

Prologue (Foreword)

In order to decipher the enigma of the most notorious false movement of our current times and to discover the secret of its surprisingly labyrinthine structure, it has been necessary for me to untangle, as it were, a knot enmeshed in a miswoven fabric. Appearances can be deceiving. Things are not what they seem to be. Ambiguity and confusion are the symptoms of the times in which we live.

In *Humanum Genus* Leo XIII said (referring to Freemasonry) that to expose it was to conquer it. Let us shine a beam of light on the real *Opus Dei*, exploring its roots, examining its doctrines, and delving into the underground waters that irrigate the structure of this organization embedded in the very marrow of the Catholic Church. This is the objective of this book, to uncover the background and inner workings of an organization that enjoys a personal prelature of its own, approved by the Holy See (which is in the process of elevating its controversial founder to sainthood).

History generally is narrated either in a superficial or an anecdotal way for any given event, usually not revealing the underlying reality. To gain a meaningful understanding requires a sense of order about background information. It is vital that all shroud of secrecy be removed and that we learn about the forces behind the scenes.

When *Opus Dei* is unmasked, we find the history of a conspiracy where reality and fiction seem to combine into a perfect partnership. The author of this book attempts to probe and reveal generally concealed information about this powerful multinational organization.

It is not a scandalous or sensational book. Controversial, perhaps. You may or may not be in agreement with its content. Indifference, neutrality and aloofness will not be possible once the book is read. It begins the work of opening a new and essentially unpublished field of investigation.

The reading of this book is a must if one does not wish to remain unaware of a threat to the very salvation of souls. Ignorance cannot exempt from ravaging spiritual consequences.

Alfonso Carlos de Borbón

A Suspicion Confirmed: Subheading 1, Chapter I

No cult considers itself to be such.(1) Nevertheless, we are of a mind to make a definitive and categorical statement in connection with *Opus Dei*. It is one of the most powerful and mysterious cults in the history of the 20th century.(2) Its Raimundo Panikkar, one of the pioneers at the establishment of the initial nucleus and an important member of its founding fathers, and who assisted in writing the documents setting forth the mission of *Opus Dei*, says “what begun as a small charismatic group slowly changed, by force of circumstances and by the spirit of its founder, into what could be called, in sociological terms, a cult.”(3)

We live immersed in a process of social crisis that has created a marketplace of strange beliefs. Cults proliferate, expand, infiltrate, mature, and execute their secret purposes, passing like smoke throughout the fabric of society, destroying and annihilating many for the lucrative benefit of a few.

The warning was on the first page. The chapter headings did not leave any allowance for uncertainty. The publication that spread the information was a national one. The headline of the newspaper announced: “Members of *Opus Dei* are treated by cult deprogramming specialists in a Barcelona clinic.”(4) The content of that surprising news story was confirmed: an indeterminate number of young applicants and active members had been treated in Barcelona during the last few months by specialists in the mental deprogramming of cult

members. The clinical treatments were applied at the request of their relatives who tried in this way to correct emotional disorders.

The story added that the assisting specialists were provided by the Association for Youth and that the technical equipment was from the Center for Recovery, Re-Orientation and Assistance to Cult Victims (CROAS), both of which are commonly known to be deprogramming organizations that follow a process of informing the cult victims of the true beliefs and actions of the organizations to which they have belonged. The first clinical treatments by deprogrammers of *Opus Dei* members and followers were made in November, 1987.

Approximately 20 families of members or followers of *Opus Dei*, from different parts of Spain, had gone to the Association for Youth, requesting information and assistance in order to “recover their children” or to obtain clinical treatment for them.

Officials of the Association of Youth (to conclude the news story) said that the dogmatic attitudes of some of the members and followers of *Opus Dei* were similar to those belonging to harmful cults. The secrecy and the recruiting activities, or “apostolic activities,” were, in the opinion of the Association for Youth, some of the most negative and harmful characteristics of the “personal prelature” of *Opus Dei*. The story noted that “at the First International Congress on the Harmful Effects of Cult Activity, held the previous November at Saint Cugat of the Valleys (Barcelona), some presumably harmful and negative aspects of *Opus Dei* were examined and discussed.”(5)

The sensation of being labeled as a pernicious sect is soaking into Spanish public opinion to the extent that, in a survey of college students, the statistical results of which were broadcast on Channel 1 of Spanish Television on 23 July 1990, during the second presentation of the news show *Telediario*, most of the interviewees said that they considered *Opus Dei* to be a “destructive cult.”(6) Two years earlier, the writer Vázquez Montalbán, in an article titled “The *Opus Dei* that Never Rests,” also said that “it should be enough that a television news program revealed some of the internal contradictions of *Opus Dei*, for example, the necessity that some of its members be deprogrammed as if they were members of cults outside of established Christianity, the news of which has disturbed the Catholic hierarchy.”(7)

Now we can explain better that recommendation from the 1983 pamphlet, *Be Safe with Opus Dei*, which referred to the initiatives and precautions that should be taken by North American high schools organizing trips by their students to Spanish universities, and which provided for them, before leaving for Spain, some rules and instructions on what they should eat or the foods from which they should abstain, the places of tourist or cultural interest they should visit, the locales they should avoid to prevent being robbed or attacked . . . but among those recommendations there were none warning them to be cautious of an organization called *Opus Dei*.(8)

Ivon Le Vaillant, in his nonfiction book titled *The Holy Mafia*, published in México in 1985, tells us that when a celebrated Italian doctor, well-known in international psychoanalytical circles, was informed that the son of one of his patients had joined *Opus Dei*, he revealed that among his patients he had several that had obtained permission to leave *Opus Dei* and that these were all neurotics, commenting that “This is a crime. They were bewitched.”(9)

Concerning these people, the picture that this book paints for us is that “when they look straight ahead, with their eyes, you are surprised to notice they are not truly themselves, that they seem to live besides themselves, as if deprived of their own personalities. It is as if they were empty in body and soul, mere appendages of an all-absorbing organization: *The Work: (Opus Dei, the Work of God)*.(10) It is the archtypical picture presented by people who are caught in the web of such a cult. The German magazine *Der Spiegel* calls it a “mousetrap”.

In an in-depth report that was published with the title of “The *Opus Dei*, the True Power in Spain,” in the magazine *Tiempo*, a well-established sober journal still published today, and which covers a wide range of general topics, it was said that “there are more and more parents who do not give up, in spite of a lack of legal recourse, in trying to remove their children from what they consider to be a brain washing operation.” The report(11) continued: “In Valencia there is a psychiatrist that has specialized in deprogramming young people captured by *Opus Dei*,” for the majority of whose full members the first commandment and daily activity is precisely the recruitment of new proselytes. According to John Roche, Professor of the History of Science in the University of Oxford and who was a member of the *The Work* for 14 years, “Today they try to capture the children from 8 to 9 years old . . . a dossier is prepared in which, little by little, significant information is recorded; age, studies, tastes, social environment, family environment, attitude toward religion and contacts with people associated with *The Work*. . .”(12)

The report(13) concluded that the power of the *Opus Dei* in Spain was so secretive that 38% of all Spaniards were convinced that the Institute founded by Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer was either a cult, a special interest group, an economic mafia, or a political cabal. The editor of *Tiempo*, José Oneto, noted in an editorial published in connection with the report, that “The Opus nowadays is so embedded in mystery in our country that we wanted to clarify part of that mystery, the part concerning its hidden power.”

The survey taken by OTR and Emopublica is based on 1200 interviews made throughout the whole national territory, and is certainly significant: there are more than enough Spaniards who think that *Opus Dei* is an 'economic mafia' or a 'special interest group'. Additionally there are many Spaniards (35%) who are convinced that the fundamental ends of *The Work* are to influence politics as a special interest group or to achieve certain economic ends.(14) With difficulties, with a lot of effort and work, with arduous investigation, one begins to see the light at the end of the shadowy and dark tunnel.

This present book, published after several years of exhaustive dedication to the collection and examination of data and verified sources, could result in the author's untimely death.

What Is A Sect?: Subheading 2, Chapter I

Julián García Hernando, in an article published in the magazine of the Institute of Applied Sociology, points out that there are two possible etymological derivations for the word "sect". The first can be derived from the Latin *sequi*, to continue. In this sense a sect would be a religious movement that follows a leader and accepts his message. the word may also be connected to the root word "secare" or "secedre" – to cut, or to separate. In his case it would mean a group that has separated from a church or from another sect, with an obvious tendency to keep to itself.(15)

From a sociological point of view, and in a wide sense, a sect could be called an ordinary group or people that participates in the same religious practices.(16) A sect, in a global sense, is nothing more than a group of people joined together by the fact that they believe in a certain doctrine and/or leader.(17) In any context, a secret is a group of people united by a particular doctrine, and the word "sect" by itself being rather uninformative, it must for that reason be further qualified as "cults or destructive sects", "youth movements", or "pseudo-religious totalitarian movements".(18)

A sect is a voluntary association of converts, limited only to adults, with sinners excluded; that is, the sect is reserved only for those that follow the law of God after having been converted to it, if we agree with the definition given by Benoit-Lavaud. In the sect, therefore, the faithful ones adhere to the revelations made to a founder. A sect is distinguished from the Church (in the theological sense) in that it recognizes a new revelation, different from the one affirmed in the Sacred Scripture, which must be followed. In addition to this, the sect limits salvation to its own members.

According to P. Caballero, the elements that characterize modern sects are the following: a sense of security and a sense of certainty. The members of the sect have feeling of belonging to a group that has a monopoly on the truth and salvation.

A related factor is that the group considers itself to be self-sufficient. It does not have contacts with other groups and does not seek to convert them and to integrate them into itself. There is no place for ecumenical dialogue, only for proselytism. It shows no charity to anything that is outside the group, and finally ends up by turning itself into a genuine "ghetto".

Another characteristic of a sect is the rigor of its doctrine, both disciplinary and moral. A total primacy is granted to its principles and to its doctrine, and the interpretation of these is superior to the rights of its members. The "sect" always comes first and is identified with the will of God.(19)

The full Spanish Congress of Deputies, after deciding to investigate the groups considered to be sects in Spain, listed the characteristics that justified defining these groups as being negative or anti-social. According to the socialist deputy Carlos Navarrete, the characteristics of a cult are as follows:(20)

1 Doctrinal integrity, religious or socio-religious, demagogic, as typical of these organizations.

- 2 The presence of a charismatic leader who is considered to be an incarnation of God or to be His prophet.
- 3 The existence of a vertical and totalitarian theocratic organizational structure.
- 4 Establishment of limits on the employment of rational criticism to examine the tenets of the sect by virtue of the dogmatic precedence of certain beliefs.
- 5 The formation of either enclosed communities or those with great group cohesiveness.
- 6 The suppression of individual freedoms, private conversations, communications, etc.
- 7 The recourse to specific neurophysiological manifestations of meditation, spiritual rebirth, enlightenment, etc.
- 8 The total rejection of all social organizations and secular institutions.
- 9 The recruitment, collection of money, and economic spoliation of their members.

To the characteristics listed above, the journalist Pepe Rodriguez, who has specialized in the study of sects, in his recently printed book on the question titled *The Power of the Sects*, corrects and expands upon those already pointed out in his previous work, *The Sects: Here and Now, and Slaves of a Messiah*. He adds, among others:

- 1 The control of all incoming communications to the members, manipulating it for the convenience of the sect.
- 2 The use of sophisticated psychological or neurophysiological techniques (disguised under the term of "meditation") that serve to deaden the will and the reasoning of the followers, causing them to suffer, in many cases, serious psychic disturbances.
- 3 A proposal of the total rejection of society and its institutions. Outside of the group, everyone is an enemy (polarization between the good (the sect) and the evil (society)).

The society is so much garbage and the people that live in it are only of value for the financial contributions that they can make to the sect.(21)

The two primary activities are the recruitment of new followers, accomplished in a surreptitious and illegitimate way, and the collection of money by soliciting for funds on the streets, prize contests, commercial and industrial activities and, in some groups, clearly criminal activities. In the case of the multinational sects, the money collected is sent, for the most part, to the headquarters of each group.

To obtain, under psychological coercion, the surrender of the personal estates of the new followers to the sect or large sums of money for educational programs or audits, the members that work on the fringes of the group have to give everything, or a great part of their wages to the sect. And those that work for companies belonging to the group do not receive wages (the payrolls of the companies owned

by the sect are only a legal fiction so that a profit never seems to be made – or the workers return the money they are paid for their work).

There are two observations upon which Pepe Rodriguez insists and places special emphasis when discussing the characteristics of the sects. On the one hand, the neophyte is isolated from the external world, all the better to depersonalize him; his environment is manipulated; his family ties are severed; his social activities and relationships are subjected to meticulous control; any prior information he may have had about the sect is suppressed and replaced with the sect's own propaganda during orientations; his personal communications are governed by strict rules and censorship; he is taught a language peculiar and characteristic of the sect, which gives to words a meaning different from the common or profane use; he learns secret signs of identification; he is imbued with a feeling of hostility and rejection toward the things of the outside world;(22) and the confiscation of his finances and means of survival, under the pretext of his own “spiritual evolution”, make him have a submissive and humiliating dependence on the sect.(23)

The second aspect that is stressed and underlined by Pepe Rodriguez is the one that refers to the suppression and elimination of the personality, the destruction of individuality by means of deliberate methods and techniques that, when perfectly executed upon the recruit, end up by leading him to believe the paradox that man – taken as an isolated individual – is a fragile and weak being. For this reason, he looks for help in the embrace of the group or community. There

he feels strong and powerful when, in fact – and this is the cruel paradox – he has passed to a state in which he is completely vulnerable and manipulable. While the isolated individual acts under rational rules, the community acts under emotion and irrational imperatives.

It is, then, a road without return, because “when he has entered into the sectarian community, he will never return to private life.” When he was asked the question, “Why do you not belong to *Opus Dei*?” the politician and lawyer, Manuel Cantarero del Castillo (from Madrid) answered briefly and concisely, “Because I am not willing to join a sect.”(24) In other words, not willing to sell himself.

Already, some years ago, in February of 1984, the journalist Luis Reyes printed an item in the weekly publication, *Tiempo*, that slipped by without being widely noticed, in spite of its seriousness. He wrote: “*Opus Dei* in Germany is included among the harmful sects, and is also known to the police as *The Way*.”

As compelling testimony we will reproduce the open letter that a father directed to his *Opus Dei* son. It is like a cry that comes from the depths of his heart:

My son Pedro: I wish that one day you would arrive at the light of the truth and that you would discover the baseness of the sect in which you now are caught, like an impotent fly entangled in the fine meshes of a spider's web. The gigantic spider is the Marquis de Peralta, the web is his work, and the lair where he takes his prey to devour them is the Antichrist's Church. I will enjoy an immense happiness on the day that you are able to escape from the dense nets in which you are now tortured so greatly. In the meanwhile, I will continue praying for you. A hug from your father who suffers and waits . . .(25)

These are the tears of the head of family who fights against a destructive sect that, as such, favors the destruction (destructuralization) of the follower's previous personality and which damages him severely by destroying his family ties.

The Hidden Secret & the Revealed Mystery: Subheading 3, Chapter I

The **1990** Nobel Prize laureate for literature, Camilo José Cela, stated: "I do not belong to *Opus Dei* because I don't like secret societies."(26) The secrecy within *Opus Dei* is an obsessive and nightmarish syndrome. Its followers practice hermeticism. As Santiago Aroca wrote: "Another of the myths of *The Work* is its secrecy. *Opus Dei* officially refuses to be considered an underground organization."

However, Article 193 sanctions: "These Constitutions, the published instructions and those that may be published in the future, as well as other documents, must not be disclosed. Moreover, without the permission of Father (José María Escrivá), those documents written in Latin must not be translated into vernacular languages."

Article 191 proclaims the value of discretion and indicates that the members of *The Work* should keep a wise silence regarding the names of other members and that they will not reveal to anyone that they belong to *Opus Dei*.(27)

One of the most knowledgeable people concerning the inner affairs of *Opus Dei* is Alberto Moncada, who belonged to the group for many years, and in which he held important positions and worked on significant projects. He has written various books that tell of "a mania for secrecy and surreptitiousness which is imply unacceptable in a modern society", (28) and he defines *Opus Dei* as "an intricate skein of threads", taking as his own the words of R. S. when he affirmed that "to understand *The Work* is to want to put an end to *Opus Dei*".(29) In it the

conditions imposed by its leaders on those that wish to leave is that they must not tell anyone about their experiences in *The Work*,(30) but that they only may say that *Opus Dei* hates, by virtue of the profound demands of Christian sincerity, "all hidden power and all pretense".(31)

For Ivon Le Vaillant, the most surprising aspect – and the one most often noted by outside observers – is the secret character of *Opus Dei*, its nature and its behavior as a "secret society". For instance, its use of specific watchwords. The Jesuit Jean Beyer explains that "the secrecy involves the members, the property, and the oaths of the organization."(32)

There are many maxims in the *Opus Dei* members' handbook, *The Way*, that insist upon and reiterate the necessity of the suffocating atmosphere in *The Work*. There are entire chapters dedicated to such topics as "discretion" (tactics) where the principles of secrecy are discussed more or less explicitly. We may read, for example:

970: It is true that I (José María Escrivá) have called yours discreet apostolate "a silent and clandestine mission" and I do not wish in the least to change this. The Constitutions of *Opus Dei*, edited in **1947**, also insist on this aspect of discretion. From their Articles we highlight the following:

Article 6. *Opus Dei* . . . cannot publish magazines and other publications under the name of *The Work*, except for the internal use of its members, who will not receive any special payment; they will speak with caution of *Opus Dei* to those that are not members . . .

Article 190. Belonging to *The Work* does not require any external show of identity, and a member will conceal from outsiders the number of his associates, and furthermore, we ourselves will never speak of this matter with outsiders.

Article 191. . . . A lack of discretion could constitute a serious obstacle for the apostolic work, and also cause some difficulties in the immediate family environment or in the exercise of one's profession. The full members and auxiliary members should be convinced of the necessity of keeping a wise silence about the names of the other members, and must not reveal to anyone their own affiliation with *The Work*, not even with the intention of promoting the Institute, without the local director's special permission. This discretion applies to all the members of the Institute and to the associates that have left it for any reason.

Article 193. These Constitutions, the published instructions, and those that may in the future be published, as well as any other documents, must not be disclosed, or even translated into vernacular languages. .It frequently happens that two members living in the same house, or in the same *Opus Dei* residence, pretend not to know each other when they meet in public. Sometimes members of the same family do not know that another member belongs to *Opus Dei*. It may happen that people discover with surprise that a friend, or a co-worker of many years' association has hidden carefully from them his membership. It is not unusual that this experience even happens to bishops who have been surprised to discover that such-and-such a priest belonged to *Opus Dei*.(33)

Lieutenant General Fernando Rodrigo Cifuentes made the following observations when referring to *Opus Dei*: "In my military capacity, I consider any commitments, except for the exalted ones that a soldier has contracted with the Nation, to be in total opposition to his duty, particularly when they undoubtedly are contracted to accept the regulation of a secret association whose purpose is to ensnare and modify the personality."(35) The writer Evaristo Acevedo commented that *Opus Dei* surrounds its activities with great caution and wariness, almost as if they were official government secrets, "up to the point that I have to ignore my wife, brothers,

uncles, cousins and dear friends unless they belong to *The Work*. The mystery and suspense that surround the 'Opusites' and the measures they take prevent me from judging with accuracy if its aims are beneficial or harmful."(37)

One has to remember that with the sectarian spirit of *Opus Dei*, who is and who is not a member is a matter of silence and that only on rare occasions and for their own convenience will their members admit that they belong to *The Work*.

One could argue that the corporate works of *Opus Dei* do exist and occasionally are acknowledged. This is the only publicity that they make of their activities, but it is significant that activities never appear with the *Opus Dei* name.

In the corresponding civil registrations of works under *Opus Dei*, their name never appears, but we do find patrons, real estate brokers, and renowned people from all manner of trade associations or cultural societies. This tactic hinders the government authorities from taxing the corporate works of *Opus Dei's* secular institutions. Then, not surprisingly, these patrons and real estate brokers commend to *Opus Dei* the spiritual guidance of these centers.(38)

The University professor of the History of Contemporary Spain, José Cepeda Adán, made the following logical reflection: "I do not understand the mystery and the secrecy that enfolds the deeds of *Opus Dei*. If the road is strait and narrow, it will be made clear by the light and it will lead you away from the dangers of a selfish and dark world."(39)(40)

The inclination for secrecy and surreptitiousness in the sect has led them to adopt passwords and special handshakes of recognition in the image and likeness of Masonry. To some it has seemed a significant fact that among the members of this Work, which has been described as "white Masonry", numerous symbols, countersigns and signs are used. Example: If one is in a meeting and a person that has just arrived says, when being introduced, "Pax", you might consider that person to be somewhat unstable. What it means is that he belongs to *Opus Dei* and that he displays their "saint and sign", so that, if there is in the group another person belonging to *The Work*, he identifies himself by saying: "*In aeternum*."(41) Secret rites. Esoteric practices.

Surely, the adoption of such attitudes is not surprising when one observes the considerable results such practices have produced for Freemasonry. *Opus Dei* copied the technique of secrecy, as a means and system of penetration and control, with the enormous advantage of having the official assistance of priests.

The Mexican writer Manuel Magaña in his book, *Revelations of the Holy Mafia*, alerts us to the existence of secret meetings of *Opus Dei* members, which occur with more frequency than might be supposed, that have as their object the control of the press, the cinema, radio and TV, so that their plans of political-religious infiltration, of international extension, may be favored with a public image that hides their true purposes. (42)

An investigator and specialist in topics related to *Opus Dei*, the journalist Santiago Aroca, provided more information on the existence of these scheduled secret meetings, when he wrote about "the cryptic internal language of those gathered together, whose high-ranking members and directors refer to themselves by numbers and not by their names when attending the highest level meetings concerning the governance of *Opus Dei*." (44)

The scrutiny of this secret society of this secret society has been constant. Daniel Artigues, in his documented book published in France in 1971 entitled *Opus Dei in Spain*, wrote on the first page that it was a nearly secret society that aspired, first, to capture the elitists, while simultaneously pursuing

concealed ends which were more political than religious, using the good reputation that it enjoys and the pleasure it takes in its own secrecy. He concluded that "this

desire for discretion, as the members of *Opus Dei* call it, or this cult of secrecy, as its opponents describe it, is one of the essential characteristics of *The Work*."(45)

According to Ivon Le Vaillant, it is impossible to know the exact number of residences or of student's houses. The name of *Opus Dei* is not listed in any phone guide, bringing one to the obvious conclusion it does not want to be discovered. By keeping itself under tight control, it brings to mind two observations:

- *Opus Dei* reserves to itself its choice of contacts, its adherents, and its spokesmen.
- It retains the possibility of using its houses and residences like 'traps'.(46)

In any case, it is vain to seek for clarification from those responsible for such an enterprise. Jesus Ynfante, author of *The Wonderful Adventure of Opus Dei*, finds in *The Work* of Escrivá "a terrible distillation system"(47) whose membership is organized in multiple and complicated ways, from wide external networks down to intimate, secret groups operating according to enigmatic methods, with the result that those younger than 18 receive instructions not to say anything to their parents, and to maintain the secret of their involvement with *Opus Dei* until their parents or guardians have no legal recourse to remove them from it.(48)

Such is the secrecy that reigns in *Opus Dei* that one of its own authorities could write: "I doubt greatly that even one in a thousand of the members knows the Constitutions."(49) And therefore, it should be added, neither do they 'know' the group to which they belong.(50)

Antonio Pérez,(51) one of the people closest to Escrivá and for some time his personal secretary, reminisced: "Father Josemaria always had a great concern for secrecy. He took it upon himself to apply to these topics the same strategy as that which was used for internal matters, that is to say, that only a few people in the inner circle knew each other and they worked only with those directly responsible, withholding that information from the rest of the members. This took place mainly by controlling the documentation and, more or less, the accessibility to the notes and warnings or Rome. There was even a secret code for the correspondence, in which each single numeral or combination thereof with vowels had a significance." María del Carmen Tapia recalled: "The codebook was hidden in a book called *San Girolano*."

The daily newspaper *El Mundo*, in its December 4, 1991 edition, published an interview with the theologian, Hans Küng, who was in Madrid to promote his "Project for an Ethical World", and who, when asked if *The Work* had as much power in the Church as it was said to have, responded: "It has a great deal and, apparently the Pope now supports the secret society of *Opus Dei* from top to bottom . . . *Opus Dei* is worse than a sect: it is a secret and clandestine subversive organization."

The Charismatic Leader: Subheading 4, Chapter I

The followers of sects are usually the slaves of a messiah, to adhere to the terminology of Pepe Rodriguez, who even used this phrase as a title for one of his books on the sects. According to this

author, in a sect we find two doctrinal bodies, perfectly differentiated from each other, but nevertheless intimately bound together. One is the cult of personality and the other is that of a new revelation.

The cult of personality consists of an overvaluation of the leader's human qualities, until he is seen as embodying values and abilities that may be characterized as divine. In the sect, Rodriguez continues, a hierarchical range of spiritual maturity is established, whose logic leads to placing the neophytes at the base of a pyramid and the leader of the sect at the peak.

Therefore, a word from a Teacher will have much more value and force the higher is the place in the hierarchy occupied by its speaker. This mechanism gives birth to another

fundamental principle: only the leader (the peak of the pyramid) is entitled to the "doctrine of the written personal myth and is to be adored through it."

The doctrine of the personal myth not only deifies the leader's biography, but it also invents a plausible personal history that agrees with his intellectual formation. The objective is to place the leader in such a high position of physical, moral and spiritual qualities that no follower will ever even dream of attaining such a state. The consequence of this, once the leader's position as the perfect one is accepted, causes the cessation of all criticism and the total subjection of the pupil to the will of the "perfect teacher".(52) In this synoptic summary of the theory of the charismatic leader, exposed by the writer Pepe Rodriguez, he condenses the characteristic typology that is repeated with only minor variant in all the sects.

Another relevant detail that delineates this theory even more is that "leaders of sects make their followers break all contacts with outside society so that they can create and mold a group that will have no other object than to follow and obey them blindly. All sect leaders pretend to have been 'enlightened' by divinity."(53)

An ostensible megalomania of the charismatic leader may be seen in all the supposition which form the basis of his all-embracing and absolute authority over his flock.

It is curious to note how "at a symbolic level it may be demonstrated that the members of a sect resemble a mother and its leader resembles a father."(54) This is exactly the title and the nomenclature that the adepts reserve for Escrivá de Balaguer.

The cult of the Founder has reached unheard-of-extremes with *The Work*. As Alberto Moncada tells us in his *Oral History of Opus Dei*, the *Opusdeistas* see themselves as members of a family in which the Father is the main character. The history of these first fifty years of *Opus Dei* is nothing but the enlarged biography of monsignor Escrivá, of his psychological evolution, of his relationships with his close friends and strangers and of the unconditional obedience of his followers.

This obedience, this devotion to the Father, becomes the reason for living for his children and the key to their religious experiences, and it ultimately overwhelms any other way of understanding the Mission *Opus Dei*. The cult of the Father's personality, which is the greatest difficulty for psychoanalyst to overcome in deprogramming an *Opusdiesta*, was begotten in the spirit of that man (Escrivá) whose faith

in his destiny made him say: "I have known seven popes, hundreds of cardinals, and thousands of bishops. But there is only one founder of *Opus Dei*."(55)

"Father" Escrivá always surrounded himself with his most loyal confidants and most of his appearances took place in group settings, if at all possible, surrounded by young boys and enraptured admirers. The paroxysm of reverence, in relation to the Founder of the sect, is described for us by Luis Carandell(57) when he writes that the members of *Opus Dei* kneel before the Founder. The Catholic generally only kneels before the Blessed Sacrament. Every morning, in the Roman residence of *Opus Dei*, a maiden wearing a white cap entered the presidential office while Escrivá had breakfast and, kneeling, placed on the table a silver tray with the mail. All his children kneel before kissing his hand.

And here is another item that once more confirms this key feature of his character. Monsignor "tolerated" these manifestations of the veneration professed by his children, but he wanted to institutionalize the custom of kneeling before him so that it could not be thought there was in his acceptance the smallest shade of vanity, arrogance or self-importance. A senior member who, in his time, held positions of great responsibility in *The Work*, told me – Carandell continues – that, in a General Congress of *Opus Dei*, which he attended a short time before leaving the organization, the only point that was widely discussed, and the one on which all were

in agreement, was that of the obligation that members must kneel before the President General, whoever he might be. This was passed "so that the successor of Father Escrivá would not be humiliated", remembering that the members knelt before the Founder.

"Father" Escrivá, the charismatic leader, was placed on an inaccessible pedestal within the organization, and was mythified while he still lived. Speaking to the members, the insider Carandell gives us a key by revealing that the decisive test(58) to determine if a person belongs to *Opus Dei* or not is to speak to him disparagingly of the "Father". They react at once. They admit that he is their "father" and that any person would react if ill were spoken of their father.

Pilar Salarrullana, a former senator and former deputy, has written a book, *The Sects*, as a living testimony of the terrorist messiahs in Spain. It points out that the leader is an essential characteristic of the sects, because he is a messianic, charismatic character, with a great personal charm and a great power of attraction and suggestion – what psychologists call an "expansive paranoiac"; that is, one who makes himself the owner of bodies and minds and, of course, the wallets of his followers. They call themselves, continues Pilar Salarrullana, guru, teacher, prophet, reverend, Swami, shepherd, president, commander, or father.

For Salarrullana, the "Father" is the one who knows everything, who controls everything and who foresees everything. One cannot doubt his works, neither his writings, neither his commands; he can never be disobeyed. Their own "Father" Escrivá referred to the members of *Opus Dei* as his "sons and daughters", and for that reason they had to kneel before him when in his presence.

In a lengthy feature published in the women's magazine, Marie Claire, a numeraria (Note: a celibate female member who lives at an *Opus Dei* residence) who titles her article "The Bitter History of an *Opus*

Dei Numeraria”,(59) explains to us that the mythification of the figure of the leader is taken to such extremes of paroxysm that he is endowed with such an exalted state that he has no need to lie or to distort the fact. Another of the characteristics that is manifested in personality of sect members is that they are accustomed to place the writings of the sect's Founder – for an example we have the booklet *The Way*, written by the “Father” – on the same level as Sacred Scripture and to interpret the Word of God according to the exegetical whims and the teachings of the leader of the sect.

Consequently, affiliation in *The Work* requires absolute submission. The Father's rule embraces everything. The children of Escrivá are like treadmill donkeys: one turn, another turn, more turns, tied to the pole that moves the treadmill. they are tied to the Father; they have no power to act, they do not know how to do anything, they cannot think anything that is against the Father's magnetic personality. We can say that they live as if they were drugged.(60) Escrivá de Balaguer is a powerful drug for those that allow themselves to be caught in the strong meshes of his spider's web. So high is the degree of intoxication that you suffer and to which you are subjected that in your thought, in your speech, in your acts, it is not Christ who is there. It is the “Father”.

There is nothing more graphic and representative than the image of the treadmill donkeys, always walking, going in circles, but going nowhere. Father Escrivá urges his "children" to be, in the spiritual realm, just like the treadmill donkeys. And among the partners of *The Work* it is the fashion to have in their houses a statuette of ceramic, straw or wood, that depicts a donkey with a saddle. The presence of the burro in the foyer of a house, or in the reception area of an office, could be an indication that the expert Opus Deiologist should remember when determining if the tenant belongs to *The Work*.(61)

Covadonga Carcedo, a former assistant professor from Asturias, denounced *Opus Dei* openly, saying: “Opus Dei is a mafia that controls everything. I have become an apostate,

thanks to *Opus Dei*. I want to inform my fellow citizens of the hypocrisy of those people, all those spiritual daughters of José María Escrivá de Balaguer, a marquis whom they aspire to raise to the altars.”(62)

When speaking of today's sects, the journalist Pepe Rodriguez also questioned if it would be interesting to study why there are so many Spanish leaders in certain sects with a manifestation of latent homosexuality.

The Community of the Elect: Adepts and Initiates: Subheading 5, Chapter I

One of the best studies which has appeared in Spain on the topic of the sects is that of Steven Hassan under the title *The Techniques of Mental Control Used by Sects and How to Combat Them*. He tells us of the “celestial deceit” in which “God forgives the deceit of the ‘elect’ if by it they gain new ‘spiritual children’,” and that the sects teach their followers to consider the Father to be the representative of God on Earth. The sectarians are inoculated with the idea that by the mere fact of membership, of being part of the group or of the clan, they belong to a special class comprising “the elect”, a community of the privileged, a nucleus of those who have answered a “call”, a circle of the predestined.

The sects, by exploiting religious motivations, stress to the addict the necessity of a personal experience of God and that, consequently, they can justifiably call themselves “the elect”, and they are even inculcated with the belief that they are sacred in comparison to all other people,(63) thus creating in themselves a feeling of superiority that is in reality artificial and vacuous.

Another idea that they transmit to the members of the sect is that of the exclusive and excluding character of their own behavior. This condition of exclusivity betrays itself in the false idea that, by being a member of the sect, you automatically reject those who do not belong to it. From now on you must be concerned only with the interests of the sect and no others.

The most evident illusion is shown in that the sects usually present themselves as the "way to salvation", presenting the most diverse methods of salvation, but all being the same in having a common denominator in the relation of the external world to each sect, which generally holds that the world is evil.

This feeling of superiority leads to the belief that all the members of the sect will live under the graces of a special divine protection,(64) and this generates that feeling of superiority, that sensation of being one of the elect, a factor that not only contributes to the cohesion of the group, but also changes its morality: those who are not “the elect” are “sinners” and it therefore is just that they be destroyed. There is no pity, neither pardon, for the “sinner”.

Another phenomenon that takes place when all of society is made to appear to be hostile is that not only do you isolate the follower, but you also plant in him the seed of the fear, which is conveniently played upon, that he will be punished if the leader orders it.(65)

In *Opus Dei* the greatest emphasis is placed upon the belief that God, the Absolute, comes to you through the Organization. This idea that your road toward full happiness goes through *The Work* justifies all the rules that you impose on yourself or that they impose on you.(66) The longings for bliss and eternal life, of immortality, that made Miguel de Unamuno tremble when he felt the agony of his Christianity, are achievable by renouncing everything, if you are convinced that this is the price of their realization.

In the opinion of the writer, Evaristo Acevedo, “*Opus Dei* seems to insinuate that only the Spaniards belonging to its organization ‘are with God’. That has the character of a monopoly and exclusivity that does not fit with my religious beliefs.”(67)

María Angustias Moreno, a member of *Opus Dei* for many years, gives us, with respect to this point, an illuminating and illustrative testimony:

What does "The Work" say of itself? That it is simple; that it is authentic; that its members are similar to other men; that they are average people amid the world. However, there is more. They are thoroughly inculcated with the idea that to belong to "The Work" is something wonderful, the best thing in the world, the greatest thing. As a logical consequence of this, the member looks on others as if from a pedestal: he enters into the illumination of the inner mysteries, he is chosen from among

thousands to be part of a perfect body; all others are condemned! They continue down below, wrapped in the darkness of err, and exposed to all dangers.

By virtue of the fact of being a member of "The work", he will always have certainty, he himself will give the true doctrine to those who are unsure, in error, ignorant and poor; simpleminded, because there is nothing else to achieve, one is already endorsed, confirmed and guaranteed by the directors, specially selected people (or so they are thought to be) that possess, by their union with the Father, the gift of infallibility. Because the Father never makes a mistake, and in "The Work" everything is reviewed by the Father: "You must show me everything for review by my head and by my heart", Escrivá repeatedly said to the directors.(68)

You cannot even be a good Christian, for *Opus Dei*, if you have some problem, ailment or illness. It does not admit people who fail the meticulous medical examination to which they are subjected. The "club of God" is restricted to the healthy, as we are told in the bitter history of a numeraria who ran up against this a few days before "whistling" – that is, joining *The Work* – when they said that she had to take a medical examination. "Why did they have to know my state of health to join *The Work*? The important thing to them was that you had a vocation, because if they had discovered polyps in my nose, would my vocation become a decision in the hands of the doctor? This young lady has arrhythmias. Forget all that you have been expecting. You cannot join *The Work*. . . . Amusing, isn't it?"

The reason for this step is not to become encumbered with a person, seemingly young and healthy, who shortly after joining *The Work* is discovered to have some type of illness, more or less serious, and has to be taken care of. *The Work* does not want the prematurely infirm, although two days before the examination she was certain that she had a vocation as strong as a fort. "In my case, they didn't find anything. Even so, they advised me in my (*Opus Dei*) house not to say anything to the doctor. It was necessary to be discreet."(69)

In the booklet *The Way*, written by the charismatic leader himself, contradictory images also appear:(70) two types of man.

The first type bears the resplendent image of the superman, fierce, arrogant, willful, immovable in his devotion to the ideology of his leaders and with an iron scorn for everyone else; a pistolero of God, effective and pitiless, disciplined to the point of absurdity, intolerant, inquiring, in search of the Absolute.

The second type is the tender image of the humble servant, a little vulnerable, modest, the least among the least, with a downcast look, as if hunted and pursued, annoyed by the general hostility of life, a masochist on occasion, a hypocrite in others, a little delicate, lukewarm in everything, audacious to a point, but mainly, never rash. He goes in search of a good bed in which to die of love sickness.

The two images are superimposed and mixed to form the prototype of the Man of *Opus Dei*, just as he is found in life.

The inner circle and general membership of *Opus Dei* show that they have lost, in certain respects, their powers of discernment when they show that they blindly believe that any attacks against *The Work* are merely slanders”(71) when they come from other members of the Catholic Church.

The Love of Wealth & Power: Or, Boundless Avarice: Subheading 6, Chapt. I

The members of *Opus Dei* are a synthesis of the Merchants of God and the Moneychangers of the Temple. Father Pique (France) said that a clan that was able to earn so many millions a year and that could absorb entire companies, when Jesus Christ displayed and preached poverty to the whole world, makes one stop and think. Furthermore, it was founded by a man who aspired to be a Marquis and who was raised to a personal prelature by the contentious Polish Pope,(72) whom we urge now to shine a light on the shadows of *Opus Dei*.

As the Institute of Applied Sociology indicated, through their specialized publication, sects do not usually spend too much time on works of charity outside of their own circle, since all their material resources are dedicated to their own ends. What these sectarian groups mainly look for is “cheap manpower to employ in the service of their own business.” The instructions that a member of *Opus Dei* receives cause him to use his time and his money for the benefit of the association. In *Opus Dei*, if a man gave to the organization all his earnings during his life and could prove that the sect spent less than it received from him, is he entitled to some restitution or even to a pension? The leaders of *The Work* maintain that he is not.(74)

The members and associates (inner circle members) of *Opus Dei* are subjected to economic regimentation, especially the numerarios (celibate members who live in OD residences), who usually live in common or, using the terminology of *The Work*, in “families” generally composed of eight to ten members, on their own designated floors of the residence, which requires them to surrender their salaries and earnings to the secretary at the end of each month. When one of them needs a suit or a pair of shoes, he must consult with the director who alone can authorize him to make such an extraordinary purchase.(75) Although the director does not decide what sort of suit should be purchased, there is no doubt that his advice weighs decisively in this respect. According to long-time members, there was a time when there was a person who was in charge of guiding the associates in each city when they need to refurbish their wardrobes, directing them to certain businesses that were more or less bound to *The Work*.

This story, with slight differences, is also told by Alberto Moncada, who confirms that all the earnings of the members are placed in the treasury of the residence and that later they had to request and to ask for necessities, in accordance with their superiors, and always within a scheme of priorities that were imposed upon them. They were not allowed to have individual bank accounts, nor private goods. At the end of the month, they had to surrender to the director, like part of a secret, an account of the expenses that they had made. A. L. M. N., whose *Opus Dei* identification number was 1,489,253, informs us of the following:

From the time you enter "The Work", they make a general accounting of your revenues and expenses. The revenues are usually greater than the expenses, and therefore a surplus exists. But if you leave,

you will never get them to return your money to you. You might begin to believe that "The Work" is otherworldly! All the things that you have to your name are to be put in the name of "The Work", because it is necessary to live in "poverty" and God has requested everything from us --these are the arguments that are used. Your personal property and belongings are placed in the name of a fiduciary. Also, when one makes the transfer, it is required to make a Will in favor of "The Work". When you leave Opus Dei, you might as well forget the Will and all that you surrendered.(76)

They justify such an abuse of trust by the idea that when you enter *The Work* it is spiritually desirable – they insinuate to you – that you sign whatever they put before you without even glancing at it, because *The Work* is of God and has a sacred founder – so they tell you – and that it is a mother to its children and, would a mother ever try to deceive you? You sign what they toss in front of you.(77)

In fact, as they aver, if you are a member of a purely and exclusively secular association, why do they want to control how you spend your income: If it pleases them to cackle about freedom so much, the money that you earn should be yours to save or spend as you wish. But it is not this way: You will never know how much money you have, neither will you be able to use it. They will never give you a receipt for the money that you have surrendered to them.(78)

The magazine *Interview* published, for the first time in April of 1988, an exceptionally revealing and very convincing document: the photocopy of the Will of an assistant professor of *Opus Dei*, Maria del Carmen Rodriguez Pinto, naming *Opus Dei* as her heir. The Will was made before the notary of Oviedo, José Antonio Caicoya, and it designates, in its second clause, as the sole heir of all her goods, rights and effects, the college known as “The Maples” of Valladolid, with the condition that, when the Will is executed, the spiritual care of this college will be confided to and placed under *Opus Dei*. It is a zealously kept secret that Wills, as well as certificates of sale for undesignated properties, are always to remain under the control of *The Work*.

Covadonga Carcedo, a former assistant professor and active *Opus Dei* member for several years, and from whom we have previously quoted, decided to apostatize from the Catholic church after many years of doubt and disillusionment over the progress of the sect, and has declared publicly: “Once I overcame the pressures, difficulties and even threats of death, I left. I want to cease my membership in an economic-financial sect, a mafia run by rich demagogues who exploit the simple-minded poor and, starting from now, I want to live under principles of honesty and to forget that world of hypocrisy forever.”

The sects are motivated by considerations of pure economic profitability.(79) When an adept takes ill and becomes a chronic expense, and is no longer able to bring in any revenue, he is given a pat on the back and is sent home to his family, to a charitable institution, or thrown out on the street. This is valid for all the destructive sects. Nobody has to convince them of the necessity of amassing fortunes for their god or idea.

The legal abuses of those who serve these organizations are extremely varied. For the exploitation of their followers, they apply the technique of the "voluntary donation". In general, the charismatic leader or "the father" lives in opulence, mansions and palaces, surrounded by luxuries and comforts, but

paradoxically, he possesses nothing legally, because the goods and properties he enjoys are nominally owned under the name of a legal entity or by trustees who are in his complete confidence, and the keys to the expense ledgers are carefully guarded. The "fathers" and charismatic leaders in this way avoid any type of civil or criminal responsibility.

The relationship of the leaders to the followers is as gods to slaves. And from that very favorable position, they not only take possession of and control the minds and the souls of their blind followers, but also – and this is the most important thing – they exploit the capacity for work and the earning ability of the members to pay for their own lavish personal goods and expenses.

In the Constitutions of *Opus Dei*, its strategy, although implicit, is camouflaged. This is the way in which Article I, Number 9, instructs that “. . .the associates of *Opus Dei* act, either individually or by means of associations that ought to be highly cultural or artistic, charitable, etc. and that these be called auxiliary societies. These societies are, equally, in their activity, subject to the obedience of the hierarchical authority of the Institute.”

Or, look at the notorious Article 202 that prays that “...half of the special apostolate of the Institution be devoted to positions of public trust, especially those that include tenured directorships.”

Armando Segura Naya, a licenciante in Philosophy and Letters, made the following logical reflection:

***Opus Dei is an unbelievable association. In the first place, it is inconceivable that "faithful followers" (i.e., mere people of either high or low political and economic categories) do not have the ownership, management or responsibility of their own goods, not even for the free residence. Undoubtedly, the level of incredibility increases with the follower's social level . . . no associate, numerario or oblate administers his own goods, nor does he hold title to the same, which is signed over to the Father. It is inconceivable that they should try to excuse the inconceivable by a "supernatural vision". As is well known, he who is not well in the natural order, is not well in the supernatural either."*(80)**

The justification that *Opus Dei* gives to inquisitive people is that private property is selfish, and is an obstacle that prevents the member from arriving at happiness. For it is absolutely indispensable that its followers donate all their properties to the sect, which will then put them to a good end; and the, wearing an altruistic expression, the sect's leaders avow to be imbued in the spirit of *The Work* which, misleadingly, and in a pompous way, they ascribe to God. What we don't know is to which god they refer – the God of the Christians or the calf of gold, the god of Mammon.

As is well known, they seek to recruit the best individuals, but they do not make them preachers, priests or missionaries to the infidels, but directors of banks, editors of publications, or cabinet ministers, in their obsession of managing exclusively, if need be, the levers of power. Specialists in the phenomenon of the sects have coined the term, “Multinationals of the Spirit, Inc” for groups similar to *Opus Dei* because, for their spiritual foundations, they display multimillion dollar financial firms,(81) demonstrating that *Opus Dei* hardly lives up to its name. It is not they who specifically control the properties since, whether of the manufacturing or of any other type, control of the management is made through bonds of loyalty (to *Opus Dei*) first and through contractual terms only secondarily. If one

possesses the Will of a person, he will also control all their acts and possessions, but avoiding, with such deceit, possible fiscal responsibilities in particular, and juridical responsibilities in general.

A book has recently appeared in Spain with the title *The Power of the Sects*,⁽⁸²⁾ in which a tour is made through the Iberian Peninsula, visiting all these organizations that are established and operating legally. Concerning *Opus Dei* it provides the following information:

Opus Dei is a secret to no one. It has always exercised its power and influence through its discreet, faithful servants over those that have risen so high in their careers as to become professionals. Although the time of the technocrats in which men of "The Work" held directly some of the power in the Franco government has already passed into history, today the hidden political activity of Opus Dei continues to be as much or more powerful than in the past. Their faithful ones control a good part of the Spanish financial structure; they are seated by the hundreds in the key positions of the Administration; they have politicians that they control -- or rather who ought to be called the flunkies of the Work of God --in many parties, especially in those like the Popular Party and the Democratic Union of Catalonia.

It controls, in great measure, the apparatus of the Vatican and the Spanish Episcopal Conference, which is another body not less important for intervening in political processes, etc. In other countries, notably in Latin America, their influence is a bit more modest than in Spain. If the faithful of "The Work" were simply "good Christians", just as they prefer to define themselves, their mention in a book on sects would have no point. But the influence that the headquarters of Opus Dei wields over its flock goes far beyond the defined, allowable ideology that is common to all religious or political systems. The trend inside "The Work", and which will not be impeded by any possible exceptions, is to control the psyches of its adepts, under the excuse of ministering to their souls. Dispensing with poetic phraseology: They seek to control the commonplace actions of today for the ends of a hypothetical one further away in the future. Opus Dei, with its undeniable sense of the practical and the intelligent, is devoted to accumulating temporal power, through its believes, in the here and now, perhaps because, with its intuition for the otherworldly, it foresees that, in the celestial paradise, when it arrives, there will not be any place for its ambitions of dominion, whether these be material or spiritual. The Kingdom of the Work of God, certainly, is of this world.(83)

From the pages of a weekly publication of national scope,⁽⁸⁴⁾ Fernando Jiménez Loitegui, of Almeria, wrote that he "could not understand why the Spanish authorities did not make an investigation of the behavior of these bankers of *Opus Dei* who control banks and safety deposit boxes and who have an uncontrolled influence on society."

The answer to this question, both cynical and infantile, came from an authorized voice of *Opus Dei*, Salvador Bernal, author of a laudatory and panegyric book about the life of the Founder of *Opus Dei*, entitled *Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer*, published by the official press of the sect, Rialp, in 1986. Bernal's attempted rationalization: "Children don't have anything of their own; everything belongs to their parents . . . and your Father always knows very well how to use your inheritance." (85)

Recruitment & Indoctrination of Members: Subheading 7, Chapt. I

Recruitment of new members is one of the first duties for any sect. To achieve that fundamental objective, which from an artistic and creative point of view could be represented by the Goya painting "Saturn Devouring His Children," these organizations use any means to reach their end, deceit and the lie being the weapons that they use to try to sell their program, in which there is always no connection between the propaganda that they present to the public and the reality that you find once you are inside.

Experts in the subject explain that the lies used in recruiting cover all the possible variants, from explicitly verbalized lies to lies of omission, but all of these are to conceal the identity and purposes of the sect. (86)

Concerning recruitment into one of these pernicious sects, nobody is immune to from the danger, nobody can be sure of not falling into the temptation, nobody can boast of being immune to the fishing nets of these groups, since the necessity to believe in something transcendent is a part of every human being. The socializing tendencies of man have psychological components that, in certain low-spirited moments, can make anyone easy prey for this type of group.

Any person has moments of crisis, of low spirits, of a feeling of being lost. These are precisely those moments, the states of depression accompanying any problem or difficulty of

whatever kind or nature, that are the most propitious and suitable times for the adepts of the sect to make their approach. They look for and exploit, among young people, examination times at school, when stress is greater and can cause certain personality imbalances, or cases where the youth is not strongly involved with the family environment or has an inclination to solitude.

The same picture is almost always repeated, the identical scenario is put into action by the sect to enhance the recruitment that began with a trivial, motivational, pleasant conversation that will conclude with an invitation (87) to attend a free conference on such and such a topic, an invitation to a meeting with a group of friends, to go eat or to have dinner where one can speak with more freedom, or for a splendid weekend at a beautiful country house to make a spiritual retreat or to carry out some other pleasing activity.

If you consent to the generous friendly invitation, you will be immersed in a prepared, artificial, illusory and fantastic environment, where you will be shown a world of make-believe and illusion, where you will meet smiling and happy people, in a casual atmosphere of great camaraderie where they will affect to show concern and interest for the new "friend" who accepted their invitation, and they will afford a welcome of great cordiality to you.

In a friendly spirit, they will be interested in your problems, your tastes, your concerns, your fears, your questions and doubts. The candidate will be entertained and evaluated. They will express their concerns and their hopes, and some of those present will say that they understand you perfectly, because they were this way in the past until they found the way to recovery. All that the incautious candidate says will be registered and recorded in a file that will be opened on the potential member.

Later, some director of the sect will make use of this knowledge to show him how to avoid his fears and to achieve his expectations thanks to the discovery of a new spiritual dimension [provided by the sect].

The recruitment of new followers is always in a personal way, by direct contact, by face-to-face meeting with some member or follower of the sect.

In a valuable report about the psychology used in the recruitment process of certain pernicious sects, made by Dr. John G. Clark and a team of specialists from Massachusetts General Hospital, the methodology that they use to recruit young people is thoroughly described as follows:

- 1 Youths who, whatever their natural human ties, are suffering the psychological transformations characteristic of the step to maturity. The members of the sects in charge of winning proselytes frequent libraries, meeting places in the universities, etc.
- 2 Persuasion: the future member is invited to attend a course about how to eliminate his problems. During these initial contacts and in the first meetings inside the environment of the sect, the recruiters make the religious community as attractive as possible to the recently arrived recruit. They move him deeply, expressing the greatest interest in his well-being, even treating with him with love and paying a calculated attention to his ideas, longings and hopes.
- 3 Conversion: trusted members, trained previously for this duty, do not leave the applicant for a single moment, even accompanying him as far as the washroom door.
- 4 Indoctrination: one of the consequences of this reeducation is the polarization of the mental activity of the recruit, inducing him to believe that the sect represents all that is good and beneficial that he needs, and that all other associations are pernicious, even perverse, so that either they must be avoided at any cost or must be manipulated to put them at the service of the new member.
5. While the indoctrination continues, the leaders and spiritual directors lose no occasion to evoke the full spectrum of supernatural punishments that will punish disobedience. Redemption, sanctity and salvation are reserved for the believers and convinced practitioners.(88) In this way, little by little, he is transformed into another man different from the one that he previously was.

As for the reasons why, in the present day, someone would enter a sect, there are several: the human necessity for inter-relational contact may prevail and he desires a shared community life; the desire to experience the transcendent; as a remedy for the troubles that we all suffer; a common belief; the inherent desire for mysticism and religious experience; the desire to find a remedy to our frustrations or help and mutual aids to our needs; the aspiration to a better social position, etc.

In the book *The Secret World of Opus Dei*, by Michael Walsh, he explains, in an itemized list, the phenomenon of indoctrination which is at the heart of *The Work*.(89) When a person doesn't have zeal to gain converts, it is because his heart doesn't beat. He is dead. And we can apply to him those words of the Scriptures, "now he stinketh, for he is now of four days [dead]" (*John 11:39*). Those souls, even though they were in *The Work*, would be dead, rotting, stinking. "And as for me," the Father (Escriva of Balaguer) says, "I don't associate with cadavers. I bury cadavers."

Recruiting followers is a primary obligation, it is something that is reviewed every week in the group meetings: how well an individual has completed his “fishing” task – the word *Opus Dei* uses – for new members. “It is the moment of reckoning. How many recruits have you brought?” “Our personal apostolate comes first, to prepare our friends in the work of San Rafael” San Rafael's apostolate is the term that Opus Dei uses for the search for young members (“I don't say” – the Father concludes – “that you cannot find vocations among older people, but that ... it is somewhat difficult.”), explaining that they would “rot” later if they are not recruited while still young. The recruitment of older celibate members is called the apostolate of Saint Michael, and the recruitment of the parents of families is the apostolate of Saint Gabriel. “That you may do well, you are counseled to put the years of your youth under Saint Raphael's protection so that he may guide you, as he did the young Tobias, to a sacred marriage with a girl who is good, beautiful and rich.” (Escriva)

Those that have friends among the members of *Opus Dei* may be annoyed to know that their friendship is considered as a means of recruiting them as new followers. Once recruited, the friendship is over, according to the procedures of the organization.

Separating children from their families goes along with the creation of an ever greater dependence upon *Opus Dei*. (90)

The following testimony is a personal testimony from a man, now a priest in Catalonia.(91) He said: “They came to us, they came to our house, to our neighborhood. We had chats and talks with other boys that had the same problems that we had. There they found an atmosphere in which they were well received. ‘Even if you are rotting, you may still progress in the spiritual order.’ Some friends they were: they pursued me, they bothered me for several months. And I was not wise that they belonged to *Opus Dei*. Suddenly, I realized it. And it was very difficult to escape their pressure, their perseverance, you understand.

“I joined *Opus Dei* because of all this, as did others. And until later I didn't realize that this was a trap, a snare. It is necessary to be around them a while to realize this. They led me down a path. I was with them. I listened to their talk, etc. Immediately a spiritual director was designated for me, a lay person, who plans your life, that is to say, what you should do from the time you get up until the time you go to bed, what you should do or not do. Every week they wanted a summary of our activities, which was passed on to their superiors. It was not necessary to be responsible for anything. When one had an interior problem, it should be told to the spiritual director who then explained it and provided a solution. He provided a conscience for you. This was comfortable. This has contributed greatly to the success of *Opus Dei*. I left when I realized that it was a progressive imprisonment.”

In general, public opinion ignores the methods which *Opus Dei* uses on Spanish youth.(92) Its system of recruitment is similar to those employed by the Eastern religious sects that have proliferated in the West and there are numerous conflicts with parents whose younger children have been recruited by *The Work*.

Opus Dei, like other sects, is devoted to using the profession of teaching as a favorable activity for the reception of new followers. It uses the educational system and classrooms like laboratories where it

begins the selection process and reception of future members. There are many well-founded accusations weighing upon *Opus Dei* concerning the sectarian manipulation that they exercise on the pupils who attend their educational centers.

There are countless examples of the infiltration of *Opus Dei* into the secondary schools. The best students are the object of unceasing and diverse invitations. Among the bourgeois classes, this method has a certain success. The most valuable students they look for are those who will sustain *Opus Dei* and all its paraphernalia.

Scenes like the following one occur with great frequency. "*Opus Dei* has kidnapped our daughter." The police of the town of San Vicente (Alicante) could not believe their ears when the wife of one of the prominent local merchants went to the town police station, in January of 1988, with so unusual an accusation.

The accusations of these parents, good Catholics for the most part, against *Opus Dei*, is mainly that they kidnapped their younger children, brain washed them and destroyed their wills, turning them against their own families, from whom they were prevented from having any contact, while at the same time they were exploited economically.

What happened to Mr. Mosquera, a chiropodist of Barcelona, is significant.(93) He went to the headquarters of the police on Via Layetana to report the case of his daughter María Pilar. The young girl had left for Vienna to study music. While there she worked as an au pair at the home of an *Opus Dei* family. She had been subjected to a real pursuit by members of *The Work* such that, according to her, they followed her around, even as far as where she lived, and they boycotted her school exams as a form of pressure. "A very kind sergeant of the national police assisted me" – Mosquera explains – "and imagine my surprise when, after explaining to him my story, he told me: 'You don't say! I also have a 19 year-old daughter that almost became crazy as a result of those *Opus Dei* tactics.' "

In Oviedo, the Director of Club Montealegre, one of more than 100 that *Opus Dei* maintains throughout Spain, received a notarized demand through which the parents of a 17 year-old girl who frequented the club demanded of him that he abstain from making any contact with their daughter, at the same time denying the validity of any agreement that the minor might have made, and they noted that they would not provide financial support to the girl if she left them to live with *Opus Dei*. (94) This whole twisted array of tactics is known as "apostolic action," but more properly and exclusively it ought to be called "proselytism," (95) and in *Opus Dei* it receives the name of "sacred coercion."

"We don't care about numbers," Escriva assures us. But it does care, and a great deal, about the numbers of those who request admission into *The Work* every year. They even break down the figures by *Opus Dei* residence or city, and they are exhorted vehemently not to stop until they achieve their numerical goals.

On the topic of the recruitment of the young, Juan de Cozar Martin, of the Sons of the [Immaculate] Conception, in the province of Cádiz, reveals (96) that this religious sect, by means of some very well developed techniques (brain washing, periodic interviews, coercion of conscience) deforms their young

recruits in such a way that they lose their primary affection for their families, and are disconnected from their parents and siblings. They depersonalize and convert them by programmed schemes solely for their own purposes, like squeezing a lemon.

Eva Jardiel Poncela, the famous Spanish novelist's daughter, tells us of her personal experience: (97) "My first experience with *Opus Dei*, frankly, disgusted me. That is the truth. I could not believe it. I found them to be impossible. I thought of all the people who, like me, would come to a bad moment in their life and who, in a moment of despair, would join *Opus Dei*. I gave thanks to God for not having been born a coward."

The main means of formation in *Opus Dei* are the courses and retreats that usually take place at specially prepared houses, located far from the important urban centers. There are houses for numerarios, diocesan clergy, and girls. In these houses, the recruits are sorted by social class and status. In this way, in a course for numerarias, girls from the lower classes will never be present, except as maids to clean the house.(98) In a similar way, at a retreat for businessmen, there will never be working men. There are courses and conferences, retreats, seminars, etc. all arranged by length and psychological intent.

Such is the manipulation to which the students are subjected, that there sometimes pops up in the press the news that the officials have been forced to investigate irregularities in the education centers of *Opus Dei*, based upon accusations of the families of the students.(99) The Department of Teaching of the Government of Catalonia investigated supposed irregularities in the Institute of Professional Formation, the "Center of Studies of the Valleys," a women's boarding school and property of *Opus Dei*, located in San Cugat of the Valleys, a suburb of Barcelona. The investigations were initiated by an accusation presented by the family of the student Gema Saiz Broch.

According to the student's mother, María Broch, "*Opus Dei* uses its schools to capture minors." (100) "My daughter's future is to be a maid in the houses of *Opus Dei*, which are beautiful and as clean as golden fountains, thanks to this branch of auxiliary numerarios who work for free. If they had not messed up my daughter's mind, why would she want to be a maid when she is only 16 years old?"

The center lacked permission to give classes at the house and the investigation has proposed to turn it into a boarding school and among the alternatives that could be adopted are terminating the economic support, closing the retreat center, or canceling the license of academic operation. The priest Don Luis Hernandez, Mayor of the town of Santa Coloma de Gramenet, has sent a letter to the President of the [Spanish] Episcopal Conference, Angel Suquía, (101) in which he accuses *Opus Dei* of "serious violations against the personal freedoms of people in its desire to capturing followers." He affirms that "the formation that is imparted in the centers under the control of the Prelature [personal prelature granted to Escrivá de Balaguer] – that is, *Opus Dei* – is not professional, but is guided especially to transform them into blind followers of *Opus Dei*."

The selection is made from the elementary schoolboys, the high schools, the college students. These have been chosen from the age of thirteen (102) and, starting from this moment, they become the object of a focused effort on the part of the agents of recruitment of *The Work* who spread around them

their ever-tightening nets. They are invited to discussion groups, to meetings, to trips. Soon after a spiritual director is assigned to the candidate. Then, around the age of fifteen years, if he is mature and has taken to the molding process well, he will write a letter to “the Father,” requesting to become member of *Opus Dei*. This adhesion to “the Father” is a key phenomenon.

Susana Crespi Boixador, eighteen years old, was able to leave, as she says, “from that Hell.” Her father, Jaime Crespi, says: “Children don't belong to us forever. But if my daughter is thrown into the river to drown, I will rush to save her. And this is what I experienced with *Opus Dei*. She entered into a descending spiral that destroyed her will.” Now, from Susana Crespi's position of true freedom, when she thinks of the girls that even now are tormented by *Opus Dei*, she is sad and wants to send her friends a message full of love and sincerity, because she affirms categorically (103) that “*Opus Dei* is worse than a sect. They recruit you as a young girl before you realize what is going on, and over the course of time you become a robot without the capacity to discern between good and bad. The only ‘good’ thing is what they inculcate in you.”

At the university level, (104) the University of Navarra, a property of *Opus Dei*, has become an immense nursery of apostles for them, being the biggest recruitment base that *The Work* has in the world.

After the proselytism and the induction come the vows that at the beginning are made for one year and which are renewed every five – the specified period of servitude; the next step is juridical incorporation into *The Work*, what is called the “Fidelity” – that is the culmination of the depersonalization process.

Abuse & Coercion: Subheading 8, Chapter I

“My daughter is working for free as a kitchen-maid” (105) – the mother assures us. “They make her work from ten in the morning to eleven at night, without stopping, so that she can't even think. I have told the young ladies that the time of the black slaves was over, but their answer is that they work for heaven's sake. But, my daughter, God doesn't need His floors scrubbed for free, it's all for *Opus Dei*.”

Covadonga Carcedo also relates his experience of the severe practices imposed by *Opus Dei*: (106) “I arose at six in the morning, kissed the floor exclaiming ‘Serviam,’ and took a shower with cold water. After work, I wore the cilice [studded leather belt worn around the thigh for corporal mortification] for two hours a day and gave all my wages to *The Work*. In *Opus Dei*, as in all sects, they have a great capacity for brain washing, but the one certain thing is that they are a true cohort of scribes and Pharisees. They preach that there should be no luxuries; however, the rich numerarios are attended by auxiliaries adorned with white coifs during the spiritual retreats. Now, many people believe this, mainly the youths, who do not know that once they enter *Opus Dei* they will become authentic slaves.”

The daily rules that a member who lives in an *Opus Dei* house must observe are very meticulous.(107) A person who was a numerario for most of ten years has assured me that during the first seven years of his service in *Opus Dei*, he lived in constant tension and had been unable to fulfill all the designated rules. However, he believed that none of those with whom he had lived or whom he had known in the ranks of *Opus Dei* had ever achieved this.

Another important observation is that all those series of rules are an integral part of the “spirit of the Work.” When getting up, they kiss the floor and they make an offering of all the day's actions to God, but the fruit of that offer is collected by the leaders of the sect. They take a shower with cold water and they have their entire day so filled with activity that they collapse in fatigue and don't have time to think of the miserable state into which they have converted their existence.

The coercive dynamic is an essential characteristic of all sectarian structures and we should not be surprised at finding it in groups so seemingly honorable as the familiar *Opus Dei*. (108)

A well-known architect, Miguel Fisac – who was one of the first twelve members of *Opus Dei* – a member of the old guard who was a member of *The Work* for years, affirms truly that:

“During the time that I was in *The Work* they coerced me to ridiculous extremes. So much so that when, finally, I received permission to leave, Alvaro del Portillo (the great guru and successor of Escrivá de Balaguer) asked my forgiveness for those coercions and justified them, saying to me that as I had shown a great generous nature, they had interpreted it as a vocation.”

This ill-termed excess of zeal or “sacred coercion,” in the terminology of *The Work*, which is so characteristic of sectarian exploitation, equates a vocation (for example, as a nun, a humanitarian, etc.) with an irrational submission and literal slavery, and it is not justifiable either with earthly arguments or divine allegations.

To seek to hide these inexcusable coercions, of whatever type and in whatever group that they are found, with the excuse of a “disinterested progress toward the ideal” is as incredible as to seek to justify the activity of a band of thieves under the mantle of soliciting funds for a humanitarian campaign against selfish materialism and sin.

The torture is not only physical, but also, and in this case most subtly, psychological. As proven by the testimony of María del Pilar Domínguez Martínez, of Tuy (Pontevedra),(109) whose testimony informs us that when she no longer wished to be affiliated with *Opus Dei*, she was escorted by a numeraria and taken to an *Opus Dei* physician so that he might determine that she had no physical problems. Later on the mortifications deformed her body and the interviews and chats acquired a true interrogatory character when she began to show her dissatisfaction. When she announced that she wanted to leave *Opus Dei*, her superior decided to take her to an *Opus Dei* psychiatrist.

In 1965, a Señorita Tapia was called to the *Opus Dei* headquarters in Rome, where they put her virtually under house arrest for eight months. They didn't allow her to communicate with the outside world, neither by telephone, nor by letter. She was informed that anyone who asked for her would be told that she was sick or absent. In three months, her hair turned white. When she asked if she could return with her family to Spain, they refused permission to her. Tapia had been director of the *Opus Dei* Venezuelan women's section. *Opus Dei* seized her passport and all her personal documents. When leaving, finally, after the nightmare, *Opus Dei* was forced to admit what had happened.(110) A priest of *Opus Dei* said that they were not sorry for any of these diverse “misdeeds,” and that it was not very likely that she could be saved. In her story in the *National Catholic Reporter*, she describes the bad-mannered and

insulting treatment that she received at the hands of the Founder. She concluded: “My astonishment is infinite when I hear now that monsignor Escrivá is in the process of being beatified.”

The coercion also is produced by the documents that the followers are forced to sign and which prevent them from taking up critical attitudes for fear of reprisals.

The numerarias sleep on a board without a mattress. This is set up at a certain height such that, when it is covered by a quilt, it appears to be a normal bed, just in case somebody from outside *The Work* happens by and sees it.(110) The Father says that women need to put their bodies on the straight and narrow path and that it is not necessary to give them certain comforts because they are a source of temptation.

The numerarias use the cilice [studded leather belt] two hours every day, less on Sundays and designated feast days. The “discipline” is another mortification of the corporal type to which they are subjected: it is a whip of strings that ends in several tips. It is used on Saturdays and only on Saturdays. To use it, they enter the bathroom, lower their underwear to their knees, and whip their buttocks during the whole time that it takes to pray one *Salve Regina* (Hail Mary). If they don't do it, they must confess this, although it is not considered a sin or a serious shortcoming.

As for the men, Alberto Moncada tells us,(112) the youths are accustomed to take the discipline, once or twice per week, and they wear the cilice very tightly on the thigh for two hours a day, during the hours of study. Once a week they have to sleep on the floor, as in the day of watchfulness when each one has been designated to redouble the observance of his brothers.

The cilice is a mortification that is completely necessary, according to what the followers of *Opus Dei* say, although in the opinion of an ex-member of *The Work* (113) “it is an object that produces sleeplessness and unnecessary suffering.” The use of the cilice (a belt with sharp points), as a practice, it is the norm in the sect. On one occasion a young girl was hurt by it and a cut was made in her thigh, (114) and when her mother asked about it she lied to her. Afterwards the mother realized that her 15 year-old daughter's wound had been produced by the cilice. These lies are designated as “secrets of *The Work*.”

To understand the voluntary acceptance of the harsh treatments by the pseudo-religious sects it is necessary to note once again the process of depersonalization that they have suffered and the guilt complex that has been instilled into them. The mentality that accepts the physical pain produced by the self-inflicted lesions is the road of spiritual evolution for the atonement of their sins and for the redemption of their faults. The toleration of the abuse and bad treatment that they receive from the *Work* is due to an irrational fervor. No matter how the cilice is worn, it hurts and it leaves marks, but the quieter the suffering, the better the follower was considered to be. If the walls of the toilet are spotted with blood after applying the weekly discipline, this is accounted to be meritorious and to indicate unequivocally that the mark and the seal of the sect have been impressed on the follower in an indelible way.

Psychological Destruction: Subheading 9, Chapter I

Saralegui writes: (115)

“It is because of that sense of authority that the young socios [*socio* = male member of full standing?] leave their families, that they are prohibited from telling their parents the true situation of their relationship to the Institution; that their reading materials, their time, and their social relationships are tightly controlled; that they are denied attendance at the theater; and finally the internal effect on them is what a professional would say is an inability to make a serious and calm critical reflection. This display of psychological pressure on hearts and immature minds is never acceptable. There are other features of *The Work* that, as for anyone at all, are a burden and a cross; this, for me, has been my single cross for many years.”

If *The Work* is of God, as they say, if its ends are good, then why has there been so much damage to so many?

In *The Work* some become wealthy, but at the expense of much damage to others, through heartless actions, with many people destroyed psychologically.

Opus Dei is a monstrous phenomenon.

The stories follow quite similar patterns, and the accusations are directed with regularity. “I saw that her behavior changed,” said a mother of her daughter who had gone to Lakefield, the prep school of *Opus Dei* in Hampstead, London. “She was a marvelous daughter and now she has become reserved and introverted.” (116)

The restrictions on the girls seem to be based on the fear that, if they are exposed to family events, the ties of affection would recover rapidly. Attendance at baptisms or weddings is considered especially dangerous. At least two older members of *Opus Dei* in England have explained that their decision to leave it was because it refused to allow them to be maids of honor at the weddings of their sisters. Visits home are very infrequent and they are strictly regulated: a couple of nights a year is all that is allowed. On one occasion, a father, who was a truck driver, met with his daughter in London; she decided unexpectedly to return home with him for a visit. A superior of *Opus Dei* called the house and accused the father of having kidnapped his own daughter.

The relationships of the youths with their families are practically non-existent. *The Work* foments a clear division between the spiritual family and the natural family. Even at Christmas they try to impress upon the numerarios that they should be with their real family: *Opus Dei*.

If centers for deprogramming members of *Opus Dei* exist, it is because, previously, someone was programmed. That is obvious. Brain washing, as in the case that occupies us presently, can only be treated by means of an appropriate clinical treatment that returns reason and free will to the person who was subjected to the dictates of the sect. Through the manipulation of the individual's religious sentiments, his psyche is broken and his natural feelings and convictions are altered, as he is dragged toward an abyss of irrationality and fanaticism.

It is the effect that is known as “atypical dissociative disorder,”(117) following the name given to it by the American Association of Psychiatry, or “cult conversion syndrome” as Dr. Clark calls it.

It is a demeaning and immoral fact that, by means of perfectly developed techniques, they abuse the fragility of the human mind, reducing people by fears and coercions of a religious and spiritual nature to states of servility and slavery in their own subconscious minds.

Among the methods and means to destroy the will power of the members and to achieve the goals of the sect is an insufficient diet. Weakened subjects are more fragile than healthy and robust ones. It is very normal that sects establish special diets that, by and large, produce malnutrition or that prohibit, for religious reasons, a series of foods that are basic for good nutrition.

Also, sleep should be insufficient. It is necessary that the follower sleeps little and badly and that he is not regenerated by a deep, sound rest. The night vigil, the watch, and wakefulness are recommended. The adept interrupts a sound sleep at inopportune hours for the purpose of making certain prayers or ejaculations that, according to the leaders, are good for the spirit, when what they actually do is undermine his resistance. The bed should be annoying, uncomfortable, and hard. It is necessary to offer this new sacrifice to God so that He will thank us for not sleeping or for sleeping fitfully.

Exhaustive and excessive activity is planned for the individual to fatigue him and to occupy his time. It is necessary to keep him always active, even if the activities are useless, such as carrying out domestic tasks of all kinds, recruiting and proselytizing, taking professional development courses, religious practices, the penitential belts, studying, the cilices, seminars, and discussion groups. It is necessary to keep up a frantic rhythm without stopping, so that there is no time to think. It is necessary to create a sensation of anguish that he cannot finish his daily tasks and duties, and to make him feel annoyed and guilty, useless, not very holy, because sanctity is achieved only when he is able to do impossible things, when the unreachable goal is surpassed. With such stressful and exhausting activity, with little time for rest and a frugal and inadequate diet, the body deteriorates and the personality degrades.

All information that is received should come only from the Sect. The adept's communication with the exterior world is interdicted, all his movements, his hobbies, his feelings, his ideas, preferably should be supervised.

The senses are attacked by blocking them. The attack on the senses is made under the pretext that they permanently and constantly lead to sin. It is necessary to mortify the senses, subduing them, although this causes psychometric atrophy and serious organic alterations. To repress the senses it will always be necessary to embrace the sword of Damocles of punishment and penance for nonexistent, imagined, artificial sins, paranoias, but which are effective for producing a feeling of misery and interior guilt in the human person that causes him vital anguishes, polarizing and dissociating his personality. It is the sect that establishes the rules of what is pure or impure, what is preferred and what is abominable, what is right and what is unjust, and the other members exert so much pressure on transgressors that everything is generally well ordered, and deviations are punished selectively for their exemplary value by humiliations, the scorn of the other members, and the silent treatment.

Nervous exhaustion and terror; here are two keys that sap the rational capacity and push the emotions to unheard-of extremes.

Regressive behavioral tendencies and infantilism are betrayed by the peculiar and simplified language, with its ambiguities and shades of meaning, that is used inside the sect. Infantile words are used by adolescents and mature members alike.

When everyone is properly “dosed,” a “group drug dependency” is realized, and affection for the sect is unhindered. And, what is worse, the adept has been totally and absolutely destroyed and reduced to the status of a tool, an effective instrument of obedience and blind faith for the designs that the Father imposes on him, accepting every one of his whims or caprices as unquestionable truths, as dogmas, and ends up by drowning in the belief that his will and that of the sect are one, and that the fanatics are the other ones, the rest of humanity. The cohesion consolidates the adepts, crowding them around the Father, and making them treat as serious slanders any criticism that comes from outside the sect. This also prevents them from making any sort of criticisms of the Father or of the behavior of the leaders of the sect. They are the slaves of our time, right here on the threshold of the 21st century. Programmed and directed robots.

To this, we may add the confiscation of the adept's personal wealth so that he is left insolvent and unable to survive on his own except for one remedy: a steely dependence upon the sect.

Once the adept's individuality is suppressed, the objective of depersonalization has been achieved.

The important thing is not sometimes what he believes, but that he just believes. (118)

They are like flies caught in a plate of honey. (119)

To be chained to *Opus Dei* is to lose all of your volitional, spiritual, and intellectual abilities and to become a robot, a marionette, at the service of *The Work* and of the Father. *Opus Dei* is a comedy of hypocrisy. Miguel Fisac recognized (120) that the only thing that *Opus Dei* provided him was to suffer an “authentic spiritual martyrdom up to the time I left” and that “it has been only after my exit from *Opus Dei* that I have carried out any work of major significance.”

Deprogramming the followers is a task of slow re-education. It is necessary to snap them out of their conditioning to begin a recovery phase and to readjust them so that they make contact with reality again and extirpate the hallucinations with which they have been imbued by *The Work*.

Secret Societies Defraud God: Subheading 10, Chapter I

The Church has suffered from the problem of sects from its beginnings.(121) Saint Paul already met with a similar problem in one of the communities that he had founded, that of Corinth. Four or five years after having established it in the Faith by means of his preaching, he condemned the existence of “divisions” and factions, that is to say, of sectarian tendencies, that he recriminated and flayed pungently.

We must not forget that the religious spirit is consubstantial with being human and one of the identifying signs that separates man from the animals. Nevertheless, there is a danger of the speculating with sacred things, with beliefs, with the Faith.

Religious sentiment is never able to turn itself into a means of defrauding men, yet the “religion” has been able to be seen, as in the case of *Opus Dei*, as “the type of business that any manager dreams about: he sells goods that cost him nothing to produce or ship, which are always adaptable to any new markets, the manpower of the sect's members are a sales force that works for free, and there are no costs of capitalization. It's Heaven on Earth!” (122)

We cannot forget that collecting money is the great religious objective, the spiritual goal, the mystic end of this type of sect. Their “marketing strategy” makes the follower believe that money corrupts and is something dirty that should be taken away from others (for their own good) and dedicated to the service of God and His work, that is to say, to the sect. The same money that is a source of perdition source for the ones outside the sect is a source of sanctification for the Work, which transforms the accumulation of money into a sacramental activity; for this reason the member has to make money and to give it to the sect.

They exploit the supernatural, the transcendent, the religious, and the sacred, convincing the members that they are being sanctified through the profane, daily, professional work by which they are able to earn their means of subsistence and to amass fortunes which, however, don't remain in their hands, but instead go to *The Work*. Appealing to the anticipated heavenly glory and to the most sensitive feelings of the human being, the sect is divinized to the extent that it takes for its name the supreme denomination, nothing more nor less than the “Work of God.”

A Scandalous Usurpation: Subheading 11, Chapter I

The name *Opus Dei* implies, in its second noun, “of God,” a genitive case word, so that it is necessary to translate “*Opus Dei*” as “the Work of God,” that is, work produced or done for the sake of God. The Founder and the sect's members interpret it this way.

As Moses met with God to learn His will, Escrivá heard in his heart, on October 2, **1928** the desire of God that he found “*Opus Dei*.” Its basic concepts, its organization, its interior life, its ends, in everything but the minor details, it corresponds, in the same way, to the will of God: it is divine. It is not merely the product of human effort or of rational thought, but it is something singular and supernatural.

Moses heard the voice of God that communicated to him His commandments, clearly defined. Escrivá received something more, however, a kind of general power of authority. All that his mind conceives has the divine guarantee, that it is undoubtedly for the sake of God Himself.

Thus, we are assured that any hostile act toward his work means a confrontation with God. Never in the history of the Church, neither from Pope, saint, nor heretic, have such pretenses been asserted.

We may say, in passing, that it seems only natural that in these circumstances of the semidivine, Escrivá should demand that you remain on your knees in his presence.

In our world it was Jesus Christ Himself who said: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (John 14:6). Now we are presented with a Jew who says, in effect, the same thing of his own wretched self, impudently copying and usurping the venerable figure of Christ, as if through his pretensions he were the way, the truth and the life. He says it and his followers believe it of him.

Is it necessary to imagine a worse blasphemy or – in other words – a more impertinent deceit?

Is this not, also, a sample of the ferocious and eternal fight of Judaism against Christ's Church?

And it is, in fact, toward the young that they direct their efforts because they know that youth has religious longings, a sense of altruism, and spiritual desires. They have a wide-open field to exploit.

It is in this theological laboratory, this distillation plant of religious fervor, in which the desire for the transcendent swells, that *Opus Dei* finds its philosopher's stone, transforming the thriving longings, and generating some "complicated and altogether morbid" relationships among its members. (123)

The popular imagination has circulated a joke that compares the members of *Opus Dei* to flying saucers: "Do you know what they call those who belong to *Opus Dei*?" "No." "They are called UROs: Unidentified Religious Objects." (124)

Dr. Alfonso Alvarez Vilar, professor at Madrid University and head of the department of the Institute of Public Opinion, an expert in psychiatry, offers the following explanation for *Opus Dei*: (125)

"On an unconscious level, we have all had at some time in our lives the desire to 'immerse' ourselves in a powerful organization that makes certain things easier for us, that encourages us culturally and professionally and defends us against that Spanish envy that transforms Celtiberia into a fight of all against all. But, later, doubts arise and, above all else, we wonder if, after all, we gave up part of our freedom in exchange for this protection. I have spoken on many occasions about false religions.

***Opus Dei*, without a doubt, is a false religious organization, although, clearly, they affirm emphatically their orthodoxy. Their very name also links them to those underground sects since, as we know, *Opus Dei* means *the Work of God*; it is worth repeating that the members of this organization are considered to be the representatives of God on Earth, as the Brothers of Perfection were known in Languedoc before and after the crusades of Simón de Montfort.**

***Opus Dei* concentrates, in itself, all the forces of man's eternal dimension that may be defined by the term illuminism, except that in this case the illuminism has been derived from one of the two forms that I noted: that of clandestine propagation. And here it is necessary to point out that a merely religious group has become a powerful pressure group on the political, social, and economic planes. But this is not the pure internal dialectic: the covert illuminism has to bring about what I have called 'the myth of the paradise.' Their model can be, for example, the New Jerusalem of the Apocalypse." The journalist Mario Rodriguez Aragon has written that "in Torreciudad a cryptocult intends to settle down with the concurrence of the Vatican."**

It is symptomatic to see how these sects thrive in Christian environments and how they never devote themselves to the conversion of unbelievers or infidels. They are like a climbing vine twisted around a tree.(126) By themselves they proliferate in Christian environments to the extent that the Christian sentiment is ingrained in a specific community or society, but the actual tendencies of these sects is, in reality, an antithesis to the Christian spirit.

You cannot serve two masters at the same time and it is not possible to pretend that the ideals of *Opus Dei* are compatible with the Gospels. Lucy Jones wrote that “As a Catholic I hate *Opus Dei* for the simple reason that I find it to be a prostitution of Christianity and a focal point for scandals.” (127)

The writer Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui, a member of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language, observes that “*Opus Dei*, to the simple-minded souls of our consumer society, promises them not only the salvation of their souls, but what is more attractive and immediate, the salvation of the body in the form of economic advantages, good jobs, sinecures, and substantial earnings. How delightful! The insatiability of *Opus Dei* for money makes one tremble.” (128)

Bryan Wilson, in his book *The Sociology of Sects*, in the chapter “Religion in a Sociological Perspective,” published in 1982 by the University of Oxford Press, analyzes a type of sect that presents the following characteristics.

1 Exclusivity

2 Maintains that it has a complete monopoly on religious truth

3 Is non-clerical, although it may develop a group of professional organizers

4 Denial of any special religious virtue to anyone except, perhaps, their own founders and their leaders

5 Volunteerism – the individual chooses to be a member

6 Concern about maintaining the rules, punishing the incompetent and the disobedient

7 A demand for total loyalty.

In most of the categories described above, *Opus Dei* fits well. It is exclusive (129) (1) on several levels, in their selective recruitment and in the secrecy that surrounds them. It is uncertain that maintain that they have a monopoly on religious truth (2), but their members are totally convinced that the interpretation of the Catholic faith to which they adhere is the only orthodox version, as it confirms the exhortation of Escrivá de Balaguer to his faithful ones after Vatican II. It is a lay organization, and that is one of their proudest boasts (3), although technically it is without a doubt a prelature and is dominated by the Clergy. It is also one of their characteristics that they are almost entirely dependent on their founder's writings. Therefore, they fit well with characteristic (4) just as Dr. Wilson describes it. The recruitment procedures, the internal discipline of *Opus Dei* and the total commitment demanded of its members coincide with points (5) and (7). [NOTE: Point (6) was illustrated by the discussions in Subheading 9 of Chapter I]

For the members of *Opus Dei*, their “salvation” is guaranteed by the Padre/founder when he promises to his followers: “When the years have passed, you won't believe what you have lived. You will find that you can't believe it. How many good and great and wonderful things you will see! You will be saved if you will be faithful, although you will sometimes have to suffer. Also, I PROMISE YOU HEAVEN.” (130)

According to the teachings of *Opus Dei*, the Church can err; but the Father, never.(131)

Subheading 12, Chapter I: not yet translated, as of this writing

Sex & Danger: Subheading 13, Chapter I

The sexual problem in *The Work*, as in other organizations of celibates, is converted into a mechanism of authoritarian manipulation, a formula of self-contempt,(147) and a source of countless pangs of conscience by which they maintain their hold on many people for a long time in a self-destructive dialectic.

As the psychiatrist Alvarez Vilar diagnoses it, the same emphasis on chastity that *Opus Dei* supports is a measure of its desire to expand. When the libido is controlled, its kinetic energy passes to other functions of the psyche.

The consequences of the danger that it is the subject of their preaching are usually neuroses. The sexual repression engenders in the member a permanent state of guilt between temptation and prohibition, between the power of desire and what *The Work* abominates, between his instinct and the notion of sin, so that it gags him. Everything is done to mold obedient and submissive people.

All the psychoanalytical theories, much in vogue at the moment, recognize that repression and sexual inhibition, which in the language of *Opus Dei* are termed “sacrificing the selfishness of the flesh,” are the basis of their authoritarian and overbearing attitude.(148) Sexuality and the capacity to love naturally have been, in this way – a psychologist would say – sublimated in a dangerous way.

In *Opus Dei* discrimination is exercised by reason of gender, and the women suffer the consequences for the worst part, since the numerarias and auxiliaries are valued less than their male counterparts and are much more frequently relegated to roles of domestic service.

A. G. C.,(149) a numeraria of *Opus Dei* for 15 years, relates her experience: “I entered *The Work* when I was 17 years old, but at no moment did I end up saying ‘Opus is for me’. The only thing that they sell you is the idea of sanctification in the world. The rest you discover later ...”

The women housekeepers in the men's houses have to maintain a proper decorum. The men's houses and women's houses are adjacent to each other, but separated by two doors with two keys that are kept, respectively, by the director of the men and the directress of the women. The director of the males usually calls on an intercom to the head housekeeper the first thing in the morning to tell her “we have so many meals to prepare today.” During two hours, in the mornings, the men cannot enter their rooms in order to avoid encountering the cleaning women. Neither may they speak with the domestics that serve them at table.

The difference between the lives led by the men and the women of *Opus Dei* is definitive. While the men enjoy freedom to practice their professions, within guidelines, the women are totally tied to their directress. They cannot spend one night in their parents' house, except that they have special permission. Some permits to do this are only granted when the parents live in a population center where *Opus Dei* does not have a house.

The women have to sleep on boards to "put their body on the straight and narrow path" as already mentioned. Also, they cannot travel alone at night and in most *Opus Dei* establishments they must request permission to go to the hairdresser or to buy clothes.

When out in public, they "guard their eyes" to avoid temptations from the glances that men give to them. They keep their hands in their pockets, clutching a crucifix tightly when temptations occur.(150) If the temptation is very great, instead of gripping the crucifix tightly, it is possible to speak of crushing it.

Dr. Mynareck accuses these sectarian groups and condemns them for repressing sexuality given that there is a direct relationship between the level of mental damage in the group and the neurotics who promote the repression. The greatest repressors are usually those who are the

most repressed themselves, with problems, sexual hang-ups and certain morbid conditions of their sexually pathological state. The danger of repression and culpability create enfeebled beings fluctuating between schizophrenia and the impenitent sinner's complex.

Subheading 14, Chapter I: not yet translated, as of this writing

Quitting Opus Dei: Subheading 15, Chapter I

The biblical curse, uttered by the Father, falls upon any members who leave the sect. Escrivá pronounced sentence, thus: "One who leaves *The Work* abandons ship and goes into the darkness." (166)

The dissidents of *Opus Dei* are pursued, calumniated, and isolated so that they cannot prove what they have seen, or, if they prove it in spite of everything, nobody will pay attention to them.(167) The media, largely managed by or dependent upon banks entangled with *The Work* or who fear the influence of *Opus Dei*, have paid almost no attention to their testimonies.

The Work, Alberto Moncada says, employs its best resources to retain the rebel. It is also the moment to open the box of threats and to suggest that such a lack of perseverance can lead to eternal damnation,(168) threatening the dissident's accomplices or even neutral parties with the idea that they are committing a serious sin.

Leaving *The Work* is a curious phenomenon because, suddenly, you see how little you are cared about by some people who have been witnesses for years of your greatest exertions. You are a file that has been sent to the archive. You are finished. And the fewer signs of life that you show, the better, because you are a burning reminder of their failure.

In every way, the divine anger has a genuine avenue of expression in the persecution which many sects employ against their former members. There are already many published accusations, endorsed by the credibility and/or proofs of their authors, that place *Opus Dei* and its top men at the head of campaigns of persecution against their ex-affiliates of a certain importance.(169) In this way, from the infinite number of positions that the obedient men of *Opus Dei* control in society at large, they can ruin the lives and professional careers of some of the fugitives from The Work who have shown an excessive loquacity. Anyone who investigates the fringes of *Opus Dei* always finds a constant characteristic: a fear to speak out.

María Angustias Moreno has written that to leave *The Work* is not easy.(170) If you leave, you become a member of the group of those who are absolutely excluded from further contact with *The Work*. You become worthless. Overnight, all your relationships are finished, all personal attachments left behind. The same ones who said that they loved you so much that they were willing to give their lives for you, now say that you took advantage of the best opportunities they gave you, and they ignore you, they forget you completely. They no longer care what you need, they do not care how you will live your life. You count for nothing, they don't want to know any more about you, they would prefer that you don't even meet them in the street. It is a palpable demonstration of how little they care for the individual person!

The same ones who, some time before, had been involved – interestingly – with you because of *The Work*, later ignore you and they avoid you because you are no longer in it. “Those that leave are as if they had died.”(171)

For those of *Opus Dei*, leaving The Work is a desertion without extenuating circumstances, a betrayal. It is an agreement and a pact with a diabolic temptation, concerning which it is logical to deduce that those who leave go to the abyss and are lost without hope of recovery. Their efforts serve to no avail. I believe – María Angustias continues – that somehow it is deliberate policy that those who leave are obliged to be condemned.

Simply, to leave *Opus Dei* is to lose sanctity.

According to another numeraria, they pressed upon her the following advice to try to remove from her head the idea of leaving: “One who leaves The Work betrays and sells Jesus,” “Nobody that has left *The Work* has been happy,” and “You will go to Hell.”(172)

People find it difficult to leave. A Colombian Jesuit even informs us of suicides.(173) And John Roche also says that he knows in a direct way of a suicide in the *Opus Dei* of Kenya, and that he has heard of two suicides of women in London, one of whom jumped from the fourth floor of an *Opus Dei* house.

“When you leave, you are transformed into a non-person, and no member is allowed to help you,” says María del Carmen Tapia. “When a person leaves *Opus Dei*, he is thrown out on the street, financially, spiritually and psychologically.” (174)

The father of Susana Crespi hugged his daughter and kissed her on the forehead. "I am at peace, now that you are free," he reflected. "I am, Papa, but they are not," the girl answered him, referring to those who remained even then in the darkness of *Opus Dei*, in the blindness of the sect. The father added: (175) "We, fortunately, have recovered Susana, but we feel the necessity to explain that it is the people inside *Opus Dei* that make it so difficult to leave the organization. My daughter was hounded for months after she returned. And the reality is that in *Opus Dei* there are three categories of members: the masters, the waiters, and the dogs."

During their stay in *Opus Dei*, the members are instilled with fear and guilt for their own spiritual survival in the bleakness of the world. The sect's purpose in this is to remove from the members the temptation to abandon the closed quarters of the organization, the enclosed precincts of the sect. For that reason they are made to depend economically upon the members of the group, placing themselves in personal indigence, to avoid the temptation to return to normality.

For many followers, it is also necessary that they discard their own fear, inspired by the sect itself, of even thinking about leaving.

In *The Work* you are assured that everybody who leaves does so to pursue some pious practice – what they call "norms of the plan of life" – or because they have become tangled up in personal, selfish problems. Other causes that they also adduce are insincerity, lust, or arrogance. With these arguments they calm and mollify those who remain inside, so that they do not fall into the weakness of leaving.

To Covi Carcedo G. Roces when he left *The Work* they said "You will disappear," and "We will water the streets of Oviedo with your blood," but it was revealed to be all bluff, having none of the courage that is born of honesty and of truth, but only the cowardice that is born of a fear of jeopardizing their profitable positions. Upon leaving, he sued *Opus Dei* for financial restitution. (176)

They try to instill fear from within, MRS explains: "They repeat to you that you condemned yourself, that they are the true path, and that the other ones are traitors." (177) "These are the classic arguments of moral blackmail." (178)

In general, those that do leave are traumatized by the experience.

Some examples are provided to us by Alberto Moncada. Miguel Fisac, the well-known architect who joined *Opus Dei* when it was first organized, left it because of the moral conflicts that they tried to raise when he married Ana María Badell, and today he doesn't care to know anything at all about the Work of God, nor of its leaders. Antonio Pérez, a rising star of *Opus Dei*, suffered one of the most tenacious persecutions when he left *The Work* to pursue a painful trip of self-discovery.

María del Carmen Tapia went from director of an *Opus Dei* house to a prisoner in the same institution, in a bizarre incident. Raimundo Panikkar was the other star, the intellectual, of that first group of opusdeistas of the postwar [Spanish Civil War 1936-39] era who left dramatically. Francisco José de Saralegui, an old Christian, had an important position in the economic activity of *The Work* almost up to the time of his departure.(179)

Jesús Ynfante tells us that Antonio Pérez Hernández of los Granales, who was the leader of the opposition to Letrado in the Council of State, was a partner of Amadeo Fuenmayor and a brilliant man in the sight of all those who knew him; and who had been ordained a priest in the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross in 1948. He held, also, the position of rector of the chapter house of Saint Just in Madrid. One day he abandoned everything and disappeared with only what he was wearing. Settling in Méjico, he tried to tell people the truth, but had negative results. Later, on account of *Opus Dei*, he changed his name and resolved never to return to Spain for the rest of his days. (180)

In general, when a follower leaves a sect like *Opus Dei* he usually presents the following psychological picture:

- 1) depression
- 2) a sensation of solitude
- 3) negative self-esteem
- 4) a guilt complex
- 5) a low level of competence in everyday tasks
- 6) dulling of mental acuity
- 7) a tendency to fall into altered states of consciousness
- 8) a rejection of the belief that he is one of the elect
- 9) ill will toward the sect for the traumas experienced while living with them
- 10) fear of reprisal by the sect.

To rehabilitate some members so that they may return to reality and freedom, it is necessary, in many cases, to de-program them so that they may be regenerated and forget the bitter nightmare.

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