted with such slogans as ‘Red nuns - out!’ Two key initiatives may be pinpointed in this parallel process: first, the General Chapters of 1964, 1967, and 1970, and second, 1972, when the General Law of Education of 1970 was put into effect throughout Spain, and when the present Principal of the school arrived.

The changes that were effected in the school as a result of the 1964 and 1967 General Chapters were based on, and paralleled, changes that were going on in the Society itself as a whole. The most important of these was the suppression in the school, as well as in the Congregation, of traditional rituals and practices that had been universal throughout the society from the time of Madeleine Sophie Barat. The effect of this suppression was to remove practice in the school from symbolic interpretation, and to open it up to the possibility of the same alternative interpretations that the nuns themselves were carrying out. By suppressing these traditions - and it cost many a pang - the nuns allowed many of the structural principles of their educational practice that had previously gone unquestioned to be thrown open to discussion.

The process of suppression was not easy, as the affective impact of these time-honoured practices was great, and they were cherished by many groups - nuns, students, Old Girls, particularly the successful - who had lived with them. They were mostly related to the rewards for good conduct, such as ribbons of merit, the entrance into religious sodalities, weekly notes of merit distributed publicly and solemnly, school prizes at the end of each academic year and such highly symbolic devotional practices as the Procession of the Lilies (see Chapter 6). To be and have been a student of the Sacred Heart - a child of the Sacred Heart as it was commonly termed by those concerned, including grandmothers and beyond - was therefore as strongly defined and as emotionally binding for many women (and often for their brothers and husbands) as it was to be a member of the Society as a religious, and this loyalty was highly prized and strongly promoted.

The ritual and affective power of these practices, with all the weight of generations of tradition (and to be the daughter and grand-daughter of former pupils of the Sacred Heart was very prestigious) had made them inextricably identified in the minds of the majority with the essential reality of the Society and its education. To eliminate them, therefore, was an important step in the process of rethinking and reinterpreting this identity. The process can be clearly seen in developments in the school from 1972 to the present.
Restructuring activity, decision-making, and general developments: 1972-84

When the new Principal, appointed by the Province, arrived for the beginning of the 1972-73 school year, the teaching staff consisted of 33 secular teachers and seven nuns, but the control of the school and all the decision-making was in the hands of the religious. A Management Committee (Equipo Directivo) existed, made up of the appointed coordinators of each course (then preschool to fourth grade, with eight classes in each grade). This team met regularly, and worked in conjunction with the Principal in the day-to-day running of the school. All its members were nuns, and its role was consultative. The secular teachers themselves were employed on the basis of individual agreements between themselves and the Principal. Parents were also involved in the school on an individual basis, the only organized meetings being at a class level for the purpose of information and general good-fellowship.

The first initiative by the Principal in this period was the expansion of possibilities of participation in the running of the school by all the staff, a process that had also to take into account the changes in the composition of both staff and students over the period of amalgamation with Pío XII. There were therefore a number of progressive stages in this development. The result of this by 1982-83 was a committee system that operates at a number of different levels.

Overall consideration of school policy rests with a Management Committee of six, which meets every week. Two of the members - the Principal and the administrator-secretary of the school - have membership by automatic right; the other four are elected as course coordinators, a corollary of which is membership of the Management Committee. Of the six, two - the Principal and one of the coordinators - are nuns. At the specifically academic level, there is a Studies Committee, which meets at the beginning of every term. It is made up of the coordinators of subject departments. These coordinators are appointed by the Principal after consultation with the staff. Of nine members, one of whom is the school psychologist, two are nuns. (This does not include the Principal, who fills a double role, being also head of the language department.) A third series of meetings are the weekly coordination meetings. These are based on the educational law of 1980 which, in an attempt to rationalize the academic structure of E.G.B. on the basis of the differing psychological, emotional, and social development of children, restructured the curriculum and evaluation system and organized the eight grades into three cycles (see Chapter 10). The teachers in each cycle meet weekly with their coordinator, who, as a member of the Management Committee, acts as a channel of information and consultation between the two groups. The responsibility of this role
carries with it some extra financial recompense. Each cycle also has regular meetings of its teachers of religion, who include both nuns and secular teachers, in order to programme and coordinate the religious courses. Finally, there are full staff meetings (the Claustro). These take place at the beginning of each term, and occasionally during the term for whatever needs arise. The latter may take the form of an extraordinary meeting, such as that called by the Principal to discuss the implications for the school of the Pope’s visit at the end of 1982. More often, however, it is part of the ongoing formation of the staff that is part of a three-hourly weekly programme included in the official timetable. Nevertheless, it must be said that, from a period of intense and significant activity in the mid to late seventies, the Claustro as a vehicle for consultation and decision-making has been superseded by coordination and programming meetings. Moreover, despite the other numerous channels of consultation that have grown up, members of the staff themselves feel much less involved in the running of the school now than they did when full staff meetings were a regular activity. Indeed, a number of requests for staff meetings, made through the coordinators, have been rejected by the Principal on the grounds that the coordination cycles and departmental meetings fulfil the same requirements.

Within this overall system of organization, members of the staff, both nuns and secular teachers, operate with considerable autonomy and individual responsibility on the day-to-day basis of teaching and general coordination. They share the programming of courses and in general run their classes very much each in her own style, while at the same time having to subject the results of their evaluation of students for report purposes to their coordination or departmental group. The fact that stability among the staff is high, as in Aluche - most have been in the school, or in Pío XII, for more than ten years - and that all have lived through and shared in the changes, contributes to the mutual trust that allows this valued independence of action.

At a more official and formal level, the coordination and departmental committees have the power of decision in matters relating to teaching, organization and programming, and evaluation. The staff as a group (the Claustro), have only consultative power, except in cases of elections of various representatives, or of voting in such labour-associated matters as strikes. In the latter cases, there is a clear formal differentiation between the nuns and the secular teachers, since the former in Chamartín belong officially to the employers’ group, and therefore on certain occasions do not have the right to vote.

The Management Committee also functions at an organizational level as a decision-making body. Ultimate legal and financial responsibility for the school rests,
however, with the Principal, as representative of the body that owns the school, that is in this case, of the Province. The final power of decision rests, therefore, with her, should the Management Committee, for example, fail to reach consensus on any matter, or in questions of the hiring or dismissal of staff. As neither of these issues arises with any frequency, this power of the Principal is felt only obliquely. What is felt by the other teachers, however, is perhaps the two-edged consequence of these 'reserve' powers: that is, the presence of the Principal as both the competent centre but at the same time the ultimate arbiter of the school. One of the secular teachers summed this up by saying, 'There's a perfect thermometer of any situation of conflict in the school. That's if Viky [the Principal] comes into the staff room'. This is partly a question of style, and the strong personal presence of the Principal has been crucial in Chamartín as in Aluche.

One of the effects of her presence has been to promote a sense of personal loyalty to her among the staff that operates as a basis for action in the school in a number of different ways. One is to maintain solidarity among the teachers - and among the families associated with the school - in ways that tend to foster a sense of privileged insulation from the dust of the general educational highroad. The school years 1975-76 and 1976-77, for example, were years of considerable agitation in education following the death of Franco. They are still known among the teachers in Chamartín as 'the years of the strikes'. This was a time when unions were still organized vertically - the vertical syndicates - and included both employers and employees. The teachers met as a group to discuss the possibility of joining a general strike that had been called for all schools throughout Spain. The woman who was then the union representative described what happened:

'We had meetings and discussions - all very theological! But there was no confrontation. Nothing really happened here. There were four or five of us in favour of the strike, but most of the others preferred to support Viky. The general feeling was, 'Poor Viky, she's so good'.

This same teacher went on to describe how the Principal instructed her, as the union representative, to pass on to the other teachers a telegram that she had received from the President of the employers' group within the union. This talked about the possibility of unspecified 'consequences' if the teachers joined the strike. Despite this, the representative maintained her support for strike action, and recalled:

'I came up here to the staff room to see whether the other teachers were

3 This was the Augustinian priest, Angel Martínez Fuertes, who is now the president of the CECE, the federation of private schools.
prepared to support me. But no one moved a muscle - not even the portrait of the Holy Mother Foundress! So I resigned.'

She summed up the situation by commenting, 'There's no sense of solidarity with teaching in general, and with other schools - absolutely none'. Her comment was borne out by succeeding events. In 1977 there occurred the first legal demonstration by teachers. There was, as one of the teachers then still in Pío XII described it,

'a march from Iglesias to Cuatro Caminos, on the footpath, and in silence. There were about 10,000 marchers. And there were the grises. With shields and masks, and submachine guns with live ammunition - live, mind you - shoulder to shoulder. There'd just been a big strike by firemen in Barcelona, and here the demonstration passed the fire station. We were in silence. But when we reached the firemen, they were there, shouting and clapping. The police couldn't do anything.'

Four of the teachers from Chamartín joined in this demonstration. The reaction of most of the other teachers in the school was one, not just of non-support for the issues at stake, but of scandal and dissociation. It was for them, as this teacher remembered it, 'a matter of the communists'.

A later general strike was called for teachers in the 1978-79 school year. This was also a year of considerable agitation, both at the national level and in the school. At the national level, it was the year of the promulgation of the new Constitution in the early post-Franco era, one of the effects of which was the formal suppression of the official vertical syndicates. For Chamartín it was also the year of the fusión - the year of the 'burning' as the teachers call it - in which the last classes and teachers from Pío XII joined the school. In the midst of all this excitement, the annual negotiations over salary and conditions of service acted as something of an emotional catalyst. Although in fact the number of teachers in the school wishing to support the national strike was again quite low, feeling ran very high. A staff meeting was permitted by the Principal to discuss the issues, but her own intervention was decisive. She asked to speak to the meeting, and pointed out to the teachers the constraints imposed on the school by the receipt of a government subsidy, and the possibility of the subsidy being withdrawn if the teachers joined the strike. This action was assessed not only by the secular teachers but by one of the other nuns on the staff as being the critical factor in swaying what had up until that

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4 The National Police, known as the grises ('greys') - or the gristapos - from the colour of their uniform.

5 Trade unions were officially legalized in 1977 (Graham 1984:118) and their status formalized in Articles 7 and 35-37 of the Constitution.
point been the decision of the staff to join in the strike. Instead, they voted against it.

It is an indication of the continuing influence of the Principal that the first public involvement by the Chamartín teachers as a body with general issues of this kind was in 1984-85, when she gave her support to a teachers' strike that was called to put pressure on the CECE, the body that acts as the employers' representative in the yearly negotiations on private teachers' salaries and conditions of service. This was after months of unsatisfactory negotiation, and occurred during the period when the LODE was under review by the Constitutional Tribunal, and therefore before it passed into law.\(^6\) In matters to do with these negotiations, the Province as represented in the school at Chamartín is officially included in the body of employers represented by the CECE, so that the Principal's support for the strike was apparently against the interests of the Province. It was, nevertheless, her support that encouraged the teachers finally to join the strike.

This sense of loyalty to the Principal is fundamentally generative of action in the school in other ways that are less dramatic, but even more important on a day-to-day level than its translation into the public sphere in issues such as industrial action. The most noticeable effect is that, despite whatever normal problems and conflicts arise, as arise they inevitably must in any human group, the everyday functioning of the school is successful, the academic standard meets the required official norms, and personal relations among individuals and groups are good. In other words, the school works, and is seen by the majority of its members - both staff and students, as well as parents - to work well. This means that the general internal practices are experienced by most members at the level of daily life as on the whole satisfying and fulfilling. The practical problems that do arise are perceived by most of the people involved to relate to external structures and constraints, and to threaten, to some extent at least, the inward orientation of the school. There are two of these external constraints that are obviously critical. One is the school's dependence on the Ministry of Education and Science, and therefore on events and developments in the national sphere. The other is the economic question.

This economic aspect of the school, while always fundamental, has become very much more complex since the introduction of the 1970 General Law of Education, and the option (or necessity) of private schools at the level of E.G.B. to opt for a

\(^6\) It was felt quite strongly in some trade union quarters that the delay by the CECE was part of a strategy to bring the LODE into disrepute and put more pressure on the government to withdraw it.
certain level of government subsidy. This possibility coincided with two relevant changes within the Congregation that have already been looked at: a dramatic drop, in the second half of the sixties, in the number of its members and therefore of nuns to teach in the schools, and the push that followed on the General Chapters of 1964, 1967, and 1970 to eschew the elitism of the past and to lower fees in order to broaden the basis of student intake.

One of the first consequences of these changes in Chamartín was associated with the large increase in the number of secular teachers employed in the school and the related change in organization that was described by one of the teachers who lived through it as a change from a family-type economy to that of a company. This aspect of the school's organization is emphasized by its membership as an employer of the CECE, the federation of private schools. It is this organization that acts, as we saw, as the employers' representative in negotiations with the teachers' unions for salary and conditions of service. The salaries of the Chamartín teachers, even though only one of them belongs actively to any union, are now regulated by the decisions reached in these annual negotiations.

These salaries are taken into account in the payment of the government subsidy, which the school finally decided to apply for, and was granted, in 1976-77. This decision was not taken without much consideration, because, as the Principal explained, 'We knew there were other schools with greater need than ours'. Nevertheless, the decision was taken with the specific aim of opening admission to the school to families at the middle and lower end of the economic scale. In fact, a system of scholarships, accounting for some 10% of the students, had been in operation, and continues to be so, under the auspices of the Parents' Association. However, this was felt by the staff not only to be inadequate numerically, but also to mark too strong a contrast between full fee-paying families and those who were assisted, a state of affairs that the closing of the free school had been specifically designed to eliminate. A partial subsidy was therefore applied for. This began at 50% and had risen, in 1982-83, to 72.86%. This percentage, as in Aluche, applies not to the total cost of running the school, but is granted only on the basis of the cost of maintaining a classroom. The school therefore has to find the money to cover all extra costs such as cleaning and maintenance, heating in winter (and the cost of this for a building such as Chamartín is enormous), auxiliary staff, the psychologist, the secretary, and - curiously - the sports teacher. Since, as we saw in Chapter 10, the Ministry of Education and Science sets a limit for subsidized schools on the amount they are allowed to charge parents as extra fees, the school runs every year on a deficit, and the machinations involved in finding ways and
means to cover costs are one of the most time-consuming of the responsibilities of the Finance Committee (the Junta Económica).

This Committee is associated with the Parents’ Association that was formally constituted in 1978, and has become a very active force at both the administrative and educational-cultural levels of the school. The Finance Committee is part of the Association and, in conjunction with the school’s financial administrator (a nun), has taken over responsibility for the economic running of the school. This is an aspect of course of critical importance, though again final responsibility rests with the Principal and, through her, with the Province.

The Ministry impinges on the school in other fundamental ways - the timetable for both students and teachers, for example, is from 9.15 to 5.15 each day, with a two-hour break for lunch (eaten at the school). Teachers are required to work thirty-three hours a week, thirty of which are spent formally in the school, and include a weekly three-hour session after school hours devoted to programming, evaluation, and on-going formation. The school is recognized officially, which means that it sets its own exams and does its own evaluating, but the curriculum is laid down by the Ministry, and there is of course an inspection system (though Chamartín, unlike Aluche, has excellent relations with its Inspector).

The most critical of recent developments for the school was, however, the introduction of the new law of education, the LODE, by the Government in 1983. Earlier choices made by the Principal and the Province to accept only a partial subsidy had been on the grounds of maintaining a certain independence of action. The LODE, however, recognizes only one level of subsidy, of 100 per cent payment of class teachers, and some administrators’ salaries. For a school to receive this subsidy meant the ceding of considerable independence within a more stringent system of public accountability. The response to this by the people concerned with Chamartín was ambivalent. On the one hand, there was a clear dissociation by the Principal from any active involvement in public pressure against the LODE. She refused, for example, to pass on to parents what she regarded as ‘propaganda’ sent to the school by both the CECE and the Church federation of teaching Congregations, the FERE. She was also very angry after a talk given to a meeting of the Parents’ Association by a priest from the FERE who she had thought, on the basis of past experience, would give a rational assessment of the effects of the new law. When the talk turned into an anti-LODE exercise, she described it as ‘a deception’ (‘un engaño’). She also moved quickly, when the legislation was first introduced, to apply for the full subsidy under the law still in force, in order to improve the school’s position when the LODE actually became effective. All this was on the grounds of her own acceptance of the
Society's commitment to education for social justice. One aspect of this was her recognition, so different from that of the Province's official spokeswoman, María Rosa de la Cierva, that the impetus behind the LODE came from a concern by the Socialists to improve equality of opportunity for all in education. Another was her own deep personal commitment to the school at Chamartín itself, and the quality of education that she had struggled to make part of this overall improvement.

At the same time, her qualifications about the law arose from her fear that the provisions involved in its implementation, particularly the issue of the controlling power of the School Council (Consejo de Centro), would threaten the very quality of education that the school had achieved and with it what she saw as its essential character. This essential character for her, and for many others in the Province particularly the Provincialis, depended on the confessionality of the school: an understanding that the nuns' only ultimate justification in the work of education is in terms of the 'mission' of the Society. This is expressed in the ideario issued by the school in the name of the Province as follows:

The Society of the Sacred Heart, whose reason for existence is to manifest the love of God revealed in Christ, is called to evangelize through education understood as service of the Church.

It wishes to live this mission creatively, responding to the needs of real men and collaborating in their growth in Jesus Christ.

For this reason, it defines today its education policy as:

EDUCATION FOR JUSTICE THROUGH FAITH (n.d.).

The seriousness of this commitment by the nuns in Chamartín to education 'through faith' and its specific relation to working for social justice is the key to many of the recent developments in Chamartín. These have been principally concerned with redefining the terms of action in the school on the basis of historical interpretation and 'involvement in the world'. The process has included an openness on the part of the nuns that has not only made them prepared to work for change, and accept its continuing nature, but to prevent them from resting too complacently on past achievements.

The process of redefining the terms of action in the school - and in the school in relation to society - has included each of the main groups associated with the school: parents, former students, staff, both teaching and auxiliary, present students, and the official Church. The inclusion has been based for the nuns on their belief that one can only achieve change by changing people, and that people change by becoming

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In fact, in the Centre-South Province, all the schools have traditionally been for girls, and the orientation has not markedly changed.
aware ('achieving consciousness'). The principal means used by the nuns to achieve change, therefore, has been to try to initiate new understandings in each of these groups in terms of their own relations with them. Each of the processes has involved a decision to deliberately alter the orientation given to the school in the past.

One of the first groups to be involved was the parents, seen by the nuns as crucial in any attempt to educate their children. For this purpose, ongoing courses for parents (*Escuela de Padres*) were begun by the Principal in 1972-73. The priority of this goal is demonstrated by the fact that the first meeting took place within months of her arrival. The aims of the courses were expressed on the basis of answers to a questionnaire sent out to parents by the school, and provide an excellent summary of what was in fact to be the line adopted in the school in general from 1972 onwards. For this reason, I quote them in full:

The objectives for the group are the following:

To pursue personal development by the acquisition of practical ideas for giving to our daughters a formation that is consonant with the actual society, a society that is in continual evolution.

To become aware of all the situations, familial, social, cultural, economic, etc., that have an influence over the whole development of our daughters.

To have a group experience, in order to find, through plurality, the appropriate way to follow.

The formation of a conscience that can afterwards be projected to the other parents in the school and perhaps, in the future, to the different levels of society.

To achieve a collaboration of school-educators-parents:

a) so that there will be no contradiction between the family environment and that of the school;

b) so that the group can act as mediator in situations of conflict.

To act with a sense of the future:

a) realizing the potential of the positive aspects and eliminating the negative aspects of a society in evolution;

b) for a continuous and conscious evaluation of the contents of education and the methods used by educators;

c) for a renewal of the values of the family (*Chamartín, Official school documents n.d.*).

For the past eleven years the parents' courses have been run weekly during the school year, for two hours every Monday night, beginning with informal discussion groups but passing quickly into more structured courses. The types of themes treated have been, to give a few examples: the meeting of the child with God through the family (1972-73); the new vision of sin (1973-74); bases for a socio-political understanding today (1974-75, the year in which the parents' 'school' became official,

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8 All, with one exception, run - it is impossible to resist the observation in view of the excellent possibilities to be found among the nuns themselves - by men, whether priests or professionals.
and broadened its objectives to include the 'ongoing formation of adults'); Marxism and Christianity (1978-79). The number of couples attending the courses has varied greatly, from 29 the first year to 85 at the highest point (1977-78). In 1982-83 it had dwindled to perhaps 15 couples. The quality of the courses offered, however, has remained high throughout, and, while the influence in the school is indirect, it has nevertheless played an important part in the growth of cooperation between parents and staff.

This cooperation with the parents has largely replaced the symbiosis that used to exist between nuns and former students - or those of them who tended to formalize their status in the Old Girls' Association. The latter were socialized within a triumphalistic formation that found its legitimating ideology in the particular symbolic interpretation adopted traditionally by the Society, and were previously the pride and the active support of the school. The spirit that animated them is expressed in a letter circulated by the Old Girls' Committee to all known former students for the 1959 centenary:

Don't you look forward to meeting the friends of your childhood again, to seeing yourself in photos that will be shown in the School; to go back to the classrooms where you learnt so many things, to see the Mothers who taught you, to remember those who are not there - won't it shed so many years from us; to go back to living, for a few hours and in the very place, the time in which you were truly happy; in a word, to feel yourself a living, active member of this great family, this wonderful family in which we were formed - the children of the Sacred Heart? (Memoria 1959:94; emphasis mine).

This group, one of the main beneficiaries of the historic reputation of the Society, and particularly of the proud traditions of Chamartín itself, has been amongst the most reluctant to see this reputation being not just lost, but, as they see it, wantonly destroyed. The nuns, on the other hand, have seen the Association as both a millstone, and as an active pressure group withstanding the efforts of renewal. Moreover, one of the inevitable casualties in the campaign to extend the school's enrolment was the privilege formerly associated with being a second- or third-generation pupil of the Sacred Heart. The main active resistance from the Old Girls came, therefore, in the first years of change, in the sixties, when so many cherished customs were suppressed. In more recent years, there has been little energy wasted on futile confrontations, with the Association being quietly dismissed by the school as intransigent, and relegated to cosy moribundity.

What remains for many of the nuns in the Province, even those most committed to change, is a pride in the historic achievements of the Society, despite what they now interpret as its many failures, and a nostalgia that is a product of
earlier years of experience of a rich symbolic heritage. Many of the nuns of the Province were students in Sacred Heart schools, and the Principals of both Chamartín and of Aluche spent most of their schooling as boarders in Chamartín. This pride and nostalgia was a matter for some surprise, even to the women concerned, during the celebrations of the school’s 125 years. The Principal of Aluche was moved to wear the Child of Mary medal that had been presented to her great-grandmother by St Madeleine Sophie herself, and she arranged for the older students from Aluche to attend a number of the events prepared to mark the occasion.

One of these was the play, *Even further yet* (*Mas lejos todavía*), especially written by one of the nuns on the history of the school and presented with a professionalism that the nuns remembered as a characteristic of Sacred Heart school performances. The play was written with a fine irony and much humour, but also with affection and profound sensitivity, an aspect that was strikingly evident in the scenes dealing with one of the coadjutrix Sisters (see Chapter 5). This part was played by the writer herself because, as she said, she thought the nuances were too delicate to be risked by anyone else. Her success in handling this difficult matter was indicated by the reaction of the former Sisters themselves, a group of whom went to thank her for the dignity that they felt she had given them. Even more unexpected was the reaction of some of the nuns from the more marginalized communities who were smitten with unashamed emotion. Clearly the experience of having been ‘children of the Sacred Heart’ was as deep for those who accepted change as for those who resisted it. What many of the nuns rejected in the Old Girls’ Association was its clinging to forms that had become anachronistic, and its failure to recognize that the spirit expressed in these old forms could survive only if they gave it new expression.

The third group to be challenged by the nuns in the changes at Chamartín was the secular teaching staff, many of whom were former students either of Sacred Heart schools, or, more commonly, of the teacher training programme of Pío XII. This challenge was, of course, progressive, but achieved a high point in 1975-76, the year that they called the year of *socialization*.9

The intense activity of this year in Chamartín was a culmination of a number of different, but related, developments, economic and political as well as religious and educational. Apart from the educational changes resulting from the law of 1970, and the first effects of the post-1973 economic crisis, no analysis of events in Spain in this

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9 There are many problems associated with defining this word as it is used in the Province. The concept developed over a period, and has come to be associated by the nuns with the movement of the schools away from an elitist education.
and the following years can hope to understand what happened without taking into account the emotional effect of the death of Franco in November, 1975. While this was an outcome to be expected in the normal course of events, and while significant change had preceded it (see Chapter 7), and would have continued regardless, the impact of the physical death of this man was resounding. With it came a vigorous impetus to change in the country in general whose effects were felt also in Chamartín. For the nuns themselves, the event coincided with the activity that had begun with the General Chapter of 1967 but had been particularly centred on the Chapter of 1970. The year 1975-76 marks in a particular sense, therefore, the furthest reach of an expansion of both thought and action following logically from the stimulus given by these Chapters.

Part of these developments was the survey of the whole Province carried out in 1974-75. As part of this survey, the nuns did their own questionnaire in the school in May, 1975, including parents, students, and secular teachers. The formulation of the results of this questionnaire - planting as an objective of the school’s education ‘the formation of women who will become agents of social change’ - must be seen as one of the immediate stimuli of the ‘year of socialization’.

The chronology of this year is important. It began in October, 1975, with a series of meetings of parents and teachers concerned with the fostering of social values. The word ‘self-governing’ (autogestión), referring to organizational structures beginning with the classroom, appeared for the first time.\footnote{This is one of the provisions of the LODE that has been regarded as most outrageous and been most attacked by its opponents.} In February, 1976, as part of an orientation towards the introduction of constitutional democracy in the country, the bishops put out a statement concerned specifically with socialization. At the beginning of March, the Chamartín teachers had a staff meeting dedicated to the question of what they called ‘social transformation’. This was followed by a visit to Barcelona by the Principal, whose object was to look at developments in the Congregation’s schools there and what might be seen as possible alternatives for the running of Chamartín.\footnote{It was recognized by the nuns of the Centre-South Province that their companions in the Northern Province were more adventurous and innovative in this as in other areas.} At the end of the month began a series of fortnightly discussion groups of all the staff, dedicated to the theme of socialization. These were run by a Jesuit priest regarded at the time as very radical (he subsequently left the priesthood), and proved in fact to be quite dramatic (traumatic). The year is seen in retrospect by a number of the secular teachers who participated as an extraordinarily agitated and somewhat aberrant time. One of them commented:
'The nuns went through a very radical stage. They invited really way-out people, theologians, for example, to talk to parents - and many of these of the extreme right. They just weren't ready for it, and there were a lot of complaints.'

On the other hand, for many of the teachers themselves who participated, there remains a positive personal valuation of the year, as a year that marked the beginning of a process of the opening up and extending of their own ‘horizons’, as one of them said.

The discussion throughout the year was certainly far-reaching, and included such themes as the individual in a class society, the political dimension of education, the function of education as a process of consciousness-raising for liberation. There was an analysis of the existing organizational structures of the school, including the economic, with a view to transforming them into structures of participation that would help to realize in practice a Christian ideal of equality based in justice. The nuns carried out an investigation of the socio-economic situation of areas surrounding Chamartín in order to test the viability of extending enrolments to include families from less privileged areas.

The immediate results of all this were twofold. One was an implementation at a practical level of suggestions that arose from the discussions. This was based very much on practices already existing in the school, and involved attempts to reduce costs, both for families and for the school; in reducing the number of auxiliary staff (done by non-replacement of those who were to leave); and in simplifying services such as the midday meal offered to those students who wished to eat at the school. The cleaning of the building was also seen as an important issue, and the students began to be made responsible for their own classrooms, as the students in the poor schools had always been, and for the materials necessary to keep them clean. Extra-curricula activities, such as guitar classes and dancing, were suppressed. Some reorganization of the space used by the school was carried out. This was also the time of the rationalization of the structures of participation that has already been looked at.

On the planning level, a synthesis of the year’s efforts was produced in the form of a document, ‘General objectives and actions of a Sacred Heart School’, that attempted to relate ‘specifically religious actions’ with ‘other pastoral actions’, seen

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12 These were ideas derived from the work of Paolo Freire, who initiated literacy programmes for adult peasants, workers, and landless labourers in the north-east of Brazil in the fifties. His work was published in two very influential works, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1972) and Cultural Action for Freedom (1972).
as a vision of working 'towards a new pedagogy'. Religious commitment remained the basis for educational practice for the nuns.

In all the discussions, the question of the actual definition of the word socialization was constantly aired and interpreted. What it finally came to mean in practice was that the school should be open to any family who applied for entry, without discrimination of any kind, particularly economic; that the school itself should actively seek students from outside both its geographical and social areas; that organizational structures should offer to every member of the staff, both professional and non-professional, avenues of participation in the running of the school; and that the general lifestyle should be so simplified as to eliminate the possibility of distinctions being noticed or made between students of differing backgrounds.

The extent to which these objectives were actually achieved in the longer term was rather less than seemed envisaged in this vivid year. This has been partly due to a lack of support by the Congregation's Provincial government which, especially after the General Chapter of 1976, set definite limits on the depth of change that could be tolerated. There was also the later event of the incorporation of Pío XII, which may have had a diluting effect on the singleness of purpose of those who had been involved in the discussions. Or, as one teacher put it, 'In this country, the only thing that changes are the words. Before, we used to say the novena to St Rita; now, we are conscientized. But we stay the same.' While this may be rhetorical exaggeration, it does sum up nicely the sense that much of the change has been less profound than all the excitement seemed to promise. At the same time, the influence of 'the year of socialization' is to be found on the personal level of thinking of those who took part in it, and in its contribution to an overall sense of positive relationships amongst those involved with the school, a sense that continues to be essential to its ongoing functioning. Without it, the possibilities of further changes would be considerably reduced - and change, though now less rapid, is by no means discounted. A continuous reassessment is incorporated into the school's functioning, and there remains a certain preparedness to broach problems and difficult areas.

The fourth group to be actively included in the search by the staff for new meanings is the students. The readiest evidence of this has been a change in the interpretation of discipline. Unlike the rigid conformity demanded earlier in the fee-paying schools, this is now based on a concept of convivencia (living together in active harmony). This is expressed in a relaxed attitude towards the relationship between staff and students, an attitude at considerable variance with the disciplinary formality expressed, up to the end of the sixties, in the use by the nuns of the formal term ustedes when addressing the students. The change to the informal vosotras was
one of the first instances of changing attitudes on the part of the nuns. With it went a change of notable symbolic significance: that of the general suppression of titles, whether of Mother or Sister, and the use of given names by the students for most of the staff.\textsuperscript{15} This was a gradual change implemented throughout the early seventies, and accompanied the change by the nuns from the habit to secular clothes. In view of the traditional elaboration given to the title of 'Mother' in the Society and the importance for the nuns that was placed on channelling their reproductive capacities into 'spiritual motherhood', the change of name was in many ways as important for them as individuals as was the change from the habit.

While the working out of ways and means to promote acceptable norms for harmonious living is obviously a continuing process, the basic outline now adopted by the staff in the school is summarized in a circular sent out to parents at the beginning of each school year. Four main points are emphasized: respect for persons; respect for each other's property and for those things used in common; respect for the class group; and self respect. Sanctions are few, and are concerned with the implementation of these norms. Those sanctions concerned with personal tidiness refer to the wearing of the school uniform, a tradition that is the object of some controversy in the school, but that has been maintained in an attempt to eliminate discrimination and promote equality amongst the students.\textsuperscript{14}

These changes in the practices associated with \textit{convivencia} reflect not just a desire to accommodate a noisier or more rebellious generation of students. On the contrary, they are a serious attempt by the staff to embody a new understanding of the goals of education. These are not seen to be a training of students that eliminates personal differences in the service of the general; it was pointed out by one of the teachers in a staff meeting on the subject that the very word \textit{discipline} is one used in such contexts as the military. Rather, the goal is the fostering of such differences while at the same time recognizing the need for students to learn to recognize and respond to other needs as well. The staff see this dimension as essential not so much to the order and easy running of the school as to the development of attitudes essential for living in society (the other facet of socialization). Although there has been no move in the school to involve students in the formal decision-making process, the significance of this change in the practice of a discipline that is, as Foucault (1977) points out, central to the relations of power in Western European society must not be underestimated.

\textsuperscript{15}The terms of address between the secular teachers and the students had always been more informal.
\textsuperscript{14}Financial help in buying the uniform is available to the few families who cannot afford it.
The final group associated with the school, with whom relationships have been to some extent redefined, I wish to mention only briefly. This is the official Church which is still, of course, a strong influence. Some dissociation with official positions is, however, worthy of note. One is the refusal by the Principal to identify with certain positions taken by the Federation of Teaching Religious (the FERE), especially when this is related to any kind of propaganda or political pressure, as it had been in relation to the LODE. Another has been the rejection of support for such polemic positions as that adopted by the Episcopal Conference in the so-called ‘catechism war’ at the beginning of the 1983-84 school year. This concerned a confrontation between Church and State over the content of textbooks to be used in the teaching of religion in schools, and was related to the question of abortion. While the bishops publicly insisted that this was the only approved catechism, Chamartín (as did Aluche) continued to use the religious texts of another publisher. The teachers also used as the basis for some of their liturgically oriented end-of-term celebrations the text of a book Un Tal Jesús. This was published in South America and officially denounced there by at least some groups of bishops on the grounds of stressing the humanity of Jesus at the expense of his divinity. As one of the nuns remarked, if it had been the other way round, as it had been for centuries in the Church, and the divinity been the aspect stressed, the bishops would have seen no problem. While none of these instances may be in itself particularly radical, they do indicate a preparedness by the school to continue to test meanings instead of just accepting them.

Moreover, in spite of the fundamentally orienting effect of religious commitment on educational practice in the school, there is little attempt by the staff, either secular or nuns, to proselytize or impose particular doctrinal interpretations directly on the students. The teaching of religion itself is in theory clearly distinguished from catechesis. That is to say, classes in religion are expected to provide cultural acquaintance with the content and forms of Catholic Christianity, not to constitute religious experiences with a view to some kind of personal commitment by the students. These kinds of experiences are offered from time to time within the general school context, but a genuine effort is in general made by the teachers to leave the students free to attend or not. Expression of religious commitment, moreover, is understood by the staff, not in any narrowly religious forms, but as an overall scheme

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15 This is the position taken by the Ministry of Education and Science in the religion curriculum that it sets for use in all schools, government as well as private. In non-confessional schools, the students are given an option between these classes and a subject called Ethics.
of values, attitudes, and practices that demands involvement of the total person at all times. The nuns see the achievement of this goal as desirable, but not necessary, and have tried to develop an orientation in the staff and in the school that fosters rather than imposes a sense of Christian commitment. They see this also as part of the total human development of each student that is fundamental to the goals they have set themselves and that are the basis of a comprehensive and individual concern for the needs of each student that is a keynote of the school's atmosphere.

As in Aluche, therefore, and through the same processes of reinterpretation and personal experience of change, the nuns in Chamartín have attempted to free both their educational practice and the religious commitment on which it is based from the symbolic interpretation that had traditionally determined its ideological content. Unlike Aluche, their success in terms of the goals they themselves set before 1976 has been only partial. This has been seen clearly by some of the nuns, both working in Chamartín and outside it, although not by the Principal, and by a few of the secular teachers. What they recognize in the school is the continuing effectiveness of relations that act to divert or thwart the initiatives for change that have played such a dynamic part in the last twenty years.

I would suggest that the basis of this continuance is twofold. On the one hand, the Province's ownership of the property in Chamartín generates a system of social relations in the school based on the relations of property. In this set of relations, the nuns, though numerically few (there are only six full-time on the staff) form the dominant group among those involved. This is because of their membership in the body that owns the school. This control gives them a directive influence in the overall life of the school out of all proportion to their numbers and, for some of them, even against their own strong personal wishes. On the other hand, the composition of the student body in the school remains, despite attempts to broaden it, predominantly middle class. The pressures on the staff from families, therefore, are to promote the interests of this class, itself dominant in contemporary Spanish society, and to maintain the practices in the school that will best achieve this. In responding to these requirements, therefore, the nuns in Chamartín are again to some extent locked in both to a practical promotion through education of the interests of this dominant social class, and to the maintenance of a process of interpretation at least partially ideological in that it masks this promotion. I wish to look at the underlying factors in this situation - the structural elements that define and limit action by the nuns - and the effects of this on practice in the school.
The distortion of interpretation and limitation of action: the structural effects of history

In Chapter 8, I examined the rapidity of change within the Society in general after 1967 and the related explosion of activity in the Central-south Province in Spain, and suggested that the latter reflected a double chronology, based on events from the rest of the post-World War II world catching up with Spain, and the sequence of events in Spain itself. Perhaps I should have talked about a triple chronology - the third being concerned with the internal dynamic of the attribution of 'historical reputation' (Ortner & Whitehead 1981:14). The Chamartin of the centenary in 1959 marked the zenith of a process whereby the Society enjoyed such an historical reputation in Spain, partly through original achievement in its work of education, but mostly by ascription, through fulfilling a role particularly valued by the arbiters of symbolic power in the society at large. The attribution of historical reputation obeying a logic of its own, what had happened with the Congregation was, first, a solidification of its social standing in relation to other groups in society, and then a rigidification that continued to project an illusion of stable prestige. This was occurring when in fact a major shift had already taken place in its position in relation to the emerging society of the sixties and seventies. In other words, both the role of the Congregation in Spanish society and the meaning of that role had already begun to change by 1959, but the inertia of tradition kept things temporarily going. The changes in the Congregation, therefore - and what happened in Chamartin was part of this broader process - may be seen analytically, not so much as a search for a new role as, rather, a tardy recognition that a shift in relations between the Congregation and other groups in society had already taken place. Hence, the changes for the nuns implied attempts to explore the extent of this shift, and of the requirements of the new role, and to work out new meanings.

At the same time, in Chamartin, and despite the best efforts of the nuns to transform them, the traditional principles that continue to organize social relations within the school are those that are most deeply related to the principles organizing the social relations in the society from which the school members come, and that most effectively promote their interests. There are a number of factors involved here. One concerns the expectations of parents and the vested interests in the prestige of the school of both parents and related organizations such as the official Church, as well as of the dominant middle class in society as a whole. Taken together, these interests add up to an ongoing pressure by society to resist change - that is, for the school to continue reproducing the social relations that have been proved to best serve these interests.
Another factor is the question of basic identity, and the school's need to define certain limits that, as with the Society as a whole, ensure continuity in this area. This has been for the nuns an ongoing process of testing and experimenting to see which structures can admit modification or elimination without altering what is seen by many of the women in the Province as the fundamental identity of the school; and which structures are those whose removal would result in a collapse, or a transformation so radical as to destroy it. There has also been a constant profound questioning in the school as to what exactly that identity is, and what it is desirable for it to be. Such a process of ongoing self-evaluation at the deepest level requires, as well as courage (and there has been ample evidence of this), both time and energy, and these are resources that are limited by the demands of everyday life, and are subjected to constant pressure from the powerful inertia of society's resistance to change.

One of the most important results of all this in Chamartín has been a return by the nuns to an interpretation of education that results in its use in practice as a vehicle for transmitting ideology. This has had a number of very important effects in the school, some of which correspond to the operation of a hidden curriculum based on the action of education as primarily for reproduction. It is possible to identify at least three aspects of this hidden curriculum as it is incorporated in the school. All of them are vigorous survivals from Chamartín's past.

The first is an elitism that directly serves the purpose of selection and reproduction of particular social relations. The second concerns the functioning of authority, and, with it, access by the nuns to an ideological power at variance with their professed commitment to individual freedom. The third arises from the school's promotion of a particular interpretation of 'culture', and therefore of the cultural heritage that the staff see as the school's duty to transmit. This interpretation is intimately related to the elitist principle, and its significance has already been touched on in Chapter 10.

The effect of elitism in Chamartín - perhaps the most difficult for the school, since it is the one that members themselves have most consistently and energetically fought - is to reconfirm the structural relation between the formal education system and access in society to limited and desired goods, whether these be material or symbolic. As Bourdieu points out,

> the contribution made by the educational system to the reproduction of the structure of power relationships and symbolic relationships between classes, [is] by contributing to the reproduction of the structure of the distribution of cultural capital among these classes (1977:487).
This concept of ‘cultural capital’ is, as I suggested in Chapter 10, crucial in explaining the importance of the so-called evaluation system in Spanish schools as a system less of evaluation than, as the Principal of Aluche put it, of elimination - or of selection. The relation between the distribution of cultural capital and the class system in general terms is both direct and indirect. Direct, in that

the class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production (Marx & Engels 1971:176).

Indirect, in that, in regulating and progressively limiting access to accepted knowledge, possession of the cultural capital becomes both a reflection of the power and prestige relations that already exist in society, and an instrument in ensuring their unchallenged continuation. The processes of selection in society in general, and specifically in the case of Chamartín, therefore also work in two directions: inwards, in the admission to the school of those, both staff and students, most suited to carrying out the aims of the school; and outwards, in processing the students according to the criteria demanded by a class society.

An intimation of the importance of the latter function of the school may be found in Chamartín by looking at nothing other than the amount of time spent in the classroom on evaluation. As one teacher expressed it, ‘We spend more time on evaluating than on teaching’. Exams are programmed at least every six weeks, and five reports a year are sent to parents (this in a teaching year of eight and a half months). The practice of sending five reports was obligatory under the regulations of the Ministry up until 1981. However, the law of that year, which initiated the concept of cycles, also introduced the possibility of reducing the number of reports to three each year, with a definitive report (affecting promotion to the next cycle) only at the end of each cycle. Chamartín has continued to send five, although the terminology has been changed, on the grounds of keeping parents informed of their children’s progress. If evaluation could be taken in isolation, this might be a positive decision. Taken within the broader social perspective, it acts simply to reinforce the relations of elitism.

Other practices within the school serve this same end. One is the system of bus routes that brings some 70% of those students who live all over Madrid to and from the school each day. These families who are outside what one might call the immediate zone of the school, and who are largely served by this bus system, may be seen as constituting the social rather than the geographical area of the school. While a few of the buses pick up students from suburbs less privileged than Chamartín, the breakdown of fathers’ occupations shown earlier is evidence that this is not a significant factor.
Further, the need for buses indicates another aspect of the present situation, that is, the decline in this part of Madrid of the school-age population; and this is in an area that, as we have seen, contains the highest concentration of scholastic places in the city. This fact, together with the questions raised by the LODE, has posed with some urgency the problem of the future of Chamartín. The lines of the discussion by the nuns to consider solutions to the problem also demonstrate the difficulty experienced by the Province's decision-makers in dissociating themselves from the structural dynamics that keep them identified with a particular position within the processes of social reproduction. While the possibility has been touched on of closing the school for economic reasons, if the government subsidy were to be withdrawn under the LODE, the general lines of discussion have tended to centre upon such alternatives as becoming coeducational,\(^{16}\) or transforming the ownership of the school into a parents' cooperative, as has already been done in a couple of the Province's other schools and in the Northern Province. The age for preschool intake has already been lowered by a year, to age four, to compensate for the reduction in the number of 5-year-old enrolments from three classes to two. In other words, commitment is to maintaining the school, regardless of diminishing enrolments, rather than on analyzing needs outside the school and the possibility that the school no longer fulfils a role of catering for needs that the Society itself has defined as urgent. Part of this commitment, as the Principal herself recognizes, certainly springs from an awareness of the difficulties related to disposing of a building and property such as Chamartín. This is a situation well illustrated by the fate of Pío XII, which the Congregation is unable either to use or to sell. Part of it also arises, however, from an attitude bred by past commitments and expressed by the Provincial in her yearly visit to the school. In a meeting of the Management Committee, one of the aims of which was to see whether Chamartín as a work of the Society responded to the criteria laid down by the 1982 General Chapter, and in particular if it responded to the needs of the country as a whole, she stated:

'We must look at the world always from the point of view of the poor. This does not imply that we have to abandon the education of the upper or professional classes, but that we must look at it from the point of view of those who have less.'

This statement - seen as extraordinary by a number of the other women in the Province - ignores the dynamic inherent in the system of social relations that prevail in the school, and reflects a conviction in the possibility of change based on 'mental

\(^{16}\)This decision was in fact made definitive in the 1984-85 school year.
criticism' (Larrain 1982:47) without corresponding action in transforming those social relations. This is the conviction that has prevented the nuns in Chamartín from achieving the radical change they so clearly articulated in the year of socialization. They have relied principally, and continue to do so, on changing ideas without changing their position within the relations of power in society. A result of this is the way in which authority continues to function in practice in the school.

Despite the attempts to democratize the school, and to require participation at all levels, the nuns, as members of the Province, continue to hold the ultimate power of decisions, and hence to empty the processes of participation of effective content. The forms of participation are to some extent reduced to keeping people happy, by masking the true principle that continues to organize relations: that is, the principle of authority. As indicated earlier, one dimension of this is the possession of ideological power; the teaching nuns have a determinative influence in the school that bears no relation to the smallness of their numbers, and in fact is unwelcome to a number of them. This authority is most readily apparent in the exercise of authority by the Principal.

This authority is demonstrated in a number of ways. The one that tends to recur is the right of the Principal to convoke or refuse meetings of the Claustro. Other situations have also, however, arisen. One of these was the period when, in the light of the Law of the Statutes of Centres (the LOECE), the staff, as in Aluche, spent the year working on their ideario. In Chamartín, however, the draft document was presented to the teachers by the Principal as it had been prepared by the Congregation: that is, with the essential sections marked as non-negotiable. In this case, those sections were not ‘touched’. As one of the teachers commented, ‘What we were left to decide was about as important as the colour of the curtains.’

The result of this process, moreover, was to give great weight to the ideario in the overall policy of the school. A circular issued by the Principal at the beginning of the 1977-78 school year specified this quite clearly as she outlined the concept of the Claustro (the teaching staff as part of the decision-making process):

The Ideology of the Ideario is preferable to all ideology. A lack of unanimity with the Ideario would be not to take seriously at a radical level

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17 A second set of relations is also at work here, deriving from the question of access to knowledge that determines status and orders the division of labour. This means that a second group of nuns, exactly equal in number (6) to the group of teaching nuns, does not in practice share in either the decision-making or the ideological power. These are the auxiliaries, former coadjutrix Sisters, who have an important role in the practical functioning of the school, but who are peripheral to its central processes. They are seen by the secular teachers as a separate group.
either living and working together (convivencia) or persons (Chamartín, Official school documents: September 1977-78).

The intervention of the Principal in the matter of strikes has already been looked at. In this context, two things must be remembered. One is that strikes were a new experience, not only at the school, but at the national level, and no one was very sure what to do or how to handle the situation. Positions were taken that, as the Principal herself admitted in the light of greater experience, were not the most appropriate. Secondly, the Principal’s manifest concern in her intervention was with the good of the students; her commitment that they should not be used by any other groups to serve particular interests has remained constant. Nevertheless, her actions on these occasions were seen by at least some members of the staff to be the invocation of an authority that remains a decisive principle in structuring relations among the members of the school.

A final instance of the ideological primacy of the nuns based on their position of authority may be seen in the use of silence with regard to certain topics in the school—since what is significant in a particular situation is often revealed as much by what is not said as by what is said. This is particularly so in an environment where verbalization (communication) is seen as a major medium of action as it is in Chamartín. There are certain key areas where this effective silence operates in the school. The principal one arises from a desire to avoid ideological conflict. Given the background of most of the members, the most obvious arena for evasion is the political. This is a subject in general most carefully avoided, to the point where, for example, during the general elections in October, 1982, won by the Socialist party with all that that implies historically, the only comments made in the staffroom were when the Principal came there at the morning break. Other than that, silence on the subject was maintained outside small circles of close friends.19 One of the teachers who had voted for the Socialist Party was taken aside by the Principal and told to take care of what she said. According to the person who recounted this incident,

‘There are still teachers here who are shocked, really scandalized, that anyone should vote for the Socialists, and they complained to Viky. She told the person she took aside that she must take that into account, that the others are not prepared for the change, and that it might get back to the families of the students.’

18 Although her support of the strike in 1984-85 raises some questions in this area.
19 In Aluche, on the contrary, some staff as we saw used the elections as an opportunity to develop certain key areas in the social science classes, and the situation was freely commented on, by both staff and students, both in the classroom and outside.
Conflict was thus deliberately avoided. It is clear, too, from the Principal’s comments that this attitude of ideological protection of the staff extends also to the families of the students. While a fair amount of openness exists between staff and students, limits are imposed by a perceived need to care about what might be reported back to parents. While this is a very pragmatic attitude, based on unpleasant past experiences with certain groups of parents hostile to change, it does operate in practice as a denial of pluralism, and a reinforcement of a division between the school and society (and between the private and the public spheres) on the lines of ‘inside’ versus ‘outside’. The point at issue is not that the nuns necessarily share the political or religious positions of any one particular group of parents or teachers, but that they are in a position to decide the extent of discussion permitted and that, in choosing silence, they serve to reinforce the maintenance of the social and ideological relations already existing.

I wish to turn now to the third basic aspect of the hidden curriculum promoted in the school, that is, the perpetuation of a particular interpretation of ‘culture’. The general lines of this interpretation have been already discussed in the previous chapter - that is, of an elitist concept as opposed to an understanding of culture as an active force in liberation. It remains to repeat that the elitist concept of culture is closely linked to the concept of cultural capital, and of cultural goods as symbolic goods, that is, non-material goods of whatever kind that are valued by the society, and the possession of which confers satisfaction and prestige. Bourdieu comments that, contrary to the popular (and promoted) belief that ‘the cultural heritage’ is the ‘undivided property of the whole society’,

the apprehension and possession of cultural goods as symbolic goods (along with the symbolic satisfactions which accompany an appropriation of this kind) are possible only for those who hold the code making it possible to decipher them (1977:488).

An elitist model of culture, then, presupposes an education that provides the tools necessary for deciphering that code, and, as a corollary, the right of entrance into that society designated by Durkheim (1977:96) as ‘polite’.

Chamartín is certainly not simply identified with this interpretation of culture. There are, however, certain elements to be found. The extra-curricula activities run by the mothers, such as drama classes and book seminars, owe something of their form to this. Perhaps most pervasive, however, is the value placed on an agreeable ideal that seems to me to act as a translation of the traditional value for women of ‘shame’ (vergüenza): that is the school’s ideal of the woman who is bien educada (well bred). This apparently vague and generalized term, constantly invoked in the
school, is in practice quite specific, and its elements are readily recognizable. The
general character of these elements as promoted in the school are easily identified
with the 'cultivated' person and indicate the ordering and differentiating role played
by socialization in a class society. They include such aspects of behaviour as the use
of elaborated language codes for example (that, as Bernstein points out, is more
accessible in industrial society to individuals with an appropriate middle or upper
class background than to those from the working-class (1971:174-78)). The teachers
promote models in which aggression is expressed only in carefully controlled ways,20
and they are unqualified in the condemnation of palabrotas: vulgar expressions or
swearwords. The value placed by the school on this ideal21 serves as another aspect
of the reproduction of social relations, both at the general level of social class, and at
a particular level of perpetuating a general female model within a society
differentiated not only on class but also on gender lines. This model is already
inherent in the fact of Chamartín being, up to the present, a traditional all-girls’
school. It is emphasized in the kinds of behaviour elicited by the bien educada ideal.

The same model of appropriate feminine behaviour is implicit in the liturgical
ceremonies that are so central to the life of the school, and they place the women in
the school, as they do the Society as a whole, within the overall social relations of the
Church. The nuns now do play some role in these ceremonies. The Principal, for
example, and occasionally some of the other nuns, help to distribute communion on
occasions when the size of the congregation calls for it. Nevertheless, this role is
always firmly secondary to that of the officiating priest or priests. No longer veiled
physically as a sign of their subordinate position, the nuns, like all other women in
this context of public worship in the Roman Catholic Church, remain so
metaphorically.

Taken as a whole, then, the situation in the school in Chamartín reflects far
more closely than in Aluche the processes that have been in operation in the Province
since 1967. The difference between the two schools lies precisely in the way in which
they relate to the Province. The nuns themselves in both cases have, on the basis of
the initiative of the Society and their own resulting experiences of greater autonomy,
responded creatively and imaginatively to change. In Chamartín, this has resulted in
attempts by the nuns to reinterpret the terms of their own educational action and, at
both individual and group levels, for others involved in the school.

20 This is reminiscent of Chesterton’s wonderful definition of a gentleman as one who is
never rude except intentionally.
21 I never heard the words bien educada mentioned in Aluche.
The effect has been a spread, to some extent at least, of the processes of decision-making, and of the maintenance of an atmosphere in the school that is both relaxed and happy for staff and students. Relations with various less privileged groups outside the school are fostered and the nuns and other teachers place great emphasis on the promoting of a social conscience among the students. For the 1983-84 school year, for example, the Principal was approached by an outside body for permission to use part of the building as a sheltered workshop for handicapped teenagers. After consultation with the Province and with the school’s Management Committee, this was granted. Although the workshop functions autonomously, the students at Christmas time performed part of their annual concert there, opening up the possibility of further contacts between the two organizations. This move was seen by the teachers as positive more for the Chamartín students in increasing their social awareness than for the handicapped teenagers. These kinds of experiences have been very important in maintaining openness in the general orientation of the school.

Nevertheless, the nuns in Chamartín remain bound to certain sets of social relations that they themselves have tried energetically to transform. These are in part the inheritance of the past, and might perhaps be called, using the language of religious interpretation accepted by the nuns, the original sin that is the unavoidable context of their action. There are also aspects though, that depend on developments that have taken place in the Province since 1976. The retreat from radical action marked by the 1976 General Chapter affected the implementation of the results in Chamartín of the year of socialization. What remains of that year are certain practices, like the students cleaning their own classrooms, that incorporate a fragment of the original stimulus for change but that have bypassed the fundamental question of social justice and the redistribution of power in society to which the nuns had specifically directed their concern. The result for the school has been a partial sliding back into ideology, a situation that is supported by the Province but rejected by other nuns who recognize that meaning cannot be divorced from its social context.

What has been released by the structuring energies of the nuns in Chamartín, therefore, has been a movement of creativity and hope that operates within the school to make possible autonomous action for both nuns and secular staff. As part of this movement, the interests of the groups involved with the school are being served, and served well. What has constrained the nuns, and diverted what they themselves saw as radical structuring activity into essentially peripheral action, has been their failure to recognize the terms of their own position in the social relations of Spanish society. For them, membership in the middle class has meant not a fundamental mobilization of the advantages of this membership in the interests of subordinate groups, but a continuing promotion of middle class interests.
While their work of education is therefore an important medium of expression of personal autonomy for the nuns involved, it is not the transforming social activity that they themselves had hoped for. This result is partially the effect of the historical development of the school itself. It is also, and fundamentally, based on the acceptance by the nuns of the terms of the incorporation of Chamartín in the Province, and of positions taken in the Province after 1976. Only through the renegotiation of these terms at the level of the school, in the same way in which they have renegotiated it personally, will the nuns free their action in the school from its ideological orientation and make it possible to restructure Chamartín's position in relation to the broader society. The nuns have already shown that they are capable of the effort and imagination needed for such a task. The challenge now is to examine their present historical reality in order to move 'even further yet'.
CHAPTER 12
Conclusions

Many generations of Religious of the Sacred Heart through the generosity of their gift, the depth of their religious life and of their service of others, the strength of their spirituality drawn from the Heart of Jesus, have contributed to forging a rich and vigorous tradition that has allowed the Society to change and adapt itself, always seeking ways to incarnate its original charisma (Constituciones 1982: Intro.).

This comment is from the new Constitutions, presented for approval to the Sacred Congregation for Religious after the General Chapter of 1982. In them are distilled the positive efforts by members of the Society to achieve two things. The first is the recovery of their past. The second is to take control over their future.

For most of the women involved, these two processes are interdependent. As they see it, it is only by taking control over their past that control over their future is possible. It follows that much of the energy generated by the changes of the Second Vatican Council and the Society's own General Chapters has been directed towards attempting to reinterpret the past in ways that make it possible for the nuns to accept their earlier commitment. For many, indeed, this has been the hardest part of the changes.

The emergence of a critical awareness in the late sixties and the transformation of practice that followed, particularly the suppression of enclosure, released the nuns from the dominance of the symbolic order and brought about a change in their understanding based on historical interpretation. Part of the same process, however, was a new interpretation of the meaning of their past as the nuns lived new experiences in the terms posited not by their own traditional structures but by the broader society around them. In doing this, they became acutely aware of the privileged and repressive limitations of those traditional structures. With recognition came rejection. Or rather, recognition of the gulf between the practices of the past and those being generated by the present forced the nuns to consider different options, and it is the choices made then that have shaped developments in the Centre-South Province and in the Society.

One choice was for members to leave the Society, and many did this. One was
to deny the criticism of the past implied in the acceptance of change and to cling to traditional practices. This choice was clearest in the communities in Florence and Toledo, but has a significant number of other adherents in the Centre-South Province. Another option was to reject the past entirely and condemn it as unredeemable, a choice made by a few. It is a choice based on deep anger at the injustices that were institutionalized in the traditional structures of the Society and represents the bitterness particularly of many of the former Sisters.

This initial sense of anger and rejection was common to many of the nuns. It arose from a feeling that they had been duped, and the very things they held dearest and understood to define their deepest selves used to turn them into 'cultural dopes' (Giddens 1979:71). Nevertheless, it was precisely because they were not cultural dopes, because even within the restrictions of traditional religious life they had acted as agents, that these women were capable of change. It was also, I have suggested, because their positive experiences in the past were a realization, however limited, of the implicit dynamic of their option for chastity which placed them in a broader tradition of religious life for women, that they were able to recognize in the changes initiated by the Vatican Council the possibilities of much greater realization of this dynamic. This they were able to do while at the same time accepting its continuity with the past.

The achievement of a positive valuation of a past that is their own past has been a difficult but important part of the nuns' process of change. It has implied a sifting and some contortions in an attempt to identify those elements that truly embodied the initiative of Madeleine Sophie Barat and the original charisma of the Society, and that might therefore provide a base for future developments. In coming to terms with the past, the nuns have had to deal with the various dimensions that have influenced their development: the symbolic system of the monastic regime, their national history and the part they played in the reproduction of social relations, their place as women and as members of an international religious Congregation in the Church.

These factors have all been confronted in various ways by the women of the Province. Nevertheless, two aspects of this past remain critical for them, and have formed one of the principal themes of this thesis. One is the extent to which these historically developed positions came to determine and define the structural dimensions of the nuns' action, and to form for so long their essential context of interpretation. The other is that, because of the early formation of the majority of these women in the routines and values of traditional life, and hence the development of long-term dispositions appropriate to these structures, their present attitudes and practice continue to be influenced by the social formations of the past.
In other words, the lives of the nuns in Madrid, in terms of the central contradiction I have posited between chastity and obedience, the duality of their experience in religious life, and their particular position and action in Spanish society, are anchored in the historical process. The nuns' attempts to come to terms with their history have, in this sense, only partially addressed the complexities of their present position. Moreover, what has been wholly unrecognized in the process has been the essential distortion of the historical initiative of chastity by its incorporation into the relations of power in the wider Church.

In this thesis I have examined the structural effects for a particular group of women of the vow of chastity as a means of providing them with possibilities of action and experiences of autonomy. I have analyzed also the radical subversion of this option as it was put into practice by the nuns within a particular set of relations of domination and subordination within the Church. These were the patriarchal relations of power that defined women, on the basis of their gender, in a position of subordination.

The effect of this in traditional religious life for both generations of nuns in the Centre-South Province was to fix them within the set of social relations in the Church that were based on gender relations and thus both to fix interpretation for them and to reinforce the gender role that they had by their action implicitly tried to reject. The women themselves experienced these processes through an interpretation of their actions generated by the principle of obedience, which became therefore, through historical process, a principle and means of domination over the nuns.

The access to power in the Church based on gender relations is, however, only one of a set of differential relations of power in the Church. Another, particularly in a society such as Spain where religious and civic orthodoxy were in practice indistinguishable, was that based on the ownership of property and the accumulation of wealth that aligned the Church with the dominant groups in society. It is this set that stands in historical contradiction with the option for poverty. I have suggested, however, that this was not a central contradiction for the nuns of the Society in traditional religious life, because it was not in these terms that their position as nuns was essentially defined. At the same time it does perhaps provide an explanation for the opposition in the Congregation between rich and poor that was rigidified in the internal organization of the Society and in its system of different schools. While property and riches in the Church have been a means of gaining access to power, that power is ultimately based on a position within an hierarchically as well as patriarchally organized ministry, and it is this that determines the extent to which any one person or group can claim the right to correct interpretation. Orthodoxy
therefore was historically related to material wealth and social position. In such a situation, to be poor was not just to be powerless, but to be outside orthodoxy. In these terms, the Society’s attitude towards the poor was a logical outcome of this set of relations of power, and of their alignment with the dominant middle class whose interests they acted to promote.

The changes brought about by Vatican II altered the basis of orthodoxy in the Church and, as a result, brought about a shift in the position of the nuns within the relations of power in the Church. This was not a structural transformation of the social relations generated by patriarchal interpretation nor a complete dismantling of the symbolic system. In Chapter 7 we saw that one of the areas where the Council clearly failed was in addressing the question of the position of women in the Church. Nevertheless, as the nuns moved into the world, and began to extend the range of their experiences in relation to the broader society, they extended the bases of their own signifying practice and, as part of the same process, chose to align themselves with social groups who were distinct from their traditional alignment and hence with a distinct set of power relations in the Church. Significantly, this happened not only as it had traditionally, with the Society as a group, but also - indeed, very much - at the level of individuals. Diversity rather than uniformity became a characteristic of the nuns in the Province after 1970, and this was a diversity that made individual alignment with particular social groups a source of tension and conflict. Poverty as a principle was actively embraced by the Society as a whole in the ‘option for the poor’ outlined in the 1970 General Chapter. But this option as interpreted by individual communities in the Centre-South Province has become a major source of conflict.

At the level of the option for chastity then, decisions made by the nuns have been distorted by their position of subordination within a set of power relations based on gender distinctions. In the option for poverty since 1970, the same processes are at work, although generated from a different set of relations. These are the relations based on property and wealth, and indicate the extent to which the Church remains committed to these. As we saw in Chapter 9, one of the requirements of the Sacred Congregation for Religious is that religious orders retain their right to own property. Poverty has therefore become an issue for the nuns in the Province because of their greater freedom since 1970 to resituate themselves, at the level of individuals and communities as well as members of the larger body of the Congregation, in relation to society. This has meant an alignment with groups who, on the basis of class rather than gender relations, are offering a challenge to the prevailing relations of power in the Church, and explains the appeal to many of the nuns of the liberation theology coming from Latin America. Moreover, for the nuns in the Province, this
opening up of options coincided with the economic changes of the sixties in Spanish society in which the class affiliations generated by capitalism became much clearer. An alteration in the relations of power in Spanish society, with the final achievement of dominance in the social formation by the middle class, was finally realized at the very time when the nuns were beginning to become aware of the effects on their own action of living in a class society.

The results of this experience in the Province have been varied. For most individuals and communities, their position is principally decided by their activities as middle-class, professional women, and their main alignment within the social formation in Spanish society is based on this rather than on the religious grounds that had previously allied them with the Catholic bourgeoisie. This is clear when we look at many of the communities in Madrid, particularly those in the big houses and in the flats that have the approval of the Provincials. Amongst these in practice there is little effective alignment with those groups in the Church or Spanish society who are challenging the relations of power based on ownership of property and the accumulation of wealth. This is true too of Chamartín as a school, and helps to explain the disjunction between the staff's professed commitment to an alteration in the class divisions in Spain and their practical acceptance of the class values required by the parents.

The Province as an organization, too, is clearly committed to the principle of ownership of property, at the level of communities if not necessarily of institutions. This has been clearly demonstrated in the communities in Madrid, where it is tied up with the re-emergence of emphasis on symbolic interpretation. This is a relationship that illustrates yet again the extent to which interpretation is situated within relations of power. By owning some of the flats, for example, the Province has been able to reimpose a use of space that is based on the traditional symbolic code, with the chapel as the centre of the house.

By the same token, the relationship constitutes another component in the Provincials' attempts to reassert control over those communities who choose not to have a chapel or to own their own flat. At the same time, the commitment to property ownership reaffirms the stated principle of the Province that poverty is principally a matter for the Province as a whole rather than for individuals. By confining poverty to the level of the organization and interpreting it in this way, the Province structures the relations among its members, and between its members and the general society, in a way that again, as in traditional religious life, sidesteps the issue of poverty for most members.

Some of the women in the Province have, as we saw, pursued an active
alignment with the working-class or with the poor in terms of working to promote the interests of these groups. These women are prominent among the individuals and groups who are being marginalized, or pushed into confrontation with authority. It is not, however, only on the basis of class alignment that groups are being marginalized. Nor does the blessing of Provincial approval embrace undifferentiatedly all members of the acceptable communities nor include all of the acceptable communities with the same degree of warmth. Perhaps even more subversive than poverty to the overall organization of relations in the Province is the right claimed in practice by individuals and communities to interpretations distinct from the official ones.

As it has been working out in Madrid, the claiming of this right has been very much a function of both the position of individuals in the overall organization and their professional competence. Given that these two elements have been the main bases for autonomous action for the women even in their traditional religious life, and that it is precisely the nuns' work as professional women that incorporates them into the middle class, it follows that the claim to independent interpretation and the experience of autonomy may be dependent for the nuns on a middle-class affiliation that ensures them of access to appropriate resources. What seems to be emerging in Madrid as the nuns continue to look for ways to express their religious commitment is an incipient contradiction - perhaps inherent for all subordinate groups and therefore for women in a class society in which power is based on a differential distribution of material resources - between opportunities for autonomy and access to resources. Insofar as the one is dependent on the other - and in practice it seems that for these women it is - there is perhaps emerging a new contradiction for the nuns between chastity and poverty. It is interesting - and significant - that for almost all concerned, emphasis has continued to be placed in practice on those aspects of daily living that I have suggested are implicit in the option for chastity.

It should be stressed at this point that the nuns themselves do not interpret developments in the Centre-South Province in these terms. What I am referring to, on the basis of the analysis of their situation given in the preceding chapters, is what I called in the Introduction the objective effects of their actions: what Giddens explains as the 'objectivity of action', in which 'the consequences of actions chronically escape their initiators' intentions in processes of objectification' (1979:44). By the same token, I would suggest that the nuns' everyday actions do indicate a practical awareness of these dimensions, and that it is in this practical sense (Bourdieu 1980) and its effect on interpretation that the primacy of chastity as the generative principle of action for the nuns and its incipient reinterpretation is demonstrated.
We saw that, within the practices of traditional religious life, the experiences of autonomy achieved by the nuns were on the basis of their option for chastity, and it was this that offered them the possibility of positive action. Such experiences were, however, partial and fugitive because of the domination of organizational practices based on obedience and interpreted, through the institution of certain codes, in the symbolic order. It was the everyday experience of the nuns that was so encoded and everyday practice that constructed religious life itself as a basis of signification. In the communities in Madrid as they are now organized, it is precisely the everyday practice of the nuns that militates against the attempted reimposition of total symbolic interpretation. It is possible to see the increasing regulation of space and time as a possible basis for the development of new codes organizing meaning for the nuns. In practice, however, this meaning remains for them contingent not on a totalizing symbolic order, but on the practical demands of their way of life which gives priority to other factors. For many, this practical priority is given to work. For others, it is the care of aging parents that organizes their activities and means that they do not even live in community. The principle of an overriding meaning derived from the symbolic order is therefore not necessarily denied by the nuns. For some it is, and their resistance to a reimposition of symbolic interpretation is unqualified. For others, however, it is not, and their community life is organized along general lines laid down by the Society or the Province. Nevertheless, the nuns themselves, even in the communities of the big houses, no longer see this organization as absolute, but as subject to practical factors.

The development of action and dispositions based on the practical sense is even clearer if we look at the question of the habit. This aspect of traditional religious life was one of the most minutely encoded and mythified and therefore subject to symbolic interpretation. Its clear rejection after 1970 by the majority of women in the Province indicated a broader principle of interpretation for them. The nuns' continuing rejection of the habit, quietly and without fuss, in the face of pressure from the present Pope, John Paul II, is more complex. On the one hand, it demonstrates yet again the generative primacy of practice for the nuns. The choice of the clothes that they now wear is rooted in each woman's personally expressed response to essential practical needs. Although to some extent still part of an overall code of dress in which elements such as style and colour signal certain specific things about the nuns, what they wear nevertheless defies any reduction to essences by incorporation into the symbolic order. The nuns' use of clothes, therefore, developed through their practical experience after 1970, exemplifies a number of the important changes that have taken place over this period.
In the first place, their maintenance of their right to choose their own clothes on the basis of practical needs rather than symbolic imperatives is a clear indication of the nuns' commitment in their everyday practice to historical rather than mythical interpretation. Secondly, the decision demonstrates the shift in and broadening of the nuns' alignment with other groups in the Church and a consequent broadening of their basis of action. No longer is their position reducible to gender as the dominant set of relations defining their place in the Church. At the same time, looked at within the relations of power generated by gender, the nuns' refusal to accede to the Pope's wishes - and this has been a costly refusal for those, for example, at the Central House in Rome - constitutes a modest but significant challenge to patriarchal authority in the Church. It is, finally, a challenge based on the nuns' practical claim to an equal right to interpretation, at least in matters that affect their everyday lives. It has been this process of claiming the right to interpretation that has been crucial for the nuns, as for other groups in the Church, since the Second Vatican Council.

What happened in the Council was not just that the possibility of change was broached, but that, officially expressed in the highest decision-making body of the hierarchical Roman Church, the principle of and need for change was not only recognized but legitimized. This was essential for change to be initially possible for the nuns. The traditional system that had developed and become rigid in religious life by the end of the 19th century was fundamentally based on the total acceptance by members of the principle of legitimacy. This system, moreover, incorporated no internal mechanisms for change but acted instead to bring about positive resistance to change by the nuns. This was made very clear over the period of the Second Republic and the Civil War. Change for the nuns of both generations was only possible if it were legitimized. It is this factor that explains the central importance in the first post-Conciliar years of the documents produced by the Society in its General Chapters. These documents embodied for the women the changes in official interpretation, and set the framework and limits of action. Only through this legitimizing of change and its subsequent expression in practice did the principle of legitimacy itself come to be questioned by the nuns.

This questioning of the very principle of legitimacy as it is expressed in the Church in hierarchical and patriarchal organization has been for the nuns a somewhat erratic and incomplete process of liberation from ideology. The beginnings of this greater freedom were in the emergence of a critical sense among some women in the Province in the late sixties. Essential too was the experience of improvisation and the strategies that it generated as the nuns moved to create new types of communities and new practices. As they worked out the altering terms of their religious
commitment, this improvised practice brought greater flexibility in interpretation also, marked by the subordination of symbolic to practical interpretation.

Not all of these women were entirely freed from ideology nor from myth. Some, particularly those of the Civil War generation and many former Sisters who had been, because of their position in the Society, deeply committed to symbolic interpretation, have moved very little. Nor was a splitting of the referent of their action between the spiritual and the social dimensions entirely eliminated. But strategies based on improvisation - and this is particularly true in the flats - have acted to prevent the reconstitution of religious life itself as a sign. This is not to suggest that symbolic interpretation and action have no place any longer for the nuns. On the contrary, they still play a very important role, and the nuns themselves continue to see them as central to their own religious commitment. What has happened is that, despite attempts since 1976 to reimpose greater control on individuals and communities in the Province by a retreat to symbolic interpretation, this has in general remained subordinate in the practical understanding of the nuns.

A critical element in keeping at bay the dominance of symbolic interpretation has been, for most of the women, their experience of community. It was in community that the nuns lived in practice the changes by which they have redefined their religious commitment. It is in community that they have built up the personal relations that have come to provide major practical and emotional support, a development acknowledged as central by the novices. It was moving to smaller communities that removed the women from the direct effects of structures of authority based on hierarchical and patriarchal organization and extended their experience of personal autonomy. Communities thus became a principal medium for the realization of chastity.

This has been, however, in ways not always clearly identified by the nuns themselves. Certainly a reinterpretation of community was central to the General Chapters of 1967 and 1970 and was essential in effecting change. Subsequent modifications, however, have tended to reincorporate the concept of community into an overall system in which the primary loyalty of the nuns was to be directed to the Congregation as a whole and therefore to resituate them in the broader structures of the Church. Community in this understanding was to be the medium that related the individual member to the whole Society. This was presented, as we saw in Chapter 9, in terms of ‘mission’ and ‘availability’ (disponibilidad), both interpreted by the Provincial in Madrid in terms of obedience.

Obedience - developed in the very first monastic communities as a principle of harmonious organization - is again being interpreted by the nuns in terms of
community, and it is here, perhaps, that a possibility of reinterpretation lies open. For this to be achieved, however, at least two things are necessary. One is a recognition by the nuns of the historical nature of the interpretation of obedience. The other is its related situation within certain relations of power.

Historically, the original impetus for the choice of religious life among early Christians was not obedience, but chastity, and a related poverty based on rejection of the world. The emergence of relations based on obedience was a response produced by needs arising from a later choice to try to express individual religious commitment in a community. Obedience was an extra principle organizing the original impulses of chastity and what came to be poverty. Developed as it was within a particular set of relations of power in European society and in the Church, its expression became modelled on military and feudal principles. Ideologically useful to the dominant groups in society, its interpretation was gradually fixed.

It is in the context of community, therefore - whether this be taken as individual communities, the Province, or the Society as a whole - that obedience must be situated if it is to be a principle not of contradiction but of reconciliation of the needs of individuals with the needs of their companions. Community is, in this sense, not only a locus of emotional and psychological support, but the place of commitment by women together to an ideal that transcends the possibilities of individual endeavour and offers an opportunity of resituating personal needs and commitments in the light of the needs and commitments of others.

This is certainly the emphasis that has emerged from the nuns themselves since 1967, particularly in the General Chapter of 1970, and is still clear in the new Constitutions despite some renewed mythifying that reduces the community to 'a sign of communion' (Constituciones 1982:11). The attempts already made by the nuns to reinterpret obedience are already in this context; the section in the new Constitutions on obedience talks of 'each one of us, exercising personal responsibility, shall put her liberty at the service of the mission of the Society' (1982:15). At the same time, any more radical reinterpretation is frustrated because of being still carried out within relations of power in the Church as a whole that remain hierarchical and patriarchal. As these relations have determined interpretation and practice in the past, so they continue to act as a distorting influence in the present.

This was very clear after 1976 in the Centre-South Province, where the formal organization of relations allowed the Provincial to impose an official interpretation that remained based on an hierarchical understanding of obedience. This was not a necessary development, and depended as much on the personality of the Provincial as on other organizational factors. Nevertheless, both the structures derived from
traditional religious life that have remained effective in the Society and the dispositions of members of the Province themselves which were so profoundly formed by that life meant that she was able to invoke an authority still legitimized in terms of traditional interpretations, and based ultimately on relations of domination and subordination derived from the official incorporation of the Society into the Church. We are back to the original question posed in the Introduction about the possibility and limits of action by individuals and groups. The nuns, despite positive and creative action, are still not free to carry through a fundamental reinterpretation of their position and role because of their definitive relation to the official Church. The cost of the confrontation that developed between the members of the central governing team in the Society in Rome and the Vatican for precisely these reasons was looked at in Chapter 8.

What the nuns have learnt from this confrontation, and also from more immediate conflicts in the Province, has been the importance of protecting their own actions through strategies of avoidance. By getting on with the job and with their lives without direct reference to authority, they have created their own areas of quite extensive action. Their status as professional women has facilitated this, and it is on this basis, in community and particularly in their work of education, that they have broadened the scope of their autonomy.

The work of education is central for these women for a number of reasons. In the first instance, it is the place where the nuns work out their relation with the world through action. It is the foundation of their status as professional women and hence of their power to act. But it is also in itself an avenue of greater access to the knowledge on which interpretation itself is based, and hence the basis for a challenge to the relations of power in the Church that are generated by a monopoly on correct interpretation. Their work of education situates the nuns also in the secular sphere where, in contemporary Spanish society, plurality is a principle of growing importance. The nuns have a choice, then, between using education to maintain ideological control in the interests of the dominant groups in society and in the Church - education as reproduction - or developing the potential of knowledge as power - the sense of culture as liberation - both for themselves and for their students. This is not a clear alternative, either in principle or in practice, but the dimensions of the choices involved and the effects of a particular emphasis on one aspect or the other were analyzed in two schools, Chamartín and Aluche, which represent different choices made by the nuns on the basis of different sets of social relations.

The effects of these choices, as those of others of the nuns' actions, belong therefore in the sphere of social relations that are not subject to definition or control.
by the nuns themselves. This implies that the meanings projected by them do not contain the total meaning of their actions nor their objective effects. In the final analysis, it is these objective effects that will determine the future of the Congregation, and it is therefore they, as well as the present understandings of the nuns, that must be identified. Such identification offers the nuns greater control over future developments and, in the terms in which this study has been carried out, a number of them are critical.

Firstly, the option by women of chastity for autonomy through control over their sexuality has been historically, I have argued, a fundamental impulse for women in choosing the religious life. It was in offering an alternative to their domestic role, as well as in providing a means of expression of a religious sense, that religious life has been an effective strategy for women within relations of power in the Church that are based on hierarchical and patriarchal interpretation. At the same time, because religious life for women was situated essentially within these relations of power as they are based on gender distinctions, their option for chastity was subverted and made effective not as autonomy through control of their sexuality but as subordination through being identified with a sexuality which was therefore reduced to virginity. As long as gender relations remained the principal defining relations for the nuns, any attempt to change this situation was ineffectual.

After Vatican II, however, while relations of power based on gender remained fundamental in the Church, they were no longer solely definitive for the nuns. At the same time, the transformation of social relations in Spanish society also broadened the options for Spanish women. Autonomous action for women is now possible in other socially sanctioned ways, and control over their sexuality has become possible while remaining socially acceptable without being expressed as chastity. The options have become broader than those opposed in the concepts of the virgin and the whore. Nevertheless, at the level of discourse, the women continue to express their choice of chastity in the traditional terms of virginity. Sexuality thus remains enigmatic and problematic in many ways.

At the same time, the commitment to alleviating social needs that was the immediate impetus for the foundation of the Society as of other women's orders in the 19th century also now has other channels for realization. These are expressed in secular as well as religious terms, a development that has also influenced the nuns' understandings of their work.

The terms in which religious life as an institution offered women autonomy have, therefore, been transformed. By the same token, the religious ideal that was also fundamental in the development of this institution will not go away, and new
recruits to the Society in Spain, though not numerous, have begun again to increase. Nor are the women who have chosen to enter religious life and accepted its parameters likely to reject a fundamental association with the Church, since it is from the Church’s particular expression of religious principles and intuitions that they draw their inspiration.

It is by a more radical realignment of their position in the Church, therefore, that the nuns of the Society in Spain - and of women’s active Congregations more generally - may have an opportunity for a fundamental redefinition of their purpose. This can only be done by challenging the prevailing relations of power in the Church which act to distort interpretation. One of the liberating effects of the changes, though its potential has not yet been generally recognized by the nuns of the Province, has been to resituate religious life in its relation to society and, by so doing, to provide a basis for a critique of the systematic deformation of ideas and positions in this traditional institution. The nuns’ recovery of the past, therefore, though still partially mystified by ideology, offers the possibility of an ongoing re-examination of their own position as women in the Church, and of the patriarchal relations on which it is based. Such a re-examination though, while essential for them as women in the Church, is not sufficient. Just as gender relations are no longer totally defining for the nuns, so too their transformation is not adequate for challenging the relations of power in the Church. These relations are not just patriarchal but hierarchical, and rest ultimately on the right to interpretation.

These relations are, in fact, under considerable challenge in the Church as a whole, in Spain as elsewhere. The nuns of the Centre-South Province as a group are not a prominent part of this. Nevertheless, there is some indication that, at individual levels, some of the nuns are actively involved. Such an indication is the membership by some of these women in Christian communities other than their religious ones. These are the Comunidades de Base, the base communities that have played such an important grass-roots role in the Church in Spain since the Vatican Council. These communities, loosely organized and made up of lay people and clergy, married couples and single people of both sexes, are providing the nuns of the Province with a different model of religious commitment within the Church, and one based on principles other than the traditional ones of chastity, poverty, and obedience.

Keeping this in mind, it is possible for the nuns to develop not just new interpretations of their religious commitment, but new forms in which to express them. This the women of the Centre-South Province have actively undertaken since 1967. That their efforts have been partially frustrated is a logical outcome of their
situation within basically unaltered relations of power in the Church, and is reflected in the partial reimposition by the Province of an obedience legitimized by the symbolic order. That this attempt has been only partial is an indication of the joy and fulfilment the women have experienced in exercising their option for chastity and taking control in everyday practice of their own lives.

It is the control over their own lives, through their experiences in community and in their work of education, that gives these women the possibility, despite structural limitations, of creative action in the present and hope for the future. Whether poverty, chastity, and obedience, these three, will remain as expressions of religious commitment is subject to question. What is not subject to question is that, as it has acted historically, and as it has shaped the experience of the women of the Centre-South Province of the Society of the Sacred Heart, the greatest of these is chastity.
Appendix A

The Beguines, a prototype

A number of general comments may be made about this group which indicate that many of the characteristics of the movement found parallels in the 19th century and with the early members of the Society. They are therefore of relevance to the overall discussion of this thesis.

In the first place, the Beguines represented a response by non-aristocratic women to a major shift in social relations associated with urbanization and population growth. The characteristics of the movement are summed up by Southern:

The beguine movement differed substantially from all earlier important movements within the western church. It was basically a women's movement, not simply a feminine appendix to a movement which owed its impetus, direction, and main support to men. It had no definite Rule of life; it claimed the authority of no saintly founder; it sought no authorization from the Holy See; it had no organization or constitution; it promised no benefits and sought no patrons; its vows were a statement of intention, not an irreversible commitment to a discipline enforced by authority; and its adherents could continue their ordinary work in the world (1982:321; emphasis mine).

These characteristics recall many of those developed by women's orders in the 19th century, including the Society of the Sacred Heart. The differences, such as the lack of a Rule, are indicative of the looser control exercised by the Roman Church in the 13th century. Further, the Beguines had their masculine counterparts, the Beghards, religious brotherhoods of urban, non-aristocratic men addressing what they saw as the new social needs of the towns. These developments suggest that religion was used in the 13th century, as it was to be in the 19th, as a vehicle for expressing new alignments in the relations of power in society.

A second comment is related to the first. The Beguines flourished at the same time as the early friars. The friars too developed from the towns, and fundamental to their distinctiveness was their embracing of poverty. This was so for the Dominicans as well as for the Franciscans, though for the followers of Dominic it was a means rather than an end. For the Franciscans, in their original vision at least, poverty was
an ideal in itself. The rapidity with which this ideal was embraced by thousands of followers even before the death of Francis himself suggests the efficacy of the principle of poverty in challenging relations of power based not just on the ownership of property within the feudal system but on the accumulation of money and goods by the growing merchant class. It is significant in this context that, in the middle of this century, Robert Grosseteste, the bishop of Lincoln, is reported to have told the Franciscans that there was a higher kind of poverty than the life of begging. This was ‘to live by one’s own labour ‘like the beguines’ ’ (Southern 1982:320). Such a reference suggests that, for these women, the central principles that generated their action were not chastity and obedience as they were for many women in the formal religious orders. Instead, they were chastity and poverty, both expressive of their will to create for themselves spaces of independence and freedom.

Their refusal to promise obedience to anyone was, Southern suggests, the primary cause of the official Church’s reaction against the Beguines, along with the fact that they did not seek official ecclesiastical recognition. The result was their formal suppression by the General Council of Vienne in 1312, and subsequent moves by various members of the hierarchy to have their communities integrated into the established (enclosed) orders (1982:330).
Appendix B

Nuns and the issue of women and religion

Given that gender is culturally constructed as a socially relevant category in all societies, even though cultural definitions may differ widely, it is essential to take into account the constructing effect of religion in this process. Part of this effect is clearly achieved by the kind of symbolism used, both officially and unofficially. As Hoch-Smith and Spring point out,

in most traditions, religion and its mythologies are the ultimate synthesizers of female metaphor from which many other forms of symbolic expression derive and find legitimation (1978:2).

Equally important is the question of religious practice, where women are excluded from formal religion, and from participating in important public rituals; they may be prominent in possession cults or healing rites but these can be seen as simply extensions of their traditional female roles. They are often either excluded or relegated to an area 'out of sight' in the church, the mosque, the synagogue, or the sacred area (Holden 1983:2).

At the same time, while formal religious practice may be dominated by men, in many societies it is women who spend more time on religious matters or in actually going to church (Holden 1983:1-2). These activities are generally regarded as belonging to the private sphere, and therefore appropriate for women. Nevertheless, they have, in many societies, provided an important area of action for women and offered the possibility of access, through knowledge and expertise, to power.

Such power is generally informal - if not deviant and threatening to the interests of dominant social groups - and achieved in opposition to the negative images of femaleness often projected by the dominant religious metaphors. And, suggest Hoch-Smith and Spring, 'in no religious system do women’s dominant metaphors derive from characteristics other than their sexual and reproductive status' (1978:2). Certainly in the Christian tradition of which the nuns are so much a part, with its symbolic roots in Judaism, woman is categorically the daughter of Eve, temptress and instrument of Adam’s sin. Indeed, for the official Church, from the rabid anti-female writings of the so-called fathers up to and beyond the Code of Canon Law of 1917, hostility to women is a systematic attitude.
Underlying all the heat, however, one glimpses less culturally formulated and more general attitudes towards women that are common to the majority of human societies. One such attitude is derived from the corpus of ideas about the essential impurity of women. The early fathers of the Church were at least more honest in their acknowledgement of this than their clerical descendants.

Dionysius of Alexandria (died c.264 A.D.) declared that a menstruating woman may not take communion or go to church, and Theodor Balsamon taught that ‘the uncleanness of menstruation banished the deaconness from her role before the holy altar...’ Theodores of Canterbury...declared that ‘women may not step into a church during the period of their menstruation. Neither lay women nor nuns should attempt this’ (Henning 1974:273).

Given the Jewish attitudes, which the first Christians inherited, towards blood in general, and towards the uncleanness of menstrual blood in particular, it is difficult to avoid seeing a hardening of such attitudes when the ritual liquid of the Christian liturgy was named as the blood of Christ. That is to say, the likeness between the two substances only served to emphasize their fundamental opposition: the blood of Christ as saving and purifying, and the blood of woman as not only polluting but dangerous. Moreover if, as Mary Douglas (1966) suggests, ritual itself recognizes the potency of disorder, then the exclusion of women from Christian ritual of itself relegates them to that sphere of ‘the wild’ (Ardener 1972), nature (Ortner 1974), or threat (Strathern 1974) that is at the heart of the nature:culture and gender debate.

Juxtaposed to this tradition, however, though not necessarily in contrast with it, is another metaphor - also based, let it be stressed, on their sexual and reproductive status - that glorifies women and places them in a position of honour. In Judeo-Christian tradition, this is Eve not as temptress, but as mother of all the living. And it is, of course, the new Eve: Mary, the mother of Jesus. As it developed in Christianity, however, this tradition did not solve the ambiguities presented by women’s sexuality. On the contrary; by an emphasis on Mary’s virginity within a theological context that opposed the flesh and the world to the spirit, the negative aspects of sexuality, both for women and for men, were reinforced.

1The only apparent remnant of such association between women and impurity to survive down to the modern Church was probably to be found in the ceremony of the Churching of Women, when new mothers were readmitted to the Church after forty days of post-natal exclusion. And indeed, so obscured had the original meaning of this ceremony become before it was finally officially dropped, that most women regarded it simply as a welcoming back into the congregation after having been relieved of their church-going duties in the first weeks after childbirth.

2This train of thought leads onto all kinds of suggestive ramifications, such as, for example, whether the very act of transformation (transubstantiation) of wine into blood might have been threatened and diverted by being performed by a woman, that is, wine into unclean blood. It is not possible to follow through such an analysis, tantalizing though it is, in the present context.
Nevertheless, essential also to the person of Mary in Christian interpretation is her motherhood, and it is this aspect of her experience that in practice eclipsed the pale and intellectual image of her virginity in the popular imagination. The evocative power of Mary as lifegiver, heir to the goddess and her self the mother of god, has always escaped the control of orthodoxy, despite repeated attempts by the official Church to contain it. It is the vitality of the cult of Mary over the centuries, a cult of great importance in Spain, that has in practical - not theological - terms provided the essential female dimension in the popular experience of god, thus completing the fiercely masculine God of Hebrew and Christian orthodoxy. It has also acted to free Mary herself from the limitations of a definition based solely on her reproductive act. Mary, in popular devotion, is mother. She is mother of god and so, in practice if not articulated belief, herself divine, with the powers and prerogatives of divinity. But she is also wholly human, much more so than her son, with a total experience of the human condition. So the cult is also based on the earthly dimension of Mary’s experience that other mortals share with her, a concern with daily relations and affairs, pride and delight in her son, anguish at his death. And she is the ground of hope - the firm assurance that even the humble and the powerless have a place in the kingdom that promises ultimate happiness.

In Spain, the high honour given to Mary in popular practice also provided a basis for positive social attitudes of value towards women and, even more importantly, for women’s own public projection of high self-esteem. The devotion reinforces, therefore, other sets of relations common throughout the Mediterranean that give women - and this applies, though in different ways, to all classes - access to prestige. These are the relations based on the concepts of honour (honradez) and shame (vergüenza). As has been pointed out in relation to Aragón in the sensitive analysis carried out by Lisón Tolosana (1966:318-48), both honour and shame apply to both men and women. They do this in different ways, and demand different behaviours from each sex. Further, shame is always held in relation to honour and, far from being opposed to it at least in Aragón, is an integral part of it. Pitt-Rivers (1965:12-43) identifies the positive aspect of shame as synonymous with honour when both are the basis of repute, and the negative aspect as shamelessness (sinvergüenza),

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3 This dominant image of God as masculine is itself the result of choices made over time within particular social contexts. Even the Old Testament offers interpretations that stress the feminine aspects of godhead, e.g., Isaiah 49:15, or the Song of Songs, but such interpretations were gradually suppressed.
which is dishonour. In all meanings there is a clear distinction between the
behaviours appropriate to each sex, but in all of them also, women as well as men
can, by their own actions as well as by those of their fathers or husbands, accrue
personal and family prestige. The position and concept of women in Spain is
ambivalent, but the result is to provide some limited areas for women to act, and the
honour offered to Mary is important to this as well.

\(^Wikan (1984)\) actually suggests that in practice it is the latter aspect, not honour at all,
that is predominant in people's concerns in the south-east Mediterranean.
Appendix C

Women’s religious life defined by the Code of Canon Law of 1917

Religious orders and Congregations were subject to a number of different ecclesiastical superiors (Canons 499-500); first to the Pope, whose actual powers were delegated to the Sacred Congregation of Religious, a body of clerics headed by a Cardinal within what became the Vatican bureaucracy. In practice, it is this body that holds the highest jurisdiction over all religious. Secondly, religious orders, including the Society, generally had a Cardinal Protector, who possessed no jurisdiction by law over the institute or its members, but whose function was to promote its interests as defined by the Roman bureaucracy. Finally, religious were also subject, though in different degrees, to the local bishop (the Ordinary). It was the latter who had the duty of conducting a canonical visitation, either personally or by delegate, every five years to all monasteries of nuns immediately subject to himself or to the Holy See (Canon 512) (the nuns of the Society came into the second of these two categories).  

Canon 513 laid upon all nuns the obligation of answering the canonical visitor’s questions truthfully, and canonical visits, though infrequent, caused some stir in convent life.

This sanctioned intrusion into the private worlds of religious women is particularly clear when we look at the matter of sacramental confession. Under Canon 520, the members of women’s religious orders were not given any choice in the matter of their personal confessor. The ordinary confessor was appointed by the local Ordinary, and was to hear the confessions of the entire community. This was usually once a week, though frequency was regulated by individual Rules, and not by Canon Law. For the nuns of the Society it was an important weekly event. While it was open for any member to request a special confessor or spiritual director from the local

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1It should be noted that, although under Canon Law the local Ordinary had certain duties of canonical visitation to men’s congregations, these were limited to a number of quite specific matters, such as those pertaining to the monastery church, sacristy, or public oratory - in other words, to matters relating fairly clearly to the public sphere. No such barrier to access to the private sphere of nuns was specified.
Ordinary (Canon 520,2), the organization of communities militated against much advantage being taken of such singularity. Finally, an extraordinary confessor was appointed for each religious house (Canon 521,1). This priest was to visit the house at least four times a year. All members of the community were obliged to present themselves to him, ‘at least to receive his blessing’. Both the ordinary and extraordinary confessors were required by Canon Law to be priests ‘outstanding in prudence and moral repute’ and - and this was classed among the essential qualities for hearing the confessions of religious women - should be forty or more years old (Canon 524,1). Only in the case of serious illness - and the Code specified what were to be so considered - might any of these regulations normally be waived (Canon 523).

In the matter of temporal goods and their administration, further distinctions were drawn in the Code between male and female religious institutes. In the matter of investment of money, for example, in the case of religious orders of men, only money given to a parish or mission, or to an individual religious for the benefit of a parish or mission, required that permission from outside the congregation itself be sought (Canon 533,1:4). For all women’s congregations, permission of the local Ordinary was required for every investment, and for every change in investment (Canon 533, 1:1).

In the question of the alienation of property or the contracting of debt, the regulations were more complex, but they extended the jurisdiction of the Sacred Congregation of Religious to almost all property transactions. As well as the permission of the Sacred Congregation, however, nuns had also to seek the further permission of the local Ordinary (Canon 534).
Appendix D
Education as reproduction or liberation: the theoretical parameters

It is certain that all educational practice is based on specific views about and philosophies of education. What is equally certain is that such practice, because it is carried out within institutions that are part of the total society, carries with it features and consequences not necessarily intended or recognized by those concerned. It is this unintended aspect that is dealt with by those theorists such as Bernstein and Bourdieu who see education principally in its function of reproducing existing social relations, or Foucault, who analyses the emergence of the school within the general growth of those disciplinary institutions that developed in the 18th Century to ensure the docility of individuals within the general relations of power in society. Such views begin with education - or, more accurately, schooling - as the most powerful socializing agent, in conjunction with the family, in modern, industrialized societies. They see schooling therefore as instrumental in defining the discourse and producing the habitus in agents who will ensure, through appropriate practice, the reproduction of social structures (see Bourdieu 1977:487). Schooling thus acts to naturalize the historically produced social formation.

For Bourdieu, this process of reproduction is realized in the relations between social reproduction and cultural reproduction, the latter acting as mediator for the former and determining

the contribution made by the educational system to the reproduction of the structure of power relationships and symbolic relationships between classes, by contributing to the reproduction of the structure of the distribution of cultural capital among these classes (1977:487).

These power and symbolic relationships he sees as in turn based on the ‘hierarchy of economic capital and power’ (488), and therefore on the division of labour in society. This in turn relates, of course, to the school’s task of preparing children to become

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1 It should be noted that, for some theorists of education as reproduction, notably Apple (1979), the concept of hegemony as developed by Gramsci (and Raymond Williams) is also central.
adults in society, a task in which gender categories as well as other socially defined bases of differentiation are fundamental. These contribute, for example, to the definition of the public and the private, a definition made socially on the basis of which gender group is given primary responsibility in each domain (Kelly and Nihlen 1982).

Educational institutions in this analysis, therefore, act to provide the instruments for the appropriation of cultural capital. This is an essentially differentiating process based on access to the code that makes it possible to decipher such symbolic goods (Bourdieu 1977:488). Access to such a code in the theory of Bernstein or, to use his own plural of ‘codes’, is determined by class relations. The essential codes for Bernstein are linguistic and semantic. He suggests that class relations generate, distribute, reproduce and legitimate distinctive forms of communication, which transmit dominating and dominated codes; and that subjects are differentially positioned by these codes in the process of their acquisition (1982:304-5).

Such differentiation may be, for example, in the command of elaborated or restricted codes by middle class or working class children.

Bernstein’s model is derived from rigorous and powerful analyses of what actually goes on in classrooms - in curricula, texts, organization, evaluation, ritual, day-to-day relations - all mutually reinforcing and all acting to reproduce the social relations that produced them. It is a view that, like Bourdieu’s, confines the process of education to what goes on in institutions, and that, for all its persuasiveness, allows for no mechanism of social change. Nor does it recognize the fundamental contradiction inherent in all education systems between the individual and society, or between the social goals of the system - embodied in the institution - and its methods which, even in the formal classroom, are based on personal relationships whose focus is the individual child.

Exclusive analytical emphasis on the reproductive function of educational systems also fails to account adequately for the very power of knowledge itself and the fact that knowledge cannot be reduced solely to ideology, that is, to nothing more than a tool in the process of legitimizing existing and unequal relations of power. The view does recognize the relation between access to knowledge and access to power, a relation that it sees as leading to the selective action of education and the attempts to successively eliminate, through examination or other evaluative mechanisms, those groups deemed as ‘unsuitable’ for the exercise of power. What these writers do not admit is that even the selection process is a partial and imperfect system.

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2 Bernstein’s work is known in Spain and the nuns in the school at Aluche are aware of it.
Other writers, in response to the lacunae in the theories of social reproduction in education (they do not deny their impressive strengths), are beginning to look at the other things that go on in schools: the questions, for example, of resistance by students and their renegotiation of the messages (themselves contradictory) given by schools, and the difference between ‘what students are taught as opposed to what students learn or choose to learn’ (Kelly & Nihlen 1982:163). In this perspective, the focus of action is shifted from the institution and its relation to the social formation to the possibilities of a practice not wholly determined by the institution; one where the person acts as subject as well as object in ‘the history of discourse and production’ (Wexler 1982:277).

In essential tension with education as reproduction, then, is education (or culture) as liberation, a principle that generates creative practice, no matter how modest the scale, and fosters challenge rather than legitimacy, transforming use rather than consumption, alternative interpretation rather than dominant ideology, expansion of discourse rather than acceptance of official representation.

The key to whether an educational system is able to realize these incipient aspects of the acquisition of knowledge lies, I suggest, in the extent to which such a system does in fact try to reduce knowledge to ideology. If this happens - as it did in the Congregation in Spain up to the 1960s - then schools will function as little more than agents of social reproduction. It is when knowledge is permitted a fuller dynamic, of which ideology may be only a part, that alternatives, and hence change, become possible.

The Society of the Sacred Heart, therefore, is not in this view condemned simply to reproduce the social formation, even though this must inevitably be a more or less significant component of its action. The extent to which this aspect does remain, and the extent to which members of the Province have made room for the action of education for liberation, rests largely on the place they give to those factors already mentioned - ideology, the use and distribution of cultural capital, the differentiation in the provision of access by students to necessary codes. In none of these spheres, however, is the Province autonomous. Its practice is generated as much by relations with the State and the Church as by its own structures. These, too, help to define the limits of cultural action for freedom (see Freire 1972b).
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