

# Writing the History of a Religious Teaching Institute: Guidelines for Research, Sources and Methods ( 19th and 20th Centuries)

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**T**he history of institutions (*établissements*) founded or served by congregations of teaching religious is quite rich. It is also very complex. Situations vary, in practice, according to place, period, and context. Each institute (*institut*) likewise has its own style: a Salesian orphanage is not a Jesuit high school. Finally, men and women working in this field have their own personalities, their own preoccupations, their own inventiveness.<sup>1</sup> It would be rash to apply a single, rigid, analytical methodology to such a com-

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<sup>1</sup> Impressively demonstrated as regards French sisters by Yvonne Turin, *Femmes et religieuses au XIXe siècle. Le féminisme "en religion"* (Paris, 1989).

plex group.. The diversity of experiences requires flexibility in scientific procedure. I will be careful not to propose a stereotyped formula or ready-made prescription. I will be happy to pose questions, to suggest trails to explore in the search for answers, to declare from the very start that it will be almost impossible for me to satisfy the aspirations of all my readers.

My remarks are those of a practitioner, even though my experience is necessarily limited. If the history of teaching congregations of Belgium, France, and the Netherlands is relatively familiar to me, I cannot say the same of the Italian, Spanish, or English literature. In addition, my work has been directed more toward female than male congregations. It has concentrated more on elementary teaching than secondary, technical, or professional schools, or higher education. It focuses mainly on the nineteenth century, less on other periods. The limits of my experience will inevitably reflect themselves in the present contribution.

In the framework of such a short introduction, I would like to recall some basic principles, obvious enough to most specialists. The first half of my presentation will be historiographical: by tracing the way in which a congregation's past has been perceived over the course of time, I will point out themes for research that seem of interest to me. The second part will consider sources and their critical use, in the framework of a monograph centered on one or more educational institution. Without pretending to exhaust the subject,<sup>2</sup> I will try to present some of the concrete problems that historians confront regularly in such a field.

## 1. Some Basic Principles

First we orient ourselves, still in a very general sense, by facing up to some reproaches directed at the study of Church history as it was practiced of old. These orientations are also the fruit of the accumulated experience of renowned scholars, in the first rank of whom I would place—without the least bit of Belgian chauvinism—Canon Roger Aubert.

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<sup>2</sup> I will not review here the specifically "French" or "Belgian" aspects developed in articles by Paul Dudon, "Pour écrire l'histoire d'une Congregation religieuse," *Revue d'Histoire de l'Eglise de France* 18 (1932), pp. 449–63; the identical text in Victor Carrière, ed., *Introduction aux études d'histoire ecclésiastique locale* 2 (Paris, 1934), pp. 361–379; Paul Wynants, "Histoire locale et communautés de religieuses enseignantes, XIXe-XXe siècles. Orientations de recherche," *Saint-Hubert d'Ardenne: Cahiers d'Histoire* 5 (1981), pp. 247–270; idem, "Comment écrire l'histoire d'une communauté de religieuses enseignantes (XIXe-XXe siècles)?" *Leodium* 72 (1987), pp. 1–36. Nor will I allude to the foreign-missionary dimension, for which I would refer you especially to Jean Pirotte and Claude Soetens, *Évangélisation et cultures non européennes: Guide du chercheur en Belgique francophone*, Cahiers de la Revue Théologique de Louvain 12 (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1989).

With good reason, "traditional" ecclesiastical history has been much criticized. Too often, it is true, it treated the structures and ignored the life of the faithful. It gave a privileged place to the hierarchical Church—Popes, bishops, superiors general—keeping silent about the intermediary levels, still more about the lowly and nameless. Masculine, in truth misogynous, it recognized only obedient and submissive women.<sup>3</sup> Even if certain reproaches may seem excessive, it would be unfortunate to ignore them totally. Therefore, as students of congregational history, we cannot compare groups of male and female religious to simple cogs in the ecclesial "apparatus." They are just as much living communities, impelling us to study them as such. As historians of education, we must examine also all the components of the teaching community: superiors and subjects, religious and lay, men and women, educators and pupils, old and young... This is the only way to learn how the Gospel message was spread at the heart of the social body.

Five other basic principles must also be kept in mind. Canon Roger Aubert expounded them twelve years ago.<sup>4</sup> I will briefly recall their substance. First of all, the past of religious congregations is not static but dynamic. So one must examine carefully the evolutions that have made a mark on them, and try to explain these changes. Next, this type of history deserves a comparative approach. Even within the scope of a monograph, we are concerned about proceeding from comparisons between institutes, between provinces or regions, between establishments: "To ascertain differences is illuminating," Canon Aubert notes, "because it draws your attention to certain aspects which you would not have thought of at first."<sup>5</sup>

The third golden rule: this history contains a supernatural dimension, but it includes also human components (political, economic, social, technological, cultural, religious, etc.). It is indispensable to discover these elements in their multiplicity if one wants to achieve a nuanced study. The fourth recommendation: Let us not neglect the processes which, by osmosis, can shape a society. Roger Aubert cites the example of the formation given to young people, which issues in a fresh transmission of values and behavior to the younger generations. It is surely hard to get a firm hold on all the social processes; but the subject

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<sup>3</sup> For a criticism of the reductive approach developed by traditional historiography, especially regarding sisters, see José Eyt, "Verborgten vrouwen, vergeten vrouwen? Veranderende visies op de geschiedenis van negentiende-eeuwse zustercongregaties," *Trajecta* 1 (1992), pp. 374–387; Susan O'Brien, "Terra Incognita: The Nun in Nineteenth-Century England," *Past and Present* no. 121 (Nov. 1988), pp. 110–140.

<sup>4</sup> Roger Aubert, "Conclusions," *Journée d'études "Vie religieuse et enseignement," Champion*, 29–10–1983 (Champion, 1984), pp. 91–97.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

deserves an attentive examination within the context of a history of religious outlooks and feelings. Finally, the past of institutes is a complex reality, not free of ambiguities. One must, consequently, be prudent before deciding on certain debated problems. Canon Aubert recalled the many lectures to which the theme of the advancement of women by means of consecrated life has given birth. His invitation to caution must be applied to other, connected fields.

## 2. Historiographical Perception and Research Themes

In a short article, Yvonne Turin, professor emeritus of the University of Lyons II, has marked out in excellent fashion the road for historians of religious life during this century.<sup>6</sup> Inspired by her analytical method, I will complete it and make it specific. At the same time, I will try to draw out the themes for research which, in successive waves, have emerged from the historiography of the subject.

It seems to me that no one can contest the turning point certified by Professor Turin: "narrating the history" of religious congregations has evolved powerfully in the course of decades because "the reader of archives who is a historian changes from one era to another." In other words, depending on the period, researchers do not necessarily prize the same sources. Nor do they examine similar documentation in an identical manner, because "their misgivings or their curiosity are directed differently." The problematics are therefore historically given. They are implied by the "air of the times." On account of this, they are all relative, even the most recent ones.

Schematically, with the same author, we can distinguish three stages: in first place comes the period of hagiographical narrative; afterward we move to quantitative and sociological studies, inspired by a religious sociology, which also develops a psychological type of approach, essentially based on normative sources; then scholars plunge into the daily reality of religious life, centered on action and prayer, but equally on intentions, their execution, successes in and checks to apostolic labor.

### A. Hagiography

I will briefly recall the first of these phases: we know all the characters and the limits of the hagiographical approach which prevailed before World War II, sometimes still in the postwar period. The writings in question aimed more to edify than to interpret reality with rigor. They rested generally upon limited

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<sup>6</sup> Yvonne Turin, "Propos historiographiques et vie religieuse," *Repsa* (Religieuses en professions de la santé) no. 331 (1990), pp. 225-228.



documentation, employed with very little critical spirit. Bent on sacralizing the religious leaders of the past, they have sometimes fostered the contrary: an anti-clerical literature, marked by derision or the tendency to "darken the picture with spite."<sup>7</sup> This edifying output can still be useful on two levels. It happens, as a matter of fact, to include the publication *in extenso* of documents now inaccessible or lost. It is also a historical source: the selection of events and the light shed on different episodes serve to reveal the outlooks and the feelings of the authors who have preceded us. They point out models of conduct proposed explicitly or implicitly to the readers. They show what represented, for the men and women of yesterday, a good religious, a saintly founder, or a zealous superior. Even if they may seem obsolete or a waste of space, let us guard against sending all these yellowing works to the shredder.

## B. The Sociology of Religion and "Socio-history"

Let us come to the second stage. This stage owes much to the sociology of religion, a discipline in vogue in the fifties, to which historians have applied, in turn, some themes from their research and made some methodological contributions.<sup>8</sup> In a suggestive but schematic abridgment, Yvonne Turin characterizes this phase:

Some studies have used subject matters that allowed statistical analyses on the number, origin, and evolution of this social and prayerful body... Graphs have been multiplied, describing youth or old age, the spread or the stagnation of these groups... Thus have appeared the structures of convents, the origin of systems, or the situations that have given rise to them, but more as social groups than as religious groupings. The life of the group has wiped out that of the individual and even, in a sense, the group's specifically religious identity.<sup>9</sup>

Let us press the reality a little closer, to call attention, very concretely, to a series of dimensions suggested by sociologists of religious life. Let us clarify, first of all, that the scientific results we are dealing with are pretty diverse. At times, they apply to one order or a specific institute, even in truth to but one of its

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>8</sup> Gerard Cholvy, "Sociologie religieuse et histoire: Des enquêtes sociographiques aux 'essais de sociologie religieuse,'" *Revue d'Histoire de l'Église de France* 55 (1969), pp. 5-18; idem, "Réflexions sur l'apport de la sociologie à l'histoire religieuse," *Cahiers d'Histoire* 15 (1970), pp. 97-111.

<sup>9</sup> Turin, "Propos historiographiques," pp. 226-27.

provinces.<sup>10</sup> Other times they will also include all the religious, male and female, of a diocese<sup>11</sup> or even a nation.<sup>12</sup> Certain works concerning a theme—vocation for example—extend the frame of consecrated life in a strict sense, to include the secular clergy.<sup>13</sup> Others, still wider in scope, paint a vast historical panorama of “the life and death of religious orders,” to quote the title of the masterly work of Raymond Hostie, SJ.<sup>14</sup> I do not pretend to summarize here all the research, but to select—through one or another methodological or analytical publication—some tracks that could be followed by the historian of a teaching religious community.

I will base myself straightaway on an article by Abbé Eugène Collard,<sup>15</sup> professor at the Catholic University of Louvain. This text, without pretension but constructed with much good sense, appears to me to be fundamental for the sociographical study of religious communities. In fact, it draws attention to a series of questions which must be asked by all historians desirous of characterizing a group of priests, brothers, or sisters. These questions, which I am adapting in view of the objective of my contribution, are brought together in Table I:

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<sup>10</sup> Thus Melchior A. Baan, *De Nederlandse Minderbroedersprovincie sinds 1853: Sociologische verkenning van een religieuze groepering in verandering* (Assen, 1965).

<sup>11</sup> E.g. Marie-Thérèse Mattez, “Les religieuses du diocèse de Tournai: Étude sociologique de leur provenance,” *Bulletin de l’Institut de Recherches Économiques et Sociales* (Louvain) 22 (1956), pp. 649-98.

<sup>12</sup> Thus M.-A. Lessard and J.-P. Montminy, “Les religieuses du Canada: age, recrutement et persévérance,” *Recherches sociographiques* 8 (1967), pp. 15-47; B. Denault and B. Levesque, *Éléments pour une sociologie des communautés religieuses au Québec*, (Sherbrooke, 1975).

<sup>13</sup> Notably *Sociologie van de roepingen: Proeve van een samenvattende probleemstelling betreffende het roepingsvraagstuk van priesters, broeders en zusters*, KASKI memo. no. 120 (The Hague, 1960).

<sup>14</sup> *Vie et mort des ordres religieux: Approches psychosociologiques* (Paris, 1972).

<sup>15</sup> Eugène Collard, “L’étude sociologique des communautés religieuses féminines et de leur recrutement,” in Eugène Collard et al., *Vocation de la sociologie religieuse: Sociologie des vocations. 5e Conférence Internationale de Sociologie Religieuse* (Tournai, 1958), pp. 208-238.

## I. Sociography of a Religious Community

### 1. Active Members of the Community

- Who are the active members of the community at this time?
- How have they developed over the course of time?
- Are these movements like those in other communities (of the same institute, of other institutes), or are they distinct? If there are differences, what are they?
- In chronological periods, how many have entered, professed, departed, died?
- At what age, after how long a period of time did these entries, professions, departures, deaths take place?
- What factors have influenced these occurrences?
- How does a pyramid representing age in the community at regular intervals (e.g., every twenty years) appear?

### 2. The Members' Places of Origin

- Geographically, where did they come from? Are they citizens or foreigners, from nearby or distant regions, from the country or the city?
- What are their socio-cultural origins? From what professional context do they come? Are they from well-to-do, influential, educated circles, or not?
- To what ideological influences have the religious been subjected? Do they come from groups marked by a certain current of thought or by a political, charitable, social, or apostolic connection?
- What did their formation consist of before they entered the consecrated life and the formation given by the institute?
- Were they active in Catholic works before their admission to the congregation? Were they members of devotional groups, youth movements, active lay organizations?
- Did they practice a profession before becoming religious? Which?

### 3. The Surrounding Milieu

- What is the vitality of the region at the religious level?
- Do Church leaders evidence foresight and an enterprising spirit?
- In that place are there some lay persons aware of the needs of their era and eager to do something to meet them?
- What is the moral state of the population?
- What is the degree of economic, social, and cultural development of the country?
- What are the development needs, in relation to the program assumed by the community? To what degree are these needs met by the civil authorities, by lay people, by other congregations? Do the services rendered by religious appear to be indispensable and selfless?
- What is the attitude of the civil authorities regarding the congregations and their involvement in the public domain?
- How is public opinion affected by relations with the community and its activities?

### 4. Structure and Organization of the Community

- Who exercises authority? What are the ways of appointing these persons, and what is their responsibility? How do they exercise power? What kind of relationships are maintained by local superiors with provincial and general superiors?
- Which are the different categories of personnel belonging to the house? How are the tasks divided among them?
- How does the community provide its own sustenance? What material means are at their disposal? Who manages those means, and according to what criteria?
- In what manner does the group organize its spiritual life and its apostolate? Do these two poles complement each other, or is there a tension?
- What special times (assemblies, feasts, solemnities) guide the rhythm of the life of the house and allow it to reinforce its unity?
- By what public representations (habit, models for imitation, symbols, architecture, etc.) does the institution affirm itself in the eyes of its

members and before the surrounding milieu?

- What kind of relations does the community maintain with the rest of the congregation, with the outside world? Through what channels?

#### 5. Attitudes and Outlook of the Religious

- How do members of the community treat one another?
- To what extent are they attached to their community, to their institute?
- What attitudes do they manifest in regard to the outside world?

#### 6. Evolution of the Group

- What substantive changes has the community experienced over the course of time?
- Does the group appear "conservative," or is it capable of adapting to new circumstances?

Let us comment briefly on the different sections of this table. The questions about the *active members* are not to be neglected. The answers brought forth allow one to glimpse certain aspects of the past. Occasionally, also, they generate new questions, which will indicate how the inquiry should proceed. It is possible, for example, to spot phases of expansion, of apparent dynamism, as well as periods of aging or withdrawal. Likewise, one can also appreciate in part the group's capacity for action, understand some traits in its outlook. Such an approach allows one, besides, to discern specifics about the house in reference to its neighbors, to form a first idea of the conditions of life and work for those who live there, which reflects its longevity, or, again, to locate chronologically the times of tension and crisis, perceptible from the abnormally high numbers of departures. Finally, it draws attention to certain contextual elements—war, political conflict, economic crisis, etc.—whose influence on the fate of the community is felt in other respects.

The *place of origin* of the members of the house is interesting in many ways. First and foremost, the geographical data allow one to characterize the recruitment for the religious house or the congregation as a whole.<sup>16</sup> The data

<sup>16</sup> We may cite in this regard the typology of Claude Langlois, *Le catholicisme au féminin: Les congrégations françaises à supérieure générale au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris,

could reveal the fruitfulness in vocations of the place where the congregation is established, of its religious fervor, of the good name acquired by the institution in the eyes of the local population.<sup>17</sup> And then, the information of a geographical, sociocultural, scholastic, and professional nature helps resolve specific problems. Are the religious able to fit easily into the region and the environment where they have been sent? Are they equipped to understand the outlook there, to grasp the needs and difficulties there? Are they well prepared for the tasks entrusted to them? A third series of indications: those which refer to sociocultural origins and a professional past. They can prove useful when one begins to examine other dimensions. For example, what outside support can the community rely upon? Lastly, ties to a current of thought, previous connections, belonging to certain organizations often give rise to a sensitivity, a frame of mind, an openness or a closure regarding certain aspirations of the people, a predisposition or inadaptability to such and such a form of apostolate. For sure these are scattered elements, which need to be linked to others and confirmed.

The study of the *surrounding milieu*, the community's field of action, must be undertaken. It allows one to understand the reception, favorable or hostile, accorded the religious. It gives an idea, already fairly precise, of the needs for which the priests, brothers, and sisters must assume responsibility and of the range of action open to them. It makes one aware, lastly, of the delicate problem of competition—among different communities, between religious and lay people, between Church and State—which the apostolate very often runs into.

The fourth set of questions concerns, as we have seen, the *structure and organization* of the community. It enables us to penetrate the internal life of the house, where the specific character of the congregation shows up clearly. Some fundamental problems are attacked from this angle: including power and its exercise, the occupational distribution of personnel, financial management, the organization of time and of common life, the mechanisms assuring the unity and identity of the group, its susceptibility to external influences. So many trails of interest to the historian.

*Attitudes and outlook of the religious* open to us many other avenues of very fruitful investigation: first of all are human relations, fundamental in every living community; next, a feeling of belonging to a part of a whole, the com-

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1984), pp. 563–564; “self-recruitment” occurs when the group attracts its members from where it is already established, “hetero-recruitment” when they come from outside, “regulated transfer of personnel” when subjects move from one region to another within a determined territory.

<sup>17</sup> This is a case of “self-recruitment.” If the congregation places its personnel in places where they are not natives, as is often the case, it is evidently impossible to draw from such lessons within the framework of a purely local monograph; the inquiry would have to be broadened to the whole range of the institute's personnel.

munity, and to a whole, the congregation, with the spiritual, and also affective, resonances that such membership implies; and finally, the way of perceiving the outside world, often ambiguous, but in any case more difficult to understand than it may seem at first sight. After all, do not a number of religious communities of active life sometimes practice flight from "the world" while exercising an apostolic presence in its bosom? This is matter for investigation, surely.

The dimension of *evolution*, the importance of which Roger Aubert has already stressed, concludes the questionnaire. This means noting the changes at work deep within the community and appreciating its ability to accept innovation. Undoubtedly this is a problematical question, hard to approach. It must, nevertheless, be at the center of every foray into historical research.

Although such an analytical method is capable of nourishing part of the research, it does not exhaust the reality. The sociological works treating of vocation have brought to light other variables in the context that might be of interest to us. I will cite just two of them.<sup>18</sup>

Religious develop their apostolates in a milieu undergoing secularization. Industrialization and urbanization are no strangers to this evolution. The first phenomenon was included in the sociography of the surrounding milieu proposed by Abbé Collard. The second, which was not explicitly present, should be added.

The very nature of the pedagogical and charitable tasks evolves from two points of view. On the one hand, the civil government is increasingly integrating these areas into its own field of action. Through subsidies, it imposes a normative, somewhat constricted plan. When that happens, when the public sector has absorbed a religious community, the situation and its implications must be studied attentively: the material means acquired, the more restricted flexibility, the reduction of the apparent specific characteristics of the institution. On the other hand, the increasingly technical nature of educational and social work, sometimes described as "professionalization," radically modifies the conditions in which such work is carried out. The formation required of the religious men and women who ensure it is becoming more and more specialized. The infrastructures—buildings, equipment, etc.—demand considerable outlays. So many challenges are not always easy to take up. The ability of the group to adapt, to which Abbé Collard's model alludes, must also be measured at this level.

There is a final schema for which the works of sociologists will prove useful to historians of the consecrated life: these works allow us to decipher certain changes in religious communities over long periods, to connect such changes with the transformations that have affected the whole of society during the nine-

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<sup>18</sup> Paul Wynants, "La 'crise des vocations' féminines en Belgique: Évolution des perspectives (de 1945 à nos jours)," *Vie Consacrée* 57 (1985), pp. 111-131. I refer to section 2 of this article, on the contribution of the sociology of religion between 1955 and the present, pp. 115-120.



teenth and twentieth centuries. To make sense of the upheavals that have occurred within the environment of religious communities, a summary comparison between the societies of yesterday and of today, inspired directly by the works of Father Émile Pin,<sup>19</sup> seems of interest to me. This summary comprises Table II:

## II. Transformations of the Social Context

Former Context	Today
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A stable society, founded on the primacy of tradition. To safeguard their influence, human groups must most of all assure their permanence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● An unstable society, based on innovation and freedom for initiative. To safeguard their influence, human groups must adapt themselves constantly, must revise ceaselessly the norms of their action.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A prescientific society, where a good number of skills are universal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A scientific society, marked by methodology, which sets up specialized training in essential requirements.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● An unequal society, often endowed with a hereditary elite.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A more equal society generating its own elites.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A monarchical society, where the one in authority consults his counselors occasionally and individually.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A society endowed with organs of government that acts collectively and more systematically.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A rather fragmented society, which leaves to the central power the prerogative of settling appeals from its different constituents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A more unified society that establishes horizontal collaboration and a certain collegiality.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A society that thinks of formation as the assimilation of norms. Education is conceived above all as a process of socialization.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A society that looks at education as an apprenticeship in freedom; people should be able to exercise self-determination by choosing among many systems of norms.</li> </ul>

<sup>19</sup> Émile Pin, "Les instituts religieux apostoliques," in Henri Carrier and Émile Pin, *Essais de sociologie religieuse* (Paris, 1967), pp. 541–565.

The multiple changes that religious communities are going through within a society in full evolution should be precisely identified in their turn, but also be placed chronologically. For example, I will go over again the transformations that Suzanne Guillemin has noted about the active religious life:<sup>20</sup>

### III. Changes at the Heart of Communities of Active Life

Past	Present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Possession.</i> Institutes control the works where their members exercise their apostolate. Often possessing a monopoly, such establishments are endowed with homogeneous personnel.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Insertion.</i> Religious communities must be integrated into a vast network of institutions, placed under public oversight and largely controlled by lay people. Occupying a minority place therein, they are in a position of numerical and financial inferiority.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Power.</i> In the works belonging to religious, all positions of authority and supervision are occupied by members. The few lay personnel are employed as subordinates.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Collaboration.</i> In modern institutions, legislation places religious and lay people under the same rules regarding the assumption of responsibility. They are frequently asked to work together, to share power.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Religious superiority.</i> Many congregations adopt a paternalistic attitude toward "their" poor. Certain of them sometimes breed guardian-ward sorts of relationships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Fraternity.</i> To maintain their credibility, religious must share in the life of the people to whom they direct their apostolate. By confronting people's problems, they can help them grasp the evangelical import of their commitment.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Human inferiority.</i> Every religious must flee the "world," presented as evil and corrupt.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Presence to the world.</i> Institutes of active life must be integrated into the "world," in order to give their witness to it.</li> </ul>

<sup>20</sup> Suzanne Guillemin, "Problèmes de la vie religieuse féminine active," *Vocation* no. 231 (July 1965), pp. 354-372.

● *Moral conversion.* The congregation exercises its apostolate in a Christianized universe. Its purpose essentially is to bring the "lost sheep" back to the Church.

● *Missionary spirit.* Religious direct their apostolate largely toward a de-Christianized society. Its objective is to help the ever-increasing number of those who have never heard God's message to discover him.

At the end of this selective outline, one can understand that in the history of religious communities, the scope of research has greatly expanded in the course of the last thirty years. Our colleagues in Quebec call it "sociohistory."<sup>21</sup> I would like to indicate the major axes, while citing in notes a series of publications, purely as examples.

Some works deal with the development of the manpower of religious congregations and communities.<sup>22</sup> These statistical studies bring out, usually by country, the general tendencies that may be observed on this subject. They lay out the numbers by regions and by sections. They furnish an overview by which one may compare the dynamics of a particular community. Such publications do not confine themselves to recording facts. Just as much, they suggest elements of explanation: we find in them hypotheses that deserve to be tested, even in the limited framework of a monograph.<sup>23</sup> Other research focuses, partly or wholly, on different aspects of recruitment (quantitative, geographical, social), often in line with the development of apostolic activities. These studies are concerned

<sup>21</sup> P.-A. Turcotte, "La socio-histoire des congrégations religieuses québécoises," in *La Société canadienne d'histoire de l'Église catholique: Études d'histoire religieuse*, 1990 (Ottawa, 1992), pp. 45-56.

<sup>22</sup> E.g., on Belgium see Jan Art, "De evolutie van het aantal mannelijke roepingen in België tussen 1830 en 1975: Basisgegevens en richtingen voor verder onderzoek," *Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine* 10 (1979), pp. 282-370; idem, "Belgische mannelijke roepingen 1830-1975," *Spiegel Historiael* 16 (1981), pp. 157-162; André Tihon, "Les religieuses en Belgique du XVIIIe au XXe siècle: Approche statistique," *Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine* 7 (1976), pp. 1-54; idem, "Les religieuses en Belgique (fin XVIIIe-XXe siècle): Approche statistique et essai d'interprétation," *Journée d'études "Vie religieuse et enseignement," Champion*, 29-10-1983 (Champion, 1984), pp. 11-39. On France see Claude Langlois, "Les effectifs des congrégations féminines au XIXe siècle: De l'enquête statistique à l'histoire quantitative," *Revue d'Histoire de l'Église de France* 60 (1974), pp. 39-64. We shall present below the important contribution of this author's thesis.

<sup>23</sup> We shall return to this below, while covering all the tracks which break out from the whole output of "socio-history."

with a congregation, a province, a single institution.<sup>24</sup> Or they deal with the religious of one diocese, even in a specific region.<sup>25</sup> They supply some enlight-

<sup>24</sup> E.g., for Belgium: Els De Smet, *De Norbertijnen in Vlaanderen: recrutering en sociaal milieu, 1834–1987*, licentiate dissertation at the University of Ghent (Ghent, 1988); Albert Druart, "Le recrutement salésien en Belgique (1891–1914)," *Ricerche storiche salesiane* 3 (1984), pp. 243–273; Thierry Durvaux, *Les Soeurs de la Providence de Gosselies, 1830–1914: Recrutement et fondations*, licentiate dissertation at the Catholic University of Louvain (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1984); Xavier Dusaudoit, "L'évolution sociale, professionnelle et politique des Jésuites belges au XIXe siècle: L'exemple du collège Saint-Michel à Bruxelles," *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 83 (1988), pp. 34–57; Karine Hanskens, *Het klooster van de Heilige Vincentius a Paulo te Dendermonde. Geschiedenis 1856–1992: recrutering, sociale stratificatie van de kloosterlingen*, licentiate dissertation at the University of Ghent (Ghent, 1993); Pierre Hupez, *Le recrutement des Jésuites belges 1832–1914*, licentiate dissertation at the Catholic University of Louvain (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1990); Rita Mertens, "Vrouwelijke religieuze roepingen tussen 1803 en 1955. Casus: de congregatie van Zomergem en de Zomergemse vrouwelijke religieuzen," *Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine* 9 (1978), pp. 419–479; Patricia 't Serstevens, *Le recrutement et l'origine sociale des Soeurs de Notre-Dame et des Soeurs de Sainte-Marie au XIXe siècle*, dissertation at the Catholic University of Louvain (Louvain, 1972); Luc Vankeirsbilck, *De Benedictijnen te Brugge, Steenbrugge en Zevenkerken (1879/1899–1989): Recrutering en origine*, licentiate dissertation at the University of Ghent (Ghent, 1991); Paul Wynants, *Les Soeurs de la Providence de Champion et leurs écoles, 1833–1914* (Namur, 1984). For congregations of brothers in the Netherlands, see the doctoral dissertations submitted at the Catholic University of Nijmegen by M. Bohnen, *Geschiedenis van de Broeders van Maastricht 1840–1880: een prosopografisch onderzoek naar herkomst en werkzaamheden der broeders* (Nijmegen, 1988); R. Francken, *De Congregatie van de Broeders van de Onbevleete Ontvangenis der Heilige Maagd Maria te Maastricht rond de eeuwwisseling van de negentiende naar de twintigste eeuw: Regionale herkomst, groei in ledental, functies en leeftijdsopbouw van de broeders* (Nijmegen, 1988); H.H.W.M. van Mierlo, *De Congregatie van de Christelijke Broeders van de Onbevleete Ontvangenis der Allerheiligste Maagd en Moeder Gods te Huibergen gedurende de periode 1852–1888: Ontwikkeling van de congregatie en regionale herkomst, groei in ledental, functies en leeftijdsopbouw van de broeders* (Valkenburg, 1989).

<sup>25</sup> For France: Gérard Cholvy, "Le recrutement des religieux dans le diocèse de Montpellier (1830–1956)," *Revue d'Histoire de l'Église de France* 44 (1958), pp. 57–73; Marius Faugeras, "Les vocations religieuses de femmes dans le diocèse de Nantes au XIXe siècle (1802–1914)," *Enquêtes et Documents* (University of Nantes), 1 (1971), pp. 239–281; Jean-Marie Périé, *Les vocations sacerdotales et religieuses dans le diocèse de Rodez*, thesis at the University of Montpellier III (Montpellier, 1979); Louis Perouas, "Les religieuses dans le pays creusois du XVIIIe au XXe siècle," *Cahiers d'Histoire* 24 (1979), pp. 17–43. For Belgium: Marina Fauconnier, *Vrouwenkloosters in Oost-Vlaanderen tussen 1802 en 1914*, licentiate dissertation at the University of Ghent (Ghent, 1980), 2 vols.; Anne Jacobus, "De vrouwelijke religieuze roepingen in het bisdom Brugge 1802–1914: Evolutie en herkomst," *Handelingen van het Genootschap voor geschiedenis gesticht onder de benaming "Société d'Émulation" te Brugge* 116 (1979), pp. 27–86; Hugo Verstrepen, "Lokale

ening points of comparison, as much for their descriptions as for their interpretations of a historical evolution.

Truthfully, the most stimulating works<sup>26</sup> project for the most part these limited perspectives. If they incorporate the sociographic dimension, they do not intend to confine themselves to it. They use it as a point of departure, to try to answer a fundamental question: why and how did religious communities, both male and female, flower so well in the past before declining in recent decades? The factors brought to light by these publications must be taken into account by a thorough study of congregational history, whenever such a study considers more than one institution. In connection with this, I will recall five variables that historians presently believe to be decisive in this regard.

(i) The *Catholic renewal*, which unfolds in the nineteenth century in a whole series of European countries, is without doubt an element to take into account. In a world in total disarray, the hierarchy, the clergy, and simple believers mobilized to consolidate their faith, and also to return to the Church its ideological and social influence. This movement strives to restore a Christian civilization. At its core, communities of teaching religious are called to play a role of prime importance. Not only must they catechize the young faithful in school, but by favoring the schooling of the masses, it becomes their responsibility likewise to make religious values permeate all social organizations.

Often, the Catholic renewal adopts an ultramontane orientation. It conducts a crusade against modern society, marked by the heritage of the Enlightenment and the effects of the French Revolution. With this spirit, the crusade develops an approach of dogmatic orthodoxy, a real pastoral dynamism, and a social apostolate, conceived above all in a moralistic perspective. It is in the wake of this movement that numerous religious communities are founded and carry out their activities.

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socio-structurele determinanten van stedelijke seculiere en reguliere priesterroepingen. Casus: stad Gent 1801–1914,” *Handelingen der Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent*, new series 38 (1984), pp. 141–180.

<sup>26</sup> Such as Claude Langlois, *Le catholicisme* (see n. 16); A. J. M. Alkemade, *Vrouwen XIX: Geschiedenis van negentien religieuze congregaties, 1800–1850* (Bois-le-Duc, 1966); Joos Van Vugt, *Broeders in de katholieke beweging: De werkzaamheden van vijf Nederlandse onderwijscongregaties van broeders en fraters, 1840–1970* (Nijmegen, 1994). One may add here some elements figuring in two much more modest contributions which appear in *Actes du colloque du C.I.H.E.C. (25–27 août 1994) 2: La christianisation des campagnes* (Brussels–Rome, 1996); Ralph Gibson, “The Christianisation of the Countryside in Western Europe in the Nineteenth Century,” pp. 485–509, and Paul Wynants, “La christianisation des campagnes par l’enseignement populaire au XIXe siècle: Étude de cas: les écoles des Soeurs de la Providence et de l’Immaculée Conception,” pp. 543–562.

Facing the challenge of secularization and the rise of socialism, the Catholic movement intensifies its efforts in educational matters. Religious communities are mobilized. They are invited to diversify their instructional curriculum, to broaden their target—public by addressing all social classes. In countries like Belgium and the Netherlands, <sup>27</sup> schools are progressively integrated into a “column,” a vast network of confessional organizations charged with providing leadership for the faithful from birth to death, while protecting them from “deadly influences.”

The numerous communities of teaching religious who tie their destiny to the Catholic renewal do not remain unscathed when the renewal begins to run out of steam, affected by secularization, the beginning of a consumer society, and the appearance of the welfare state. More and more Catholics accommodate to modern, pluralistic society. They begin to dissociate their faith from belonging to confessional organizations, preferring social engagement. Consequently, the existence of a “militant” network of Catholic schools involving at its core the personnel of religious congregations gets called into question.

(ii) The second variable to keep in mind is the *emergence of new needs* and the capacity of religious communities to meet them. So, during the nineteenth century the desire for access to written culture intensifies. The social demand for literacy springs progressively from every stratum of the population. It varies when certain environments aspire to specific kinds of formation. It increases, moreover, when responsible persons—notably churchmen—argue in favor of “separation of the sexes” in school, the argument being presented as a pedagogical, psychological, social, and moral imperative. <sup>28</sup> Now the civil authorities intend to limit their expenses in the educational domain. At the core of the liberal system which then prevails, private initiative alone can remedy what the

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<sup>27</sup> In this regard, see Jaak Billiet, ed., *Tussen bescherming en verovering: Sociologen en historici over zuilvorming*, Kadoc Studies no. 6 (Louvain, 1988); Jan A. de Kok, “Kerken en godsdienst: de school als motor van de zuilvorming,” *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 13 (Haarlem, 1978), pp. 145–155; Emiel Lamberts, ed., *De kruistocht tegen het liberalisme. Facetten van het ultramontanisme in België in de 19e eeuw*, Kadoc Jaarboek 1983 (Louvain, 1984); Joos P. A. Van Vugt, “De verzuiling van het lager onderwijs in Limburg, 1860–1940,” *Jaarboek van het Katholiek Documentatiecentrum 1980* (Nijmegen, 1981), pp. 17–60; the special issue *Verzuiling—Pilarisation of Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine* 13 (1982), 1.

<sup>28</sup> A. Bosman-Hermans, “Onderwijs voor meisjes: Enkele aspecten van een ontwikkeling,” *Kultuurleven* 47 (1980), pp. 891–913; Marijke Verbeke, *Jongens en meisjes samen in de klas: Coëducatie in België tussen de 19e en de 20e eeuw* (Ghent, 1984); Paul Wynants, “L'école des femmes: Les catholiques belges et l'enseignement primaire féminin (1842–1860),” *La Revue Nouvelle* 77 (1983), pp. 69–76.

national and local governments do not provide, with the limited financial means which they dispense.

Thus challenged, religious institutes provide great numbers of teachers. The personnel of the congregations possess an orthodoxy beyond suspicion; they are competent according to the criteria of the time, morally certain, devout. Formed rapidly, they can guarantee continuity of service, thanks to their belonging to an organized community. Needing little, sometimes working for peanuts, they are satisfied with skimpy salaries, with precarious conditions of life and work. They represent a solution much more economical that can be used, without any purse to open, to supervise a church group, direct the choir, or animate parish social life. In the end a sort of syllogism is imprinted in people's mentalities: Only the mostly highly motivated teachers can carry heavy educational loads in very difficult conditions. This motivation, which engages one's whole life, is characteristic of congregational personnel; religious are therefore the teachers "par excellence."

Nothing can prevent the evidence of "excellence" from becoming less and less credible. Turning teaching into a civil service leads to a series of consequences. On the one hand, schools multiply at such a pace that religious congregations cannot supply all of them with teachers. On the other hand, thanks to more abundant budgetary allowances, the conditions of life and work improve. Salary scales are re-evaluated, school buildings are made healthier, instructional equipment is improved, the number of students per teacher decreases, stable employment is guaranteed. As a result of this twofold evolution more and more lay people undertake such a career, in which they find opportunities of social advancement. Gradually, academic education stops being a gift provided by institutions. It changes into a right guaranteed by the state. Instructional duties no longer appear as an apostolate, taken in hand by chosen souls. They are converted into a profession which can be ensured by every competent person, bringing about respect for the norms and the program established by the authorities. As teaching becomes a function, the special characteristics of different congregations are diluted: the exercise of the profession is separated from belonging to a religious community. This turnaround announces the withdrawal of the institutes, which disengage themselves little by little from the school system.

(iii) The *idea of education* prevailing in society is a third theme to integrate into the analysis. In the last century, to educate is above all "to inculcate sound principles." Hence religion and morality permeate all formation given to students. They take precedence over instruction, over the acquisition of profane knowledge. This is so in the name of religious and social considerations.

The Church considers, in fact, that faith and sacramental practice depend principally on knowledge, on behavior, on habits assimilated during infancy.



Consequently, teachers must not only teach Christian principles, but also learn themselves to love and serve God, to initiate into prayer and virtue, to inspire "noble sentiments" in the pupils entrusted to them. More, nineteenth-century Catholics assign to the school a social function defined in conservative, even paternalistic, terms. Education must strengthen the established order, by implanting among the poor the values which underlie the status quo: resignation, humility, docility, obedience, etc. In the measure that liberalism and socialism are making headway, the mission transmitted to the school evolves: certainly it has the duty to fight "error" and "anarchy," but also to "lift up" the working class by inculcating in them the qualities—order, propriety, foresight, economy, etc.—which, say persons of influence, procure good fortune for simple families. If religious and moral values occupy such a place in the process of schooling, who better than the members of a religious congregation can efficaciously ensure their diffusion? Priests, brothers, and sisters are not content with assimilating sound principles during their formation: they must put them into practice in their community life. To knowledge they add the power of example.

The secularization of society knocks a hole in this reasoning. It shatters the relationship between education and religion. In pedagogical and practical plans, educational objectives are differentiated from specifically religious goals. By the same token, the criteria by which one evaluates teachers are transformed: respect for norms and methodological aptitudes relegate piety or zeal to last place. Finally, in the heads of the young, the democratization of society values autonomy and a critical spirit rather than the imitation of models. Traditional arguments, which underlie the omnipresence of religious in the educational field, thus lose part of their credit.

(iv) The fourth element to observe: *social approval* from which teaching religious communities benefit, especially among the social, political, and religious elite. On the support given them depend their abilities to act and their influence.

The role of influential persons as school benefactors was important in the last century. The reasons animating these people are varied. Some donors want their name attached to a work. Others, organized by the clergy, are sensitive to the theme of private charity as a means of assuring their salvation. Still others are moved by social concerns in a paternalistic sort of way. From certain members of the nobility and the middle class, considerations of prestige are not lacking: by sustaining a school, a family shows its prominence. As time goes by, however, the support given by landowners, important businessmen, and industrial magnates wanes for different reasons: laxity in giving, the erosion of some large fortunes, the emergence of a demanding attitude among the "dependents," solicitude about the autonomy of the religious, etc. The progressive retreat of the

influential generally stirs the teaching communities to turn toward the civil authorities rather than toward the Church.

The attitude of the civil authorities varies according to periods and countries. It is not rare that, for a time at least, governments are convinced of the social usefulness of religion. They favor or tolerate the development of religious communities of active life. States adopt constitutions that grant such communities a certain range of movement; teaching publicly is sometimes largely open to them; the private school system can benefit from accreditation and subsidies. The downfall cannot be more brutal, the day when public opinion reverses and makes an anticlerical assault. There appears an entire arsenal of hostile measures against religious: the requirement that public school personnel be laity, the dissolution of unauthorized congregations, their exclusion from the professions, etc.

The support of Church officials—diocesan bishops and parish clergy—is no longer constant. Benevolence is generally conditional, depending on a certain submissiveness, when abundant personnel are required for the pastoral organization of the population, for the battle against ignorance and religious indifference. But benevolence can be diminished when the secular clergy believe they are losing control of the school system, or they doubt—for sound reasons—that a congregation will maintain its teaching presence in a situation which it subsidizes substantially and for which lay personnel are readily available.

(v) I come now to the fifth and last variable to keep in mind: *the different models of religious congregations*. During part of the nineteenth century, this development is real, for different reasons. At first the juridical framework<sup>29</sup> in which institutes with simple vows are evolving remains rudimentary. Afterwards the patrimony of the congregations is still limited: priests, brothers, and sisters are not bound either to buildings or to works; they always know a certain mobility. The way of life of religious may be adapted to the circumstances without too much difficulty. And so, the model of congregational organization is perfectly capable of going along with a society in slow evolution, at whose center, changes—secularization, literacy, urbanization, industrialization—are progressively at work. Later on, however, the increasing rigidity of the canonical framework imposed on congregations disengages them from a thoroughly chaotic world. The pioneer spirit which characterized the beginnings of many a community is overshadowed by the necessity of ensuring the continuity of the apostolate already undertaken. Literally confined in a lifestyle, in a system of works, religious congregations no longer seem to be dynamic vehicles for mobilizing the elite for service to Church and society. Other, more flexible forms of organization—secular institutes, then Catholic Action—compete with them.

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<sup>29</sup> In the canonical sense of the term.

The dynamic of Catholic renewal, the emergence of new needs and the capacity of religious communities to meet them, the dominant ideas in the educational field, the social approval from which the teaching institutes might benefit, the different models of congregational organization: these are five parameters whose importance for religious congregations specializing in the education of the young has been laid out in recent historical output. It is necessary to reserve for these themes a significant place in every monograph focusing on an institution of this type.

To close the second stage of Yvonne Turin's schema, I will say a few words on research themes employing approaches of a "psychological" type. The issue developed by such works<sup>30</sup> is useful to us only for two aspects: *community life* and *physical and emotional standards*. In this regard, I will limit myself here to suggesting some questions, brought together in Table IV:

#### IV. Community Life

##### 1. Community Life

- What picture does community life present? How are the buildings laid out and divided? What kind of furnishings do they have?
- What rhythms are evident in the community life? What is the timetable? What solemnities are observed? What place is reserved for work, common prayer, recollection, silence, relaxation?
- How can one characterize the "affective relations" within the community? What relationships do the religious have with their local superiors, with their confreres or sisters?

##### 2. Physical and Emotional Standards

- What kind of religious habit is worn? What is its symbolism?
- What kind of attention is given to cleanliness of dress and of body?
- What conduct is expected of the members?
- What kind of food is given them? Is it sufficient in quantity and quality?
- Which kind of care and extraordinary treatments are given to the sick?
- How does the community experience the death of its members?

<sup>30</sup> The model for this genre in French is Odile Arnold's *Le corps et l'âme: La vie des religieuses au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1984).

### C. The History of Daily Life

The third stage, according to Yvonne Turin, is a plunge into the concrete existence of religious communities, or, if one prefers, into their "communal experience."<sup>31</sup> The works executed within this perspective will enrich our questioning, *a fortiori* if we integrate the contributions made by publications in the history of education. The point of view which we will adopt, as readers in search of themes for our research, is modified. Most of the time we will not have to test in detail some hypothesis or statement formulated on a general level, but rather will have to adapt an issue raised in an existing monograph in order to bring forth a new one.<sup>32</sup>

In this survey we will barely review the questions brought out in the course of the two preceding stages. Our principal objective is to add new questions to those we have already posed. We will give no more attention to the religious community, but will turn to the school.<sup>33</sup> We will hold to Willem Frijhoff's definition:

In a broad sense, [a school] is an institution or a structure that gathers together and unites around a teacher or a supervisor invested with varied responsibilities a certain number of students with the object of imparting knowledge, culture, good breeding... This knowledge is imparted in common, adding a certain intellectual investment to manual activities, in a collective learning process and according

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<sup>31</sup> Turin, "Propos historiographiques," op. cit., p. 228.

<sup>32</sup> Monographs of quality are not lacking. E.g., for the Salesians: Francis Desramaut, *Don-Bosco à Nice: La vie d'une école professionnelle catholique entre 1875 et 1919* (Paris, 1980); William John Dickson, *The dynamics of growth: The foundation and development of the Salesians in England*, Istituto Storico Salesiano, Studi no. 8 (Rome, 1991); Françoise Fonck and Gabriel Ney, *De l'orphelinat Saint-Jean Berchmans au Centre scolaire Don Bosco: Cent ans de présence salésienne à Liège (1891-1991)* (Liège, 1992); Yves Le Carrère, *Les salésiens de Don Bosco à Dinan 1891-1903*, Istituto Storico Salesiano, Studi no. 6 (Rome, 1990). For schools run by sisters, we may point out two recent monographs: Gian Ackermans, *Vereniging van vrouwen...: Franciscanessen van Heythuysen in Nederland (1900-1975)* (Heythuysen, 1994); Ria Christens, *100 jaar Heilig-Hartinstituut Annuntiaten Heverlee: Geschiedenis van een school en een congregatie* (Louvain, 1994). One also finds stimulating reflections in Turin's *Femmes et religieuses*, pp. 105-180.

<sup>33</sup> While not losing sight, if there is a place, of the specific characteristics of female education. In this regard see, e.g., for France: Françoise Mayeur, *L'éducation des filles en France au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1979); idem, *L'enseignement secondaire des jeunes filles sous la Troisième République (1867-1924)* (Paris, 1977); Françoise Mayeur and Jacques Gadille, eds., *Éducation et images de la femme chrétienne en France au début du XXe siècle* (Lyons, 1980); Louis Secondy, "L'éducation des filles en milieu catholique au 19e siècle," *Cahiers d'Histoire* 26 (1981), pp. 337-352.

to rhythms established in advance from above, without concern for immediate economic profit, but in a location ordinarily separated from the workplace. Because this is set apart from the concerns of daily life, <sup>34</sup> the values conveyed by the academic model can be inculcated in the student through schedules, exercises, courses, and lessons... Consequently, the academic model, disciplined and rhythmical, with its structure of interpersonal competitiveness, becomes a universal model of social behavior. <sup>35</sup>

Now let us see, in Table V, what kind of tracks the researcher might still pursue:

## V. Other Aspects to Explore

### 1. Context of the Foundation <sup>36</sup>

State of the congregation at the moment of the new institution's founding:

- active members
- institutions ministering in the region, the country, and abroad
- the institute's policy for making a new foundation and conformity to it in the projected foundation

### 2. The Foundation

#### a. Starting Up:

- those who initiated the foundation (their quality, status, dealings with the institute, etc.)
- their motives and plan
- their support
- the ties that will keep them with the work in the future

<sup>34</sup> He means here economic concerns.

<sup>35</sup> Willem Frijoff, "Préface," in Willem Frijoff, ed., *L'offre d'école: Eléments pour une étude comparée des politiques éducatives au XIXe siècle. Actes du troisième colloque international (Association internationale pour l'histoire de l'éducation), Sèvres, 27-30 septembre 1981* (Paris, 1983), p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> In this regard, see the data above concerning the environment surrounding the community.

b. The Preliminary Negotiations:

- their length
- the channels by which they were carried out (correspondence, visits, etc.)
- psychology, the expectations of the parties
- the initial proposals directed to the institute (buildings, furnishings, remuneration, tasks to be taken on, etc.)
- impediments encountered
- the intervention of third parties in the discussion
- the terms of the final agreement
- promises that this compact may conceal, difficulties that might arise

c. The Opening of the Institution:

- the date of foundation
- the "pioneers" (their identity, previous careers)
- the types of formation established at the start
- the clientele expected
- the number of classes and of students at the beginning
- the reception accorded the school at its opening

3. The Personnel Assigned to the Work <sup>37</sup>

a. The Staff:

- the number of active personnel
- their assignments (teaching, administration, supervision, maintenance, etc.)
- their expenses, conditions of life and work <sup>38</sup>

b. The Teachers' Profile:

- age
- nationality

<sup>37</sup> See the questions above concerning the members of the religious community.

<sup>38</sup> Available in this regard are some works that synthesize some useful points of comparison. E.g., for Belgium: Marc Depaepe et al., *Geen trede meer om op te staan: De maatschappelijke positie van onderwijzers en onderwijzeressen tijdens de voorbije eeuw* (Kapellen, 1993).

- the ratio of religious priests, religious who are not priests, celibate lay persons, married lay persons
- their educational preparation <sup>39</sup> (degrees included)
- their length of stay in the institution
- their perseverance in the institute

c. Academic Norms:

- their origin and content
- the rights and duties of the educators
- models suggested to them
- evaluations

d. Career Educational Investment:

- continuing formation
- contributions to pedagogical reflection (drafting of handbooks, <sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> It is worthwhile to compare the information brought out in this material with what is available for other religious and teachers. E.g., on the formation of those who run Belgian institutions in general, and of religious in particular, see An Bosmans-Hermans, "De onderwijzer: opleiding in het perspectief van professionalisering," *Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine* 10 (1979), pp. 83–104; idem, *De onderwijzersopleiding in België 1842–1884: Een historisch-pedagogisch onderzoek naar het gevoerde beleid en de pedagogisch-didactische vormgeving* (Louvain, 1985); Maurits de Vroede, *Van schoolmeester tot onderwijzer: De opleiding van de leerkrachten in België en Luxemburg van het einde van de 18de eeuw tot omstreeks 1842* (Louvain, 1970); idem, "De pedagogische opleiding van de Jozefieten 1817–1851," *Tijdschrift voor Opvoedkunde* 14 (1968–1969), pp. 321–339; idem, "La formation pédagogique des Frères des Écoles Chrésiennes, spécialement en Belgique, au cours de la première moitié du XIXe siècle," *Paedagogica Historica* 10 (1970), pp. 49–79.

<sup>40</sup> The study of school handbooks must be undertaken in a comparative fashion and on a grand scale, like that of a country. For France see the works of Alain Chopin, in particular: "L'histoire des manuels scolaires," *Histoire de l'éducation* no. 9 (Dec. 1980), pp. 1–25; idem, "Les manuels scolaires," in Thérèse Charmasson, ed., *Histoire de l'enseignement XIXe–XXe siècles: Guide du chercheur* (Paris, 1986), pp. 191–195; the 5 volumes published thus far under the editorial direction of the same author, entitled: *Les manuels scolaires en France de 1789 à nos jours*. See likewise Hilde Coeckelberghs, "Les manuels scolaires comme source de l'histoire des mentalités: approche méthodologique," *Réseau: Revue interdisciplinaire de philosophie morale et politique* nos. 32–34 (1983), pp. 15–22.

<sup>41</sup> One may use for this purpose periodical catalogs with their indexes. E.g., for Belgium, Maurits de Vroede et al., *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van het pedagogisch leven in België in de 19de en de 20ste eeuw: De periodieken* (Ghent–Louvain, 1973–1987), 5 vols. On the educational press in France, see Charmasson, pp. 187–189.



membership in associations, publications in journals, <sup>41</sup> etc.)

- other responsibilities assigned (evaluators, etc.)

e. Relations with the Teaching World:

- with confreres in the institution
- with the confreres of the institute
- with the other teachers
- with school authorities

#### 4. The Students

a. The Student Body and Its Characteristics:

- the number of students
- their geographical origins
- their social origins

b. Conditions for Admission:

- age
- previous studies
- school fees or scholarship
- required administrative documents

c. The Different Categories of Students:

- according to age, level of studies, seniority
- according to program being pursued
- according to social environment
- according to responsibilities expected of them in the institution

d. The Social Relations of the Youths:

- rapport among themselves
- relations with their educators
- relations with people outside the school

## 5. The Program

a. The Educational Plan:<sup>42</sup>

- the traditions from which it springs
- the concept of youth and the needs on which it is based
- the objectives of the plan
- the models it proposes, the qualities it tries to cultivate
- the manner of thinking which it instills
- other characteristics it presents

## b. Organization of the Program:

- departments, levels, diplomas offered in each section
- the criteria for guidance
- the criteria for promotion
- the diplomas awarded
- the share of the human and material means assigned to each department

## c. Educational Content:

- the program of courses
- the instructional time assigned to different disciplines
- their weights in the final evaluation
- the place of religious instruction in relation to secular subjects
- the coordination of the courses in religion and morals
- in secular fields, the relative parts given to theory and to practice
- the attention given to training in good behavior (orderliness, etiquette, discipline, demeanor, etc.)
- in comparison with other institutions, the originality of the program of studies
- in comparison with other schools, the level of the instruction imparted

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<sup>42</sup> The development of this plan might be studied in comparison with the views of the founder, analyzed from earlier works, e.g. G. Avanzine, ed., *Éducation et pédagogie chez Don Bosco: Colloque interuniversitaire, Lyon 4-7 avril 1988* (Paris, 1989); Marie Halcant, *Les idées pédagogiques de la bienheureuse Mère Julie Billiart, fondatrice de la congrégation des Soeurs de Notre-Dame de Namur* (Paris, 1929). It might likewise be situated within a broader historical development, e.g. studies like those appearing in Pietro Braidò, ed., *Esperienze di pedagogia cristiana nella storia* 2 (Rome, 1981).

## d. Educational Theory:

- the teaching method, with its characteristics <sup>43</sup>
- the materials used <sup>44</sup>
- the means employed (advice, the setting of patterns, rewards, sanctions, punishments, etc.)
- their implications in what concerns the behavior of the teachers
- the amount of work given the students

## e. Results:

- the rating of the students at competitive and industrial fairs
- their advantages or handicaps when proceeding to higher studies
- the type of persons formed, at the human, professional, social, familial, religious levels
- priestly and religious vocations fostered by this training.

6. Spiritual Animation <sup>45</sup>

- type of ministry employed in the institution
- religious and sacramental practices
- piety and devotions <sup>46</sup>
- retreats and days of recollection
- pious associations (confraternities, sodalities, study circles, etc.)

<sup>43</sup> See, for comparison, P. Giolitto, *Histoire de l'enseignement primaire au XIXe siècle*, vol. 2: *Les méthodes d'enseignement* (Paris, 1984).

<sup>44</sup> A fair organized at Brussels by the Caisse Générale d'Épargne et de Retraite showed the wealth and variety of the materials: see Albert D'Haenens, ed., *L'école primaire en Belgique depuis le moyen âge* (Brussels, 1986). See also Charmasson, pp. 205–208.

<sup>45</sup> See, e.g., Ingrid Querton, "La formation religieuse et la vie spirituelle des institutrices à l'école normale de l'Enfant-Jésus (Nivelles) au XIXe siècle," *Revue d'histoire religieuse du Brabant wallon* 2 (1988), pp. 283–293.

<sup>46</sup> Roger Aubert, "Les dévotions," in *Colloque "Sources de l'histoire religieuse de la Belgique"* (Bruxelles, 30 nov.–2 déc. 1967): *Époque contemporaine*, Cahiers du Centre Interuniversitaire d'Histoire Contemporaine no. 54 (Louvain–Paris, 1968), pp. 164–172.

## 7. Infrastructure and Finances

## a. Status of the Institution:

- legal status of the community
- legal status of the school
- juridical administration of the property

b. The Buildings and Property: <sup>47</sup>

- initial state
- acquisitions and sales
- fittings, alterations, repairs
- new construction
- costs and financing

## c. The Equipment:

- furnishings
- tools and machinery
- instructional materials
- costs and financing

d. Operations: <sup>48</sup>

- importance and apportionment of ordinary income
- importance and apportionment of ordinary expenses
- rate by which receipts exceed expenses

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<sup>47</sup> See especially Serge Chassagne, "Pour une ethnologie du patrimoine scolaire," *Cent ans d'école* (Seysse, 1981), pp. 16–23; B. Toulhier, "L'architecture scolaire au XIXe siècle: De l'usage des modèles pour l'édification des écoles primaires, *Histoire de l'éducation* no. 17 (Dec. 1982), pp. 1–29. For case studies, see Isabelle Van der Borgh, "Les maisons d'école: les écoles primaires de la ville de Bruxelles au XIXe siècle," *Cahiers de la Fonderie* no. 4 (1988), pp. 2–15; Jan Heymans, *De lagere schoolgebouwen in België van 1842 tot 1878*, licentiate dissertation at the Catholic University of Louvain (Louvain, 1982). Certain school buildings are the architectural remains of artistic and ideological currents, such as the Neo-Gothic; see Jan De Maeyer, ed., *De Sint-Lucasscholen en de neogothiek, 1862–1914*, Kadoc-Studies 5 (Louvain, 1980).

<sup>48</sup> Extraordinary income and expenses correspond to investments in buildings and equipment (subsections b and c).

e. The Institution's Benefactors:<sup>49</sup>

- the importance of their contributions
- their motives
- the ways in which they help financially
- their social environment
- their religious, social, and political affiliations

## f. The Running of the Institution:

- its strengths and weaknesses
- its character (prudent, ill-considered, efficient, inefficient, etc.)

## 8. Daily Life

## a. The Framework of Life:

- limits, organization, divisions of space
- arrangement and function of the buildings<sup>50</sup>

## b. The Rules of Life:

- laws, norms, and traditions governing community life
- models which inspire it
- hierarchy of the institution
- type of society thus formed (familial or patriarchal, autocratic or open, hierarchical or egalitarian, homogeneous or heterogeneous, etc.)
- mechanisms of integration into the group

<sup>49</sup> The nature of their ties to the institution will be surveyed below.

<sup>50</sup> For comparison see, e.g., Nancy Dandois, *L'école primaire au quotidien en Hainaut à la fin du 19e et au début du 20e siècle*, licentiate dissertation at the Catholic University of Louvain (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1987); Paul Gerbod, *La vie quotidienne dans les lycées et les collèges au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1968); Pierre Guiral and Paul Gerbod, *La vie quotidienne des professeurs de 1870 à 1940* (Paris, 1982); Richard Hémeryck, "Il est défendu de ne pas jouer": Jeux et fêtes dans les écoles congréganistes (troisième quart du XIXe s.)," *Revue du Nord* 69 (1987), pp. 623-643; Marieke Hilhorst, *Bij de zusters op kostschool: Geschiedenis van het dagelijks leven van meisjes op Rooms-katholieke pensionaten in Nederland en Vlaanderen* (Utrecht, 1989).

## c. Organization of the School Year:

- its progression
- events that break its routine (particularly feast days)

## d. Organization of the Week.

## e. Organization of the Day:

- type of schedule
- place given to the spiritual life, study, extracurricular activities (including leisure time)

## f. The Conditions of Student Life:

- lodging
- nourishment
- clothing
- light and heat
- hygiene
- health

## g. The Climate, the Atmosphere of the Institution.

## 9. Relations with the Outside World

## a. The school's image (in relation to educational, civil and religious authorities, influential people, parents of the students, the press, etc.).

## b. Relations of the Institution with:

- public officials (national, state, local)
- religious authorities (bishop, parochial clergy)
- influential people, especially "friends" and benefactors
- other educational institutions
- religious communities in the area, the families of students
- particular individuals (neighbors, tradesmen)

## c. Statistical Data:

- of persons
- of books, magazines, newspapers

- of correspondence
- of information

d. Publications of the Institutions:

- type of publications
- the number of copies
- feedback on them

e. Other Services Rendered to the Local or Parish Community:

- concerning prayer and worship
- youth movements
- charitable and social works

### 10. The Closing of the Institution

- causes
- process
- destination of assets
- results

Other, more detailed themes, it is true, could be kept in mind in certain monographs. We will mention three for the record:

- The impact on a specific institution of anticlerical politics (the laws about charitable foundations,<sup>51</sup> conflict over schools,<sup>52</sup> legislation against

<sup>51</sup> E.g. Albert Müller, *La querelle des fondations charitables en Belgique* (Brussels, 1909); Paul Wynants, "Les résistances à la loi du 19 décembre 1864 sur les fondations d'enseignement primaire: le cas de Couthuin, 1864-1899," *Annales du Cercle hutois des Sciences et Beaux-Arts* 43 (1989), pp. 199-220; Daniel Dereck, "Le sac du couvent des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes de Jemappes, 31 mai 1857," *Annales du Cercle d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de Saint-Ghislain* 2 (1978), pp. 239-300.

<sup>52</sup> E.g. Gérard Cholvy, "La résistance à la législation sécularisant l'enseignement primaire en France (1879-1893)," *Les résistances spirituelles: Actes de la dixième rencontre d'histoire religieuse tenue à Fontevraud les 2, 3 et 4 octobre 1986* (Angers, 1987), pp. 155-167; Jacques Lory, "La résistance des catholiques belges à la 'loi de malheur,' 1879-1884" *Revue du Nord* 67 (1985), pp. 729-747; L.-M. Tagage, "Onderwijscongregaties en vrijheid van vereniging: Een aspect van de schoolstrijd in Limburg, 1857-1859," *Maaslands melange: Opstellen over Limbrugs*



religious,<sup>53</sup> expulsion or exile of religious,<sup>54</sup> etc.) or intercultural conflicts.<sup>55</sup>

- Relations, at times difficult, between members of the religious congregation and lay personnel.<sup>56</sup>
- The advancement of women by means of the consecrated life, particularly by the exercise of the teaching profession.<sup>57</sup>

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verleden Dr. P. J. H. Ubachs aangeboden bij gelegenheid van zijn 65ste verjaardag, (Maastricht, 1990), pp. 290–303.

<sup>53</sup> E.g. Francis Desramaut, "Émile Combes et les salésiens," *Cahiers Salésiens* no. 1 (Lyons, 1979).

<sup>54</sup> E.g. Yvette Daniel, "Quelques aspects politiques, économiques et sociaux de l'immigration de religieux français en Belgique, 1901–1904," *Contributions à l'histoire économique et sociale* 4 (1966–1967), pp. 49–90; H. M. J. Francort, *Verdreven Franse religieuzen in Limburg, 1880–1940*, doctoral thesis at the Catholic University of Nijmegen (Nijmegen, 1984); Guy Laperrière, "Persécutions et exil: la venue au Québec des congrégations françaises, 1900–1914," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 36 (1982), pp. 389–411; Rita Müllejans, *Klöster im Kulturkampf: Die Ansiedlung katholischer Orden und Kongregationen aus dem Rheinland und ihre Klosterneubauten im belgisch-niederländischen Grenzraum infolge des preussischen Kulturkampfes* (Aix-la-Chapelle, 1992); Marie-Xavier Van Keerberghen, *Ursulines françaises exilées en Belgique au début du XXe siècle sous le Com-bisme* (Tournai, 1981).

<sup>55</sup> E.g. P.-A. Turcotte, *L'enseignement secondaire public des Frères Éducateurs (1920–1979): Utopie et modernité* (Montreal, 1988).

<sup>56</sup> E.g. Paul Wynants, "La collaboration entre laïcs et religieuses enseignantes en Belgique: Esquisse historique (XIXe–XXe siècles)," *Vie Consacrée* 60 (1988), pp. 154–172.

<sup>57</sup> On this theme hotly debated in recent years, see Catriona Clear, "The Limits of Female Autonomy: Nuns in 19th-century Ireland," in Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy, eds., *Studies in Irish Women's History in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Dublin, 1989), pp. 15–50; Marta Danylewycz, *Profession: religieuse. Un choix pour les Québécoises (1840–1920)* (Montreal, 1988); Micheline Dumont, "Une perspective féministe dans l'histoire des congrégations de femmes," *La Société canadienne*, pp. 29–35; Micheline Dumont-Johnson, "Les communautés religieuses et la condition féminine," *Recherches sociographiques* 19 (1978), pp. 79–102; Mary L. Peckham, *Catholic Female Congregations and Religious Change in Ireland, 1770–1870*, doctoral dissertation at the University of Wisconsin (Madison, 1993); Giancarlo Rocca, *Donne religiose: Contributo a una storia della condizione femminile in Italia nei secoli XIX–XX* (Rome, 1993); Annelies Van Heijst, *Zusters, vrouwen van de wereld: Aktieve religieuzen en haar emancipatie* (Amsterdam, 1985); Paul Wynants and Marie-Émilie Hanoteau, "La condition féminine des religieuses de vie active en Belgique francophone (19e–20e siècles)," in Luc Courtois et al., eds., *Femmes des années 80: Un siècle de condition féminine en Belgique (1889–1989)* (Louvain-la-Neuve and Brussels, 1989), pp. 145–150.

The reader will understand: the range of tracks to explore is wide. Each researcher has to limit his scope in view of the time available to him, as well as according to the sources at his disposal.

### 3. The Sources

The present outline has given enough attention to school handbooks and educational journals.<sup>58</sup> Since there are good guidebooks for research in these materials,<sup>59</sup> we will mention no more printed works (books, brochures, pamphlets, etc.), whose usefulness is readily evident. We will stick almost exclusively to archives, trying to shed some light on what they can contribute and to derive some principles for using them critically.<sup>60</sup> We will divide this documentation according to the institutions that have produced it, not pursuing where it may now be preserved, for these places vary from one country to another.<sup>61</sup>

#### A. Congregational Archives

For several decades now, religious institutes have been expending serious effort to preserve, classify, and make inventories of their archives and make them accessible to researchers. In certain countries, they benefit from the support of specialized associations or institutions.<sup>62</sup> In order to help them in this enterprise,

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<sup>58</sup> See the bibliography cited above.

<sup>59</sup> E.g., for works dedicated to religious institutes: Joos P. A. Van Vugt and C. P. Voorvelt, *Kloosters op schrift: Een bibliografie over de orden en congregaties in Nederland in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw*, Publicatie van het Dienstencentrum Kloosterarchieven in Nederland, KDC-Cursor 6 (Nijmegen, 1992). For printed sources on the history of teaching, see Charmasson, pp. 171–186 (“archives imprimées”), as well as Marc Depaepe et al., eds., *Bibliographie de sources pour l'histoire de l'enseignement préscolaire, primaire, normal et spécial en Belgique, 1830–1959* (Ghent, 1991).

<sup>60</sup> Besides the methodological articles of Paul Dudon and Paul Wynants cited in n. 2, and the work done under the editorial direction of Thérèse Charmasson (n. 40), we point out also: Florence Regourd, “Faire l'histoire de l'école,” in Alain Croix and Daniel Guyvarc'h, eds., *Guide d'histoire locale* (Paris, 1990), pp. 258–274, and Dominique Julia, “Les sources de l'histoire de l'éducation et leur exploitation,” *Revue française de pédagogie* no. 27 (April–June 1974), pp. 22–42.

<sup>61</sup> Thus, when similar documents might have been deposited in the archives of the national government, the local government, or the chancery, sources originating in a parish will be treated under the rubric of “parochial archives.”

<sup>62</sup> We refer, in France, to the Groupe de recherches historiques et archivistiques des congrégations féminines (Association for Historical and Archival Research of Women Religious), animated by Charles Molette, which has published an annual *Bulletin* since 1974. French-speaking Belgium has a Groupe des religieuses archivistes de Belgique (Association of Religious Archivists of Belgium), which produced the

some manuals and articles on archival methodology have been published.<sup>63</sup> Guides to documentary collections<sup>64</sup> and inventories<sup>65</sup> intended for historians have also appeared. These last<sup>66</sup>—sometimes seconded by theologians<sup>67</sup>—regularly remind the congregations and the scholarly community of how profitable this archival patrimony may be to them.

How should we conceive of an investigation of documents? For convenience, our plan of action—which proposes some representative categories without pretending to be exhaustive—is organized by the different types of sources, not by the place where they are preserved. We do not distinguish, at this point, documentation stored locally from collections kept by the province or the motherhouse. The outline is broad enough: it encompasses the records destroyed in certain institutions or sometimes having major gaps. In any case, the author of a

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pamphlet *Archives des congrégations religieuses: Document de travail* (Nivelles, 1985). In Flanders there is another association, Kerkelijke Archivarissen (Ecclesiastical Archivists), which collaborates with the Katholiek Documentatie- en Onderzoekscentrum te Leuven (Catholic Documentation and Research Center of Louvain). In this regard, see Jan De Maeyer and Godfried Kwanten, "Archieven van religieuze instituten," *Bibliotheek-en Archiefgids* 68 (1992), no. 3, pp. 9–13. In the Netherlands was organized a Dienstencentrum Kloosterarchieven in Nederland (Central Service for Monastic Archives in the Netherlands), located at the Catholic Documentation Center and at the Catholic University of Nijmegen.

<sup>63</sup> E.g. Charles Molette, "Les archives des congrégations religieuses," *La Gazette des Archives*, new series no. 68 (1st trimester 1970), pp. 26–42; [Godfried Kwanten], *Handleiding voor het beheer en de ontsluiting van de archieven van de religieuze instituten* (Louvain, 1990); E. Boaga, "L'archivio corrente degli Istituti religiosi," *Archiva Ecclesiae* 30–31 (1987–1988), pp. 93–104.

<sup>64</sup> Charles Molette's *Guide des sources de l'histoire des congrégations féminines françaises de vie active* (Paris, 1974) is particularly useful. Sometimes one must be satisfied with introductory sketches. E.g., for Belgium: Viviane de Villermont, "Notes sur les archives des congrégations et ordres religieux féminins installés en Belgique pendant la période contemporaine," *Colloque 'Sources'* (cited in n. 46), pp. 122–128; Ignace Masson, "De archieven van de Belgische broederorganisaties," *ibid.*, pp. 129–133.

<sup>65</sup> E.g. Marguerite Vacher, *Les archives des congrégations françaises de Saint-Joseph*, Publications du DEA d'histoire religieuse (Lyons: Universities of Lyons II, III, and St. Étienne, 1991), or again, K. Leeman, *Inventaris van het generaatsarchief van de Zusters van Liefde van Jezus en Maria*, Kadoc inventarissen 29 (Louvain, 1993).

<sup>66</sup> *Archives. Sources de la connaissance historique des origines: vie religieuse et apostolique. Catalogue de l'exposition réalisée à l'occasion du 4e Congrès national de l'Association des Archivistes de l'Église de France, Paris, 26–28 novembre 1979* (Paris, 1979), as well as Joos P.A. Van Vugt, "Archieven van congregaties: niet alleen voor gedenkboeken," *Erasmusplein* 1 (1990), pp. 6–7.

<sup>67</sup> Noelle Hausman, "Pourquoi et pour quoi conserver les archives?" *Vie Consacrée*, 60 (1988), pp. 183–187.

monograph would like to specify for his readers not only the range of sources he has consulted, but also their condition and degree of preservation, by period and by genre.

(i) When they have been preserved, *annals* or *chronicles* deserve attention. They are the points of departure and arrival for an examination. They consist of accounts of varying length, often unpublished, written either episodically or in a single stretch. When they concern the entire congregation or one of its provinces, these reports have the scope of perpetuating the memory of the beginnings, of recounting the institute's expansion, the evolution of its apostolate, and the progress of its secondary houses. They often contain a historical presentation, more or less detailed, regarding the principal institutions maintained by the priests, brothers, or sisters. When they deal with a particular "outpost," they report events experienced by the local community.

The authors of the annals or chronicles depend on the material they have at hand. The narrations are also based on the recollections of old people and the clergy. They shape the image that the institute or the community intends to present concerning its journey, at some specific point. The past is not only restored; it is also reconstructed, according to the apostolic or apologetic purposes which are invested in those who treat of that past.

The critical usage of such documentation is more difficult than it would seem at first. In due time, by comparison with other sources, annals or chronicles must undergo three successive readings. The first would consider the material facts related, which may be transcribed as brief and simple statements. The second would add to the first treatment some information on the narrator: his selection of data, their interconnections, the outline the narrator follows in composing his account, the logic he brings to it. The third, close in fact to the previous stage, would center on the interpretations suggested to or imposed on the reader: how the protagonists are named, how their behavior is described, the meaning explicitly or implicitly assigned to situations.

The first reading, considering the material facts, reveals the richness of the annals or chronicles. In a few lines the reader discovers a mass of specific input, useful for pursuing his studies. Later he will find much useful material among this information, blurred in the rubbish of details of little interest or extraneous to the subject. In a very short time, the historian thus learns the date of the institution's creation, the names of its founders and benefactors, the identities of the staff and superiors, the organization of the community, its material situation, the arrangement and development of the buildings, the number of classes and teachers, the importance of the academic population, the status of the school, the nature and magnitude of the difficulties encountered, etc. Certain essential details

are found in no other document. This says it all as regards our interest in such accounts.

Contrasting these data with other sources rapidly tempers initial enthusiasm. One then measures the full distance that separates annals and chronicles from a rigorous scholarly work. Sometimes the text is composed in a short time, with the help of heterogeneous materials, used indiscriminately and integrated into the narrative without the least indication of their origin. The misunderstanding of the context, the inaccuracies inherent in oral tradition, the lack of precision in recollections lead to some modifications. Some episodes, known simply from hearsay, are reported as such, without reservations or nuances. Doubtful facts are mingled with well established episodes. The names of persons, dates, and numbers are not always transcribed correctly. Each element must be verified, occasionally completed, or corrected on the basis of more extensive documentation.

When the second reading of the annals and chronicles is taken up at the end of the analyses, it remains instructive. It reveals how the narrator has proceeded deliberately in the selection and treatment of information while carrying out his responsibilities for envisioning the past. That we may understand well, let us bring up a simple example. Many passages are conceived according to a dialectical plan: the "heroic" origins of the institution, the difficulties that worked against it, and then the final victory of the religious, faithful to their original charism. Does such a representation of the past correspond to reality?

This is far from always the case. One often observes when comparing sources that the author of some text has shoved aside facts difficult to integrate into his stereotyped pattern. Those alone survive that contribute to the coherence of the narrative or allow a predetermined progression in it. The connections established between various events are as well marked. A simple temporal juxtaposition, for example, is turned into a principle of causality in order to give credit to the thesis of an unvaried period, dominated by trials or triumph. As it is arranged, the message—intended, let us not forget, for the members of the institute or community—is clear: today, like yesterday, it is necessary to bear courageously the vicissitudes of community life, because through them the souls of the elect are perfected. Other constructions, more subtle and complex, are conceivable. It is important to note them. Before crediting annals or chronicles, it is indispensable to disclose the logic that has governed their production.

The third reading of documents of this type, also, is quite revealing. It allows one to sift with another filter, giving the narrative something essential for its coloration. The narrator lays out the point of view of the institute, which he must hand on to future generations, for the purpose of enlightening and guiding their way of life. Recounting facts has, in some fashion, a "pedagogical" function: it shows what mistakes one is liable to from disobeying superiors, ignoring the rule, or departing from its spirit. The presentation of the past is generally

one-sided, even totally Manichean. The community and its allies incarnate the "forces of Good," their adversaries the "powers of Evil." Between these two poles is no middle way. Mistakes or faults that the institute or the Church might have committed are obscured, underplayed, systematically "excused." Responsibility for conflicts is blamed on the outside world, sometimes described in the most somber terms. Behind the two opposing blocs are lined up those whom the chronicler considers as the "true actors of history": God, who eventually turns his part over to such and such a saint, and Satan, who uses people as his instruments. The lesson thus taught is evident: if one must suffer in this "valley of tears," it is by following the Lord in everything that one will finally attain "celestial joys."

The manipulation to which facts are subjected can be understood in the edifying perspective animating the authors of annals and chronicles. The researcher must consider such influences with a clear mind, before using such materials in a final synthesis. A solid knowledge of the texts will allow him to separate the wheat from the tares. The solidity of the work depends on these critical operations, surely delicate, but inherent in all scholarly enterprises. The same prudence is indispensable when consulting collections of *memoirs* and *biographies* composed for internal use, which present similar characteristics.

(ii) The *rules, constitutions, directories, customaries, regulations of internal order, circular letters, and instructions* of superiors are interesting in different manners. In the first place, they trace the normative framework for regulating the life and activity of the community, for both material matters and spiritual. Certain sources keep to general principles. Others, on the contrary, appertain to details of day-to-day existence. On this basis, one may come to understand the components of the spirituality of the religious, the hierarchical structure of the house, or again, one or another aspect of its daily life. The passages concerning the running of schools are significant. They bring out the type of institutions and students the institute prefers, the spirit in which this education is realized, the prescribed behavior, recommendations or prohibitions to teachers, sometimes even the schedule to be followed in the house. Directives given to local communities also spell out behaviors observable in a specific institution. In case of a conflict over schools or government politics aimed against religious, for example, they allow us to understand the attitude of the religious regarding civil authorities and the details of an eventual withdrawal of the religious.

(iii) Documents concerning *personnel* are presented in various forms, depending on the congregation and the community: lists of assignments, registers of entries, professions, departures, deaths, "rolls" that include all these data together or even individual files. The researcher may find here multiple biographical and



sociographical details on the people whose activity he is studying. By paying attention to the vocations of the town and its neighborhood, one may come to understand the reputation of the community. Complementary data sometimes figure in the *archives of the teachers' college* attached to the motherhouse: diplomas earned by the religious, evaluations of them written up by boards of examiners, data on the lay staff employed in the institution, etc.

(iv) When they have been preserved, *the reports of superiors general, provincials, and local superiors*—manuscript or printed—prove indispensable. They show how the future of an institute or a community is perceived by the authors. Frequently, they contain data on active members, endowments, buildings, closings. In the details of a report, the historian may discover profound reasons for a decision, coming from the pen of the very ones who arrive at the decision or carry it out. Reports on visits done at the institution by general and provincial superiors are particularly instructive: composed objectively by well informed persons, they present a sort of “x-ray” of the community and its works at a specific period, pointing out, under different headings, its strengths and weaknesses, its successes and failures.

(v) *Documents of general, provincial, and local administration* (rough drafts, the secretary's log, minutes of meetings of congregational proceedings, etc.) merit attentive analysis. Produced by the superiors, they inform one about a universal or local situation, as well as about measures taken to deal with it. Certainly, information concerning a single school—its opening, closing, measures concerning personnel, buildings, operation, etc.—is diluted when thrown in with a lot of other information. It is nonetheless vital for understanding a difficulty, no matter what its nature, and explaining the outlook adopted by the community. Nothing prevents these items, too, from being used with a critical spirit, as they ought. Let us take the example of the minutes of meetings of a chapter. One must guard against considering *a priori* the resolutions there recorded as having been unanimously approved and faithfully carried out by all the religious. The state of the institute and of its affiliations is no longer necessarily described with exactitude. Desirous of justifying themselves or of causing a psychological shock, superiors could have embellished or blackened the situation. The distance existing between the summit and the base can be considerable. The excitement that periodically takes hold of the institute's leaders is not always felt in the local communities, where daily life follows a more serene course. Finally, the attention given to certain material problems could give a false impression of avarice. Is it because one must speak of administration with respect to certain processes that considerations of this nature are constantly their main anxieties?

(vi) Let us examine more closely some components of the administrative archives. Numerous institutes have established *registers of foundations*. Such documentation is very rich for those who scrutinize the past of academic institutions. They may discover there the names of people who dealt with superiors for the purpose of obtaining personnel, and the conditions under which the agreement was reached. The terms of negotiation often presage—it has happened—the material or financial problems which will confront the community later on.

(vii) Files concerning *immovable goods* (property titles, abstracts of surveying plans, building projects, works, etc.) or *equipment*, as well as *accounting documents*, deserve a particular mention. They allow the reconstruction of the framework of life. They inform us of the highs and lows that the school has known, the support it benefits from, the relations it maintains with the outside world. The items concerning finances are instructive: do not the entries of receipts and expenses give a glimpse of the main aspects—both lofty and prosaic—of the life of the house?

(viii) Too rarely preserved from destruction, *student rosters* allow a study of “school recruiting” and the school’s reputation: the number of youngsters admitted, the environments from which they came, the family ties that unite them, the conditions of admission, the length of their stay in the school, the frequency of vocations among the alumni, what became of the youths trained there.

(ix) When it has been preserved, which is far from always the case, the *correspondence* of the institute, the province, and the house is a source of first order. Considering a monograph centered on an institution, one ought to distinguish three types of documents: letters sent by superiors general and provincials, those that the members send to general and provincial headquarters, and finally those exchanged with third parties.

(x) *Letters of general and provincial superiors* give specific instructions to the community in the form of circulars. They advise the religious on how they should act, in order to resolve certain problems judged “delicate”: dealings with municipal or educational authorities or the clergy, the attitude to adopt with difficult students, too demanding parents, undisciplined members of the community, postulants. These documents contain, besides, a mass of recommendations that reveal the apostolic plan of the institute, the “condition of religious life” in the past, and the personalities of the teachers. Most of these items are of a confidential character. One can understand that they may not be made available to all researchers.



(xi) *Letters sent to the motherhouse and provincial headquarters* by the religious of a specific institution are, by far, the most interesting documents. They are not exempt from partiality, summary judgments, exaggerations, or errors. One should therefore verify their content by comparing them among themselves and contrasting them with other sources. Nonetheless, whoever has access to this correspondence loses his prejudices toward religious life. No treachery or over-formality in these pages written in haste, with a liberty of tone that reveals the deep ties uniting the members of the same institute, whatever their rank may be. Various problems are approached in them, with a serenity, a lucidity, which manifest the quality of the people. The caricature of the "little brother" with a complex or the frustrated "good sister" gets a serious blow from them. One would try in vain to draw up an exhaustive list of subjects thus treated. Starting from a concrete case,<sup>68</sup> let us be satisfied to propose a summary typology, limiting the outline to the matters raised most often:

## VI. Content of Correspondence Addressed by Some Sisters to Their Motherhouse

### 1. The Community's Internal Affairs

- The sisters' health: their illnesses, the attention given them, the remedies prescribed, the agony of the dying
- Living conditions: the state of buildings, food, produce from the garden and orchard, needs in provisions, clothing, furnishings
- Finances: budgets and accounts of the institution, receipts, expenses, savings, debts, the treatment of the teachers
- Classes: development of the school population, the level of teaching, the quality of the teachers, evaluation reports, teachers' conferences, results of examinations and competitions

The sisters' behavior: relations among members of the community, their relations with the superior, observance of the rule, fulfillment of their duties, participation at common prayer, the intensity of prayer life

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<sup>68</sup> The archives of the Sisters of Providence and of the Immaculate Conception of Champion. See Wynants, *Les Soeurs*, op. cit.

## 2. Dealings with Outsiders

- With the parish clergy: their attitudes, requirements, qualities, and faults
- With the civil authorities: their political inclinations, their behavior toward the sisters and clergy, their decisions in school matters (premises, academic courses, treatment of subject matter, academic program, etc.)
- With benefactors: their character, their financial position, their dispositions toward the community, their personal and family problems
- With the postulants: their aptitudes, their conduct, their spiritual life, their families, their solvency
- With the general population: their conditions of life, their political, social, and religious behavior
- With other religious communities: dealings with superiors of other houses of the institute, rivalries and conflicts with members of other congregations

## 3. Local News

- The results of elections, public demonstrations, strikes and social troubles, the economic situation, the fluctuation of salaries and prices, epidemics, episcopal visits, parish missions, jubilees, feasts, and ceremonies (civil or religious)

## 4. Requests

- Various requests for authorizations
- Requests for advice: on the way to deal with third parties, on how to organize the community and conduct classes, on the attitude to adopt in the face of different problems
- Requests for clarifications: on the academic program, school, inheritance, and fiscal law, the rule, the rights and duties of the sisters toward the parish priests, the school authorities, the civic administration

Not all the elements found in this correspondence can be used. Many do not directly concern the life of the community or its apostolate. Others are too fragmentary to be held onto. Under pain of letting oneself be buried by the mass of information of every sort, it is necessary to cut some of it out, in order to keep the essentials. Such work is not as stimulating as one might imagine at first sight. One has to review tens, indeed hundreds of letters, mostly of a harmless sort, before gleaning from them some scattered data that one later connects. It is only then that one has access to the web of community life, with its joys and sorrows, its great and little aspects, its solemnities and its dullness.

(xii) To complete the information thus amassed and proceed to examining it critically, we must analyze the *items sent by third parties* to members of the institute and the community. This documentation covers again diverse types of sources, which one can distinguish according to their origin and content. Such is the nomenclature which we have established for one female teaching congregation:<sup>69</sup>

## VII. Content of Correspondence Addressed by Third Parties to One Motherhouse

### 1. Items Sent by the Parochial Clergy

- Negotiations preparatory to the founding of a school
- Reports on the situation of the community: finances, buildings, salaries, dealings with outsiders, observance of the rule, attendance to duties, confessions
- Reports on parishioners received into the novitiate
- Reports on the state of the classes: school population, ability of the teachers, quality of the instruction, remarks of evaluators, benefactors, and the general population on these different topics
- Local news: election results, morale of benefactors, of influential persons, of parishioners
- Proposals and recommendations
- Complaints: about the attitude of the sisters, their deficient state of health, their ineptitude at teaching

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<sup>69</sup> This nomenclature could, obviously, be adapted to the situation of a male community.

## 2. Items Communicated by the Chancery

- Authorization to open or close an institution
- Designation of ordinary and extraordinary confessors
- Consecration of the chapel, blessing of the stations of the cross and of the classrooms
- Request for favors for the benefit of the parish or the pastor
- Interventions on the occasion of conflicts with the clergy, benefactors, the municipal government
- Complaints about the behavior of certain sisters

## 3. Items Sent by the Town

- Negotiations preparatory to the opening of a school
- Requests for information about the teachers: name, date of birth, diplomas, previous employment
- Decisions made by the municipal government or other supervisors (national, regional): nominations, salaries, buildings, equipment, school regulations, academic program, evaluations, dismissals, cancellations
- Assessments of the teaching personnel, with appreciations, complaints, protests

## 4. Items Communicated by Benefactors

- Negotiations conducted in view of founding a school or insuring a take-over by the municipality
- Decisions delayed by the financial backer and his family
- Assessments of the conduct and work of the teaching staff

## 5. Letters from Educational Authorities

- Quality of the instruction given and ability of the teachers
- Suggestions for the training of students at the teachers' college

## 6. Items Coming from Local People

- Petitions requesting the return or the departure of a sister
- Staff: appreciations, complaints, anonymous letters

(xiii) Too rarely preserved, *archives of a pedagogical nature*—course descriptions, lesson plans, student notebooks, etc.—speak clearly of the content and teaching methods used in the institution. *Public relations materials* let one capture the image that the school tries to impress upon the public. The *rolls of student confraternities and associations* give information on piety, on spiritual animation in the house. *Obituary letters* and *holy cards*—to be evaluated according to their genre, so that they may be interpreted judiciously<sup>70</sup>—testify to a religious sensitivity, a mentality, an esthetic. Let us not overlook the *periodicals* produced for internal use by the congregation or intended for the alumni: they carry a chain of factual data as well as some revealing indications of morale.

## B. Chancery Archives

I will not suggest here any contribution from the Vatican archives. These would prove useful when writing the history of an institute. It is improbable—except in case of a conflict of major significance—that any sources concerning a single school would be preserved there.<sup>71</sup>

Chancery archives merit inspection. The ways in which they are classified depend on the diocese: in one place the documents are grouped chronologically or by episcopate; in another they are arranged according to subject matter. The limitations of documentary collections worthy of interest is not always evident. Each researcher has to adapt to his own situation.

<sup>70</sup> Jean Pirotte, *Images des vivants et des morts: La vision du monde propagée par l'imagerie de dévotion dans le Namurois, 1840–1965* (Brussels and Louvain-la-Neuve, 1987).

<sup>71</sup> At least when the institution with which one is dealing is not the motherhouse of the congregation.

The nature and the origin of the items one finds in chancery archives is quite diverse: lists of convents and institutions belonging to religious congregations; correspondence from bishops, vicars general, diocesan educational superintendents, and visitors of religious communities; notes sent to the chancery by deans, parish priests, mayors, civil educational authorities, superiors, and teachers; inquiries about the situation of schools, their owners, and their benefactors; files on the teaching of religion and morality; reports on the creation, composition, and financing of school committees; complaints, etc.

Every teaching community established in the diocese is mentioned, here and there, in these archives. Often they contain specific details about the beginnings of the institution, its founders, its charter. They sometimes possess copies of expired contracts between the clergy, benefactors, and the motherhouse. One can find here an abundant correspondence regarding bitter problems that a community encounters over its estate: strained relations with parish priests, inconstancy or impoverishment of financial backers, whims of the influential persons who support the school, hostility on the part of the town officials, incompetence of the teaching staff. These problems sometimes lead to the closing of a school, the technicalities of which may then be comprehended. To this may be added information on the school population, the buildings, teachers' salaries, their contribution to parish life, rivalry with the public school system.

In principle, the very first documentary collections to consult are those concerning the religious communities,<sup>72</sup> teaching, parishes, without forgetting the personal papers of various bishops<sup>73</sup> and the visitations of the deans. It may happen that researchers make genuine discoveries: for instance, to cite four Belgian examples, a series of monographs on parish history edited by the parish priests of one diocese, a set of detailed reports on one period of tension over schools, a detailed inquiry on the real patrimony of religious congregations and communities of the country at the beginning of the century, an inventory of the numerous groups of French religious exiled on account of the Combes laws,<sup>74</sup> etc.

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<sup>72</sup> Figuring here also are items of a limited interest: dispensations, appointments of ordinary and extraordinary confessors, the consecration of a chapel or of stations of the cross, etc. The reports of visitors of religious communities could be gold mines: one discovers in them statistics on school enrollment, information on the community's internal problems, on the attitudes which the clergy, local officials, and the general population show toward it, etc.

<sup>73</sup> Sometimes including pastoral letters, instructions, correspondence of interest.

<sup>74</sup> Translator's note: Émile Combes (1835–1921) was prime minister of France from 1902 to 1905. Fiercely anticlerical, he forced the dissolution of many orders and congregations, the exile of their members—estimated at 30,000 by Roger Aubert—and the confiscation of their property.

### C. Parish Archives

The documentary collections holding our attention concern the school principally. Their potential interest is considerable: on the local level, is not the parish priest or the dean often the animator of the Catholic school system, sometimes also the school's landlord or the provider of its funds, president of the school board, the ecclesiastical evaluator, the eminence grise of the church accounts, the confessor of the brothers or the sisters?

A survey done in Belgium about fifteen years ago of nearly two hundred teaching institutions cruelly deceived me. The researchers found that in many instances locally preserved archives had been blindly destroyed after the deaths of parish priests or at the time of parish consolidations, not to mention disappearances and thefts. Here and there, nevertheless, they uncovered the existence of a *liber memorialis*, remnants of correspondence, a register of minutes of the parish council: these were, my informants were saying, the only documents saved from the collective shipwreck. I made the mistake of taking them at their word.

In fact, the historian who is not local starts off with a heavy handicap. In these places worthy "ecclesiastical bureaucrats," many of them in charge of the churches in question, consider him without question an intruder to be brushed off, even if they have to conceal the documents they possess or minimize their interest to him. Local researchers, on the contrary, are more tenacious. They know the rectory's resources better. When they have formed local religious history associations, responsible for classifying parish archives, they can be connections of capital importance.

I had such an experience, some years later, in the French-speaking part of the diocese of Malines-Brussels. The religious history associations established in this region,<sup>75</sup> under the auspices of the vicariate general, have safeguarded, classified, and inventoried an impressive mass of archives, precious indeed for the study of educational history. Henceforth accessible to researchers, these documentary collections for a decade already have proved much larger and more varied than one could believe. So it is necessary to explore them.

The nature, volume, and contents of the sources thus exhumed vary widely from one parish to another. Besides the inevitable official documents addressed to all institutions, one sometimes finds in them real treasures. These deal with the foundation, expansion, financial support, and closing of schools, personnel, buildings, the school population. Parish archives contain firsthand data on the spiritual animation of schools, as well as on their organized activities. I think in

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<sup>75</sup> We point out one of their publications: Omer Henrivaux, "L'enjeu des archives paroissiales: Quatrième colloque du Chirel B. W., Nivelles, 20, 21 et 22 août 1987," *Revue d'histoire religieuse du Brabant wallon* 2 (1988), no. 2, pp. 35-190.

particular of the vitality of parents' associations in the course of recent decades. I mean likewise those displays, almost rituals, which form the campaigns for recruiting students, lotteries, fund-raising fairs, and other distributions of prizes.

#### D. Archives of the Civil Authorities

By civil authorities I mean the national government and other levels: states, provinces, counties, cities, townships, etc. I include also in this term the official organisms charged with benefits, public assistance, and social aid.

The national archives,<sup>76</sup> those of states, provinces, regions, departments,<sup>77</sup> etc., are of a varying interest, depending on the countries, periods, and status—public, semi-public, or private—of the institution under study. The documentary collections of the ministries of public worship, of the police, and of justice will prove useful where the civil authorities have sought control of religious congregations. Their contribution is, by contrast, quite weak if complete freedom of association has prevailed. The documentary collections of the ministry of public education give out information on official institutions, accredited, recognized, or subsidized by the civil authorities. Sometimes they hold documents concerning private schools, perceived as competitors. In Belgium, for example, a country where religious congregations have played an important role in the communal and approved systems, the "Provincial Administration" or "Province and Teaching" documentary collections<sup>78</sup> are not to be neglected. They provide materials on the school activities of superintendents, towns and departments, official evaluations, teachers. One finds here investigations on the instructional situation, especially in the primary schools, at specific dates. Here likewise are preserved files on essential topics: the creation, recognition, and financial support of schools, staff (nomination, remuneration, evaluation), budgets, buildings, fur-

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<sup>76</sup> Translator's note: Let the reader note that Prof. Wynants is speaking in the European context.

<sup>77</sup> For France, see Charmasson, pp. 67–105 (National Archives) and pp. 107–128 (Departmental Archives). (Translator's note: In France the departments are geographical administrative units into which the whole nation is divided, comparable perhaps to counties within states in the U.S.)

<sup>78</sup> Patricia Van den Eeckhout and Els Witte, *Bronnen voor de studie van de hedendaagse Belgische samenleving* (Anvers–Amsterdam, 1986), pp. 55–70; Els Witte, "Onderschat en verwaarloosd archief van de nieuwste geschiedenis: de bronnen afkomstig van gemeentelijke en provinciale overheden," *Sources de l'histoire des institutions de la Belgique: Actes du colloque de Bruxelles (16–18/IV/1975)* (Brussels, 1977), pp. 541–156; Hilda Coppejans-Desmedt, "Het archief van de provinciebesturen en van de plaatselijke overheden," *ibid.*, pp. 532–540; Roger Petit, *Les archives des administrations provinciales en Belgique*, *Miscellanea archivistica* 14 (Brussels, 1977).



nishings, manuals used in the classroom, scholarships for needy students, implementation of legislation, etc.

The richness of the documentary collections produced by towns and departments needs no demonstration.<sup>79</sup> Consulting them is indispensable to the scrutiny of the history of schools organized, recognized, or subsidized in days past by municipal authorities.<sup>80</sup> By contrast, they furnish hardly any data for the researcher who wishes to shed some light on the development of a private institution. Let us imagine ourselves in the first situation, so that we may examine two questions in turn: which documents to review and what might be found in them?

(i) The range of communal archives available is very extensive. The enumeration here proposed, to start with my own Belgian experience, calls attention to the sources most abundantly preserved or most easily accessible. The population registers and the acts of the civil government provide some information on school personnel native to the locality or active in it. To write a school history, one must also examine the local newspaper, if there is one, the minutes of meetings of the town council and of the assembly of the mayor and his deputies, the budget, the accounts. One can see, further, the annual reports of the advisory council, correspondence exchanged with the superintendent's office, the files concerning buildings, works, public instruction (personnel, furnishings, subsidies, student rolls, etc.). One must not overlook the archives of the welfare offices and of the parish council, particularly if these have contributed toward financing a school, for example by setting up a charity foundation.

(ii) When municipal archives are well preserved, what can be found in them? Materials on the most diverse questions; for example:

- the political, demographic, economic, social, cultural, and ideological situation in the area
- the creation, organization, financing, and attendance of the public schools

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<sup>79</sup> For France, see Charmasson, pp. 129–31. For Belgium, see—besides the articles cited in n. 80—Edmond Tellier, “Que trouve-t-on dans les archives d’une commune? L’exemple d’Ampsin,” *Cahiers de Cléo* no. 59 (1979), pp. 86–95, and Henri Vannop, “Het belang van de hedendaagse gemeentearchieven,” *Ons Heem* 30 (1976), pp. 157–164.

<sup>80</sup> Paul Wynants, *L’apport des archives communales à la connaissance du passé congréganiste: Une étude de cas* (Namur, 1988); idem, “Le repérage des communautés religieuses enseignantes dans les archives communales du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Revue d’histoire religieuse du Brabant wallon* 2 (1988), pp. 221–225.

- the approval, accreditation, financial support of institutions created by private initiative <sup>81</sup>
- the staff: appointment, salary, evaluation, dismissal, recall, living and working conditions (housing, condition of the school buildings and furnishings, taxes imposed by the town)
- relations with the superintendent's office and those who evaluate the schools, indicative of the manner in which the municipality carries out its obligations and the extent to which higher authority respects the autonomy of local government
- school population: social standing, distribution of paying and needy students, extent of illiteracy and child labor, syllabus taught, performance of students in exams
- controversies: clashes between the civil authority and the religious, confrontations concerning the basics of instruction, conflict over schools, suppression of non-recognized communities, <sup>82</sup> sale of their goods, etc.

### E. Some Other Sources

(i) The study of a religious community's patrimony often requires the consultation of *notary*, <sup>83</sup> *land registry*, <sup>84</sup> and even *judicial* <sup>85</sup> *archives*. Since numerous

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<sup>81</sup> Paul Wynants, "Adoption et subordination d'écoles confessionnelles de filles dans les provinces wallonnes: Étude d'un échantillon (1830-1914)," *L'initiative publique des communes en Belgique, 1795-1940: Actes du 12e colloque international du Crédit Communal de Belgique, Spa, 4-7 sept. 1984* 2 (Brussels, 1986), pp. 623-44.

<sup>82</sup> Translator's note: The Combes laws in France provided that religious congregations and individual institutions could obtain government recognition and remain in operation; in practice, it was almost impossible to acquire recognition. Thus the Paris Salesian province sought and was denied approval, and the Salesians were expelled. The Nice province, on the other hand, opted not to apply for recognition and went underground, so to speak, "leading a precarious, clandestine existence," to quote Morand Wirth, *Don Bosco and the Salesians*, trans. David DeBurgh (New Rochelle, 1982), p. 233. Eugenio Ceria treats this unhappy period at length in *Annali della Società Salesiana* 3 (Turin, 1945), ch. 8. See also n. 53 above.

<sup>83</sup> Philippe Jacquet, "L'intérêt historique et l'utilisation des archives notariales," *Le notaire dans la vie namuroise: Catalogue de l'exposition organisée à l'occasion des journées notariales, Namur, 9-19 octobre 1975* (Brussels, 1975), pp. 21-30.

<sup>84</sup> For Belgium, see A.-C. Deruelle, "Le cadastre: Instrument d'analyse économique et sociale des sociétés urbaines au XIXe siècle," *Archives et Bibliothèques de Belgique*, special no. 10 (1973), pp. 187-192; idem, "Reflexions sur l'utilisation des sources cadastrales et notariales. Un exemple: ventes de terrains à Bruxelles en 1865," in *Contributions à l'histoire économique et sociale* 5 (1968-

industrialists and great landowners have promoted a certain ideological current or been patrons of a system of teaching or a specific school, it is interesting to mine the *private papers*<sup>86</sup> and *archives of businesses*.<sup>87</sup>

(ii) The *local and regional press*<sup>88</sup> sometimes dedicates special articles to a school or a religious community. Ordinarily these are accounts of ceremonies organized on the occasion of an opening, a jubilee, the departure of a teacher, or a distribution of prizes. If the correspondent has taken the trouble to inquire carefully, one may glean details worthy of interest from such pieces. It is the same for the polemical articles published during election campaigns or conflicts over schools. The use of newspapers sometimes presents certain inconveniences. Sounding out some passages demands, first of all, some tedious analysis. To use them critically requires a solid knowledge of the sources consulted, an understanding of their leanings, their network of collaborators, their practices for gathering information.

(iii) For the recent past, *oral history*<sup>89</sup> constitutes a resource which one cannot ignore. Without doubt the memories of the persons being questioned—especially if they are aged—lack precision. They misrepresent reality. Their contribution is generally weak when it is matter of establishing a chronology, the unfolding of precise facts. It is more substantial when the objective pursued is to come to understand motives, morale, an atmosphere.

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1969), pp. 137–163; A. Zoete, *De documenten in omloop bij het Belgisch kadaster, 1835–1975*, *Miscellanea archivistica* 21 (Brussels, 1979).

<sup>85</sup> Philippe Godding, “Les archives judiciaires (période contemporaine): point de vue du chercheur,” in *Sources pour l’histoire des institutions*, op. cit., pp. 572–574; idem, “Consultabilité et exploitation scientifique des archives judiciaires en Belgique par l’historien (XIXe–XXe s.),” *Archives et Bibliothèques de Belgique* 49 (1978), pp. 287–306.

<sup>86</sup> For Belgium, see Van den Eeckhout and Witte, pp. 527–553.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., pp. 334–367; Hilda Coppejans–Desmedt, “De bedrijfsarchieven in België,” *Economische Geschiedenis van België: Behandeling van de bronnen en problematiek* (Brussels, 1972), pp. 204–220.

<sup>88</sup> Jacqueline Sainclivier, “La presse,” in Croix and Guyvarc’h (see n. 61), pp. 121–128.

<sup>89</sup> We note two methodological contributions conceived as research projects in local history: Bruno De Wever, “Mondelinge geschiedenis,” in Jan Art, ed., *Hoe schrijf ik de geschiedenis van mijn gemeente?* 1 (Ghent, 1993), pp. 51–78 (with a bibliographical orientation), and Vincent Millot, “L’enquête orale,” in Croix and Guyvarc’h, pp. 129–140. See also Helmut Gaus et al., *Alledaagsheid en mondelinge geschiedenis: Studie en toepassing in het secundair onderwijs*, Bijdragen van het Interfacultair Centrum voor Lerarenopleiding Rijksuniversiteit Gent no. 1 (Ghent, 1983).

(iv) The *vocabulary* used in a religious community could itself constitute a source for the history of their outlook and social relationships. Did not each institute, each province, use some particular expressions without parallel in the Church or society, expressions that form a kind of "jargon"? Such language merits that researchers pay attention to it and even construct glossaries.<sup>90</sup>

(v) Finally, let us not forget the documents and objects preserved by *alumni* or by the *teachers* themselves. Do these persons not still possess school notebooks, textbooks, and book prizes, newsletters, awards, photographs, or other memorabilia? It would be wrong to underestimate these traces of the past.

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My conclusion will be brief. The outline sketched in this contribution is exemplary only. On the one hand, it is inconceivable to present every avenue of research, every stimulating publication, and every source in a few pages. On the other hand, the multiple operations that we have suggested do not necessarily have to be undertaken in the framework of a monograph: each historian has to select, within his proposed range of research, what is of interest to him and above all what the documentation will permit. For the rest, the researcher must decide: a historical inquiry does not go on without hesitations or tentative steps. Whoever is passionate about the past of religious congregations and their schools will experience this more than once.

Whatever the burden and the barrenness of the work at certain stages, such investigations are worth the trouble. Through the journey of a religious community or an educational institution, one feels a whole world come alive, at once united to the rest of society and cut off from it by certain specific traits. This life, precisely, is a link in the chain that forms the history of people and of the Church.

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<sup>90</sup> See, e.g., Ackermans, *op. cit.*, pp. 437–469, and Maria Bouillon, *Vocabulaire des congrégations religieuses féminines à la fin du XIXe siècle*, licentiate dissertation at the Catholic University of Louvain (Louvain, 1975).