The Unofficial Opus Dei FAQ

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 The latest version of this document can be found at: <http://www.mond.at/opus.dei>. Please forgive me any grammatical mistakes or misspellings, as English is not my mother tongue. (But I am always happy if someone tells me where I have made mistakes.) Also note that this is "Work in progress" and I am still adding material and changing things where I found that I was not accurate enough. The next thing planned is a chapter about the "late" Escriva to see if he learned from his faults when he grew older. **Credits:** Dr. Thomas Wilson for language screening and numerous people for sending me their opinions about my pages.

Contents

1 Q: What is Opus Dei?

A: Opus Dei a fundamentalistic sect which operates in a Catholic environment. Officially it is part of the Catholic church and so they claim that they are not a sect. Well, it all depends on how you define the word “sect”. It would be best for you to derive your own opinion by reading this FAQ.

2 Q: Why have I written this FAQ:

A: A friend of mine got sucked into this cult and I had to explain to her why it is a bad thing. When I was searching on the Internet for information I found very little. There is their official home page "http://www.OpusDei.org/", which does not reveal much about their true nature. Since I also want to prevent other people from falling into Opus Dei's traps I have written this document. I am a religious person and a Catholic myself, though I am a critical person and do not accept all the positions of the Church. In my opinion, the Catholic Church has accumulated a lot of dust that covers the joyful message of Jesus. Opus Dei is an organisation that adds to this dust and mistakes the dust for the message in a lot of ways. So by claiming to be Catholic this organisation brings my church into a rather bad light. With this document I aim to help prevent more damage to my Church. It really upsets me when I see what they are teaching in the name of God... The third reason for writing this document is also the hope that it can help them to see where their errors are and in this way help the organisation to change and reform itself into something better.

3 Q: What kind of people are they?

A: Mostly good people. People with good hearts who love God and want to do good things and sacrifice themselves for the work of God. Only/mostly good people are attracted by them. These people are all a bit naive because they make one big mistake: They think that the Opus Dei can not be bad, because the people there are good people and they are all very religious. Therefore, they do not see all the evil ideology which is in the teachings of Josemaria Escriva (founder of Opus Dei). Most of these people are rather intelligent, as the Opus looks for intelligent people because they want to increase their influence on society this way and they can get more money from them. But intelligence does not always go along with a critical mind. Particularly when it comes to religious topics, many people refuse to use their intellect at all.

4 Q: Are we supposed to use our intellect on religious things?

A: Of course we are. While it is true that we can never understand God with our small brains, the Church is always built by mortal humans and they may make mistakes. We are supposed to critically think about what these people say and teach. The Catholic Church has made many bloody mistakes in its history (crusades, burning of witches, the Spanish inquisition, etc ... , etc ... see `<http://spunky.paranoia.com/~wcs/victims.htm>`)), so why should we assume it is perfect now? If we do not use our minds on religious things we might as well follow the sect that committed collective suicide with the California cult when the comet came close to earth because they thought there would be a starship to bring them to God. (Of Course, who knows: maybe they were right and we (Catholic) people are wrong?)

Well, I do believe that God has given us our brain to use it and a conscience to decide right from wrong. In opposition to this the Opus Dei demands us to sacrifice our intellectuality to them and to completely trust their teachings as they claim these teachings are all God's will. Criticism is not wanted and not allowed. They will tell you that this only covers the religious field and that the members are otherwise completely free to do what they want. While I do believe that we should not completely trust humans in religious fields this is belittling. For a man who takes his religious beliefs seriously, almost any decision in life will be covered by his beliefs. So do not sacrifice your rational mind to any human organisation regardless of how holy they seem. You can sacrifice it to God: You may believe in his supernatural power, in miracles, in his infinite love. This is something extremely gratifying and not only may you believe, I think you should. But do not confuse God with the "Opus Dei".

5 Q: What are the positive things in Opus Dei?

A: In short: They have a good spirituality. The "childhood in front of God" and the idea of the necessity to become holy in every day life.

5.1 Q: What is the "childhood in front of God" about?

A: The idea of "childhood in front of God" has been nicely covered in the main book of the founder of Opus Dei (Josemaria Escriva: "The Way"). Unfortunately, like every thing that is meant for God the Opus tries to utilise it for itself. So out of the "childhood in front of God" the "childhood in front of the Opus" is developed - so that their members do not act on their own responsibility, but leave every important question to the Opus, like children do with their parents.

5.2 Q: What about "becoming a saint in every day life"?

A: I think every one here on earth should make this world a better place, so there can never be enough saints. Making the world a better place can especially be done by charity and love. Unfortunately the Opus Dei view is that becoming a Saint is mostly a question of prayer; the topic of charity and love is of secondary importance to the love of God. (If Escriva, the founder of the Opus, had been a person with a little understanding of the Bible he would have known that there is no difference between these two types of love at all:

> *And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'* Matthew 25.45

5.3 Q: What about the development of a deeper spirituality

A: This is also one of their good points. Keeping up a high level of spirituality in our modern world is not an easy task and they do have some good concepts of how to do this.

6 Q: What are the negative things in Opus Dei?

A: In short:

- The Fascist ideology in Escriva's teachings. The fundamentalism. The
- Intolerance towards other religions.
- The dishonesty.
- The danger inherent in the undemocratic structure of blindly following orders.
- The danger inherent in the psychological control they have of their members due to the "weekly chat" where they have to tell the innermost details of their souls to their spiritual leaders.
- The aggressive and manipulative way in which they try to catch new members.
- The evil character of the founder.
- The fact that they do not reveal their true goals and keep a lot of material secret from the public.
- The smug thinking of belonging to an elite.

6.1 Q: What is fascism?

A: A good definition of it can be found at a site dedicated to reminding us of the crimes of the holocaust. (by Chip Berlet) <http://www.remember.org/hist.root.what.html>

An other good definition comes from Umberto Eco (14 features of fascism): <http://www.loop.com/~bramble/fascist.html> I used the one from Chip Berlet. (to compare Escriva's teachings with the (mostly equivalent definition from Eco is left as an exercise to the reader:))

Here are some quotations from that document:

The seeds of fascism, however, were planted in Italy. "Fascism is reaction," said Mussolini, but reaction to what? The reactionary movement following World War I was based on a rejection of the social theories that formed the basis of the 1789 French Revolution, and whose early formulations in this country had a major influence on the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights. . . . Fascists particularly loathed the social theories of the French Revolution and its slogan: "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity."

- Liberty from oppressive government intervention in the daily lives of its citizens, from illicit searches and seizures, from enforced religious values, from intimidation and arrest for dissenters; and liberty to cast a vote in a system in which the majority ruled but the minority retained certain inalienable rights;
- Equality in the sense of civic equality, egalitarianism, the notion that while people differ, they all should stand equal in the eyes of the law;
- Fraternity in the sense of the brotherhood of mankind; that all women and men, the old and the young, the infirm and the healthy, the rich and the poor, share a spark of humanity that must be cherished on a level above that of the law, and that binds us all together in a manner that continuously re-affirms and celebrates life.

This is what fascism as an ideology was reacting against. Its support came primarily from desperate people anxious and angry over their perception that their social and economic position was sinking. Frustrated with the constant risk of chaos, uncertainty and inefficiency implicit in a modern democracy based on these principles, fascism, the antithesis of democracy became an option.. . . Fascism and Nazism as ideologies involve to varying degrees some of the following hallmarks:

- Nationalism and super-patriotism with a sense of historic mission;
- Aggressive militarism even to the extent of glorifying war as good for the national or individual spirit;
- Authoritarian reliance on a leader or elite not constitutionally responsible to an electorate;
- Cult of personality around a charismatic leader;
- Reaction against the values of Modernism, usually with emotional attacks against both liberalism and communism;
- Exhortations for the homogeneous masses of common folk (Volkish in German, Populist in the U.S.) to join voluntarily in a heroic mission - often metaphysical and romanticized in character;
- Dehumanization and scapegoating of the enemy - seeing the enemy as an inferior or subhuman force, perhaps involved in a conspiracy that justifies eradicating them;
- The self image of belonging to a superior form of social organisation beyond socialism, capitalism and democracy;
- Elements of national socialist ideological roots, for example, ostensible support for the industrial working class or farmers; but ultimately, the forging of an alliance with an elite sector of society.
- Abandonment of any consistent ideology in a drive for state power.

6.2 Q: Why are they Fascistic?

A: The term "Fascist" has created some confusion. The ideology of Opus Dei has all the features commonly found in the abstract political category of "fascism" even though it is a very special form of this ideology, since it is mixed with elements of the Christian religion. Reading Escriva's book "The Way" with the above definition of fascism in mind, it is evident that he is the perfect Fascist. Here are some indicators: In #849 he directly states that he is against Voltair's ideas.

Fascist loathe Liberty:

They have this law and order mentality: every thing should be under the control of the leaders. Large chapters in the book are about leadership and blind obedience. I guess Hitler would have loved this book. (read #56 till #80) Of course, they want to control the information you get. Like in #339:

> *You shall not buy books without the advice of an experienced Christian. It is so easy to buy something useless or mischievous. Often people believe they are carrying a book under their arm ... but they only carry a load of mud.* (Josemaria Escriva, The Way, #339)

According to Maria del Carmen Tapia they also read the private mail of their members. And of course they want enforced religious values, too. Some People argue that other spiritual works also recommend obedience as useful but this does not prove it is a good thing. Particularly, the blind obedience (blind because the Opus also controls the information one can get) is dangerous. Normally if a person joins a monastery he will have to submit to some obedience there too: but that obedience usually only concerns "outside" things. You will do the house work they want you to do and you would go to mass regularly ... etc. but you would still be allowed to think independently. The obedience that also concerns mind and thinking is of a much higher level of obedience. Would you want to live in a world where the way you have to think is dictated? Criticising religious things and a free will is not wanted and not allowed: (see e.g. #945, #53, ...)

Fascists loathe Equality:

Escriva teaches that people should not even be equal in the eyes of God!! (#98 priests are more valuable than other people). In many others the need for leadership is expressed (e.g. #60, #61) the whole chapters about leadership all implicitly suggest that there are people who are superior and this is their legitimation of why they should rule over others. (I think there is a teaching where he explicitly says that he does not believe in equality. Can't find it, though ...)

Fascists loathe Fraternity.

One would think that Fraternity is something every person would immediately agree with, but his idea of fraternity is rather limited to the fraternity within the sect. (#458,) Also it is not the humanity that is a motivation for fraternity but a selfish way of being strong within the sect and against THE WORLD. (#460, #462, #55, #924) There seems to be no idea in them that the people outside the sect are equal humans too; they are just potential victims for their "apostolate", enemies, or even "devils". At the moment where he calls someone "devil" he excludes these people from: *"... a spark of humanity that must be cherished on a level above that of the law, and that binds us all together in a manner that continuously re-affirms and celebrates life"* as it is expressed so neatly in the definition of fraternity. Furthermore the characteristics of fascism from the above document have been:

- *Nationalism and super-patriotism with a sense of historic mission.* Nationalism is something they can not really afford as they want to be globally active. Nonetheless they do think a little bit of nationalism is good for being Catholic: read #525. Obviously their goal is not to win power in a country but to win power in the Catholic Church and in the whole world.

  Where fascism in general needs enemies to blame for all the evil Opus Dei has to be very selective. Because of its global nature it can not as easily pick other nations. It would be a dangerous game to openly spread hate against other religions. This would lead easily to contradictions with their own spirituality (one of their good sides) but also to intolerance of other religions, which is not hidden very well (see my chapter about tolerance in my FAQ. In any event, the main enemies they picked are:

  - all people who criticise them.
  - communists.
  - some mysterious Freemason... dark world conspiracy.

- *Glorifying war*: see e.g.:#306 or #311. It is not clear how much the words are metaphors or how much they are meant as written. (They are in a chapter entitled "more from the inner life" (at least this is the name of the chapter in the German edition), but his points often have other meanings than just the one that the chapter would suggest. In Spain there are many Opus members in top positions in the army (from the TAZ/Berlin 15.9.1995). Or read about the Archbishop of El Salvador below.

- *Authoritarian reliance on a leader or elite not constitutionally responsible to an electorate.* There is no democracy within the Opus Dei. The points which emphasise the importance of leadership are numerous.

- *Cult of personality around a charismatic leader.* It may be that he was a man with very bad traits. It is curious that such a person has any status at all. However, in the practical life of the Opus Dei the members had to treat him and is relatives like if he where God himself. (read e.g. Carmen Tapia's book). Members still write letters to him although he is already dead. If you go and ask Opus Dei members, they will tell you that they have a lot of material about Escriva that they do not show to the public because it would destroy the portrait that they have painted of him.

- *Reaction against the values of Modernism, usually with emotional attacks against both liberalism and communism.* e.g. see #849. Communism is not directly mentioned but the anti-communism is everywhere in Opus Dei.

- *Exhortations for the homogeneous masses of common folk (Volkish in German, Populist in the U.S.) to join voluntarily in a heroic mission - often metaphysical and romanticized in character.* (What could be more metaphysical than religion?) Also, he constantly appeals to heroic feelings when he describes how noble it would be to serve the Opus Dei.

- *Dehumanization and scapegoating of the enemy - seeing the enemy as an inferior or subhuman force, perhaps involved in a conspiracy that justifies eradicating them.* (Enemies are devils. or see e.g.: #833 where he constructs the image of Freemasons as a demon-like enemy;)

- *The self image of belonging to a superior form of social organisation beyond socialism, capitalism and democracy.* Most Christians will see their belief not as something that contradicts democracy or socialism. However, by merging all his political statements in his book, Escriva places his beliefs in direct competition with political ideologies. From his Fascist ideas it is clear that he is against socialism. All the points about leadership/obedience show that he does not think all too well of democracy. I think he has no problem with capitalism, if you have enough money you can also buy a little bit of holiness by being a "cooperator" (see their homepage).

- While their ideological root is definitely not directly national socialistic, the *forging of an alliance with an elite of society* is exactly what they do. What " *ostensible support for the industrial working class or farmers*" concerns: They keep them silent and obedient by promising them a better life in heaven with their "sanctification of ordinary work" slogan. This is an abuse of religion.

- *Abandonment of any consistent ideology in a drive for State power.* Fascist ideology is in contradiction with Christianity and so it is not all to easy to combine these two things. The question is: Why did he press all the Fascist ideology into this book at all? Of course if you want to construct a sect than

> the ideology comes handy: The leadership/obedience constellation is especially useful, but then he could have hidden the ideology much better behind religiose explanations. The fact that the ideology is so open, suggests it must have been something very important to Escriva. But to make his sect a success he does not care that it is in contradiction with Christianity. (Maybe he did not see that at the beginning, but I imagine that a lot of people will have talked about that topic with him. If he did not want to agree with a logical argumentation he used his 2+2+God equation (#471). To agree with the arguments of others? Never! (#54) Furthermore: Inconsistencies and contradictions gives you more freedom when you want to use the ideology to direct people into certain directions. When you want to command them, the one thing you can use is this point, and when you want to command them otherwise you use another.

One last point: Like the Nazis' head the "entartete Kunst" (art that did not conform to the official sense of beauty) Escriva also labels modern art as "morbid" and "subjective". (While, of course it is subjective - but it does not hide that - but he implicitly claims that he has the objective truth). Cutting down the freedom of arts is also a sign of Fascistic and totalitarian governments.

Conclusion: As it can be seen there is a lot of Fascism in the book of Escriva and in his sect. The reader who is aware of it will find a lot more in his book and in the behaviour of Opus Dei. The strong focus on leadership in particular, makes this organisation extremely dangerous, and with the mind control of the weekly "confident" talks, their leaders have incredible power over their followers.

6.3 Q: Do they have tolerance towards other religions?

A: No. Other religions are not even mentioned in his book. What we know about Escriva from the Carmen Tapia he called Queen Elizabeth (Head of the Anglican church) "this daemon". In #433 he uses the names of battles fought by Christians against Moslems as a synonym for victory. He also hated other Christian Religions like Protestantism (#505: *... do not trust anything that does not have this sign* (the love for the virgin Mary)) which is a clear affront to the Evangelic Church. He even had hateful words for some Catholic organisations (e.g. the Jesuits). The intolerance in Escriva's attitude is strongly related to the fundamentalism of his teachings. One who concentrates only on the unimportant details of the Catholic beliefs instead of the core of the messages of Jesus can not be tolerant towards other religions which may have the same core but other details.

Have you ever spent a thought on the question of how it is possible that there are so many different religions, and how all people think that their view of God is the right one? For example, are there different Gods for different people, and do Christian people go to Heaven, and are Buddhists reincarnated? Or is it that, only one view of God is the right one, and the other religions have a wrong view? If so, than what happened to the people that lived before Jesus Christ was born? Lots of questions. Once I heard a nice parable which has a nice answer to the problem of explaining why there are different religions. it goes like this:

God is like the sunlight that falls through the window of a church which has many colourful pieces of glass in it. And the light throws spots of colourful lights on the floor of a very very large church. And the small people who stand there they only see one colour, which depends on where they stand. So one sees God as a green light and the other one as a red light while no one sees the whole picture. I do like this parable and I set some store by it. So I think we should not trust anyone who says that God is like **this** and everything else is wrong and bad. And especially not if they are so picky about unimportant details that they do not even allow other Christian religions.

I think we get the best picture of God if we try to move around a bit on the floor of this church so that we see different colours. That is we inform ourselves how other religions see things. For example, when I read "Siddhartha"(Hermann Hesse) I did learn a lot about God, although it is a book about Buddhism.

6.4 Q: What is dangerous in the structure of Opus Dei?

A: The inherent danger lies in the undemocratic structure of the Opus which totally reflects the Fascistic ideology in Escriva's teachings. People have to follow the orders given to them by their leaders without doubting them. Leaders have total control over the people subordinated to them through the weekly talk where they learn everything they need to manipulate followers. So, if the topmost leader decides to do something it will happen. They justify this structure with the excuse that it is all in God's name. But the people in the Opus are all humans and there is always a chance that they might make mistakes. In the dictatorship-like structure of the Opus a mistake or an evil decision by just one person on top of the organisation can have fatal consequences. Their response is something like: "Oh well we have built a dictatorship, but do not be worried: we have such a nice dictator on top who is such a kind person with a good heart ..." Besides: Escriva was not a person with a very good character. And a person who does not admit that he has made a mistake by putting this Fascistic ideology into his work, even after 1945, when the evil of the Fascistic ideology should have become obvious to everyone is definitely not a saint. Well at least, I think that God is NOT a skin head in camouflage and army boots, who likes Fascism.

6.5 Q: Do they abuse the information they get from their members in the weekly talk to manipulate them?

A: Yes. According to Carmen Tapia they do. When she was in the position of a spiritual leader she had to write reports about all the people under her and she sometimes received orders from above on what to tell them.

6.6 Q: What about the "Apostolate"?

A: As in most sects, this is one of the most important things: Finding new members. The necessity of the apostolate is everywhere in Escriva's book, beginning with #1. Especially #614:

> *When doing apostolic work there is no disobedience that would be slight.*

According to people who left the sect there is a strict plan on how to approach new potential members and how to talk to them.

6.7 Q: Is the apostolate a bad thing?

A: No. Not in general. Normally if an idea is good it will spread by itself. People will tell their friends and if the thing makes sense they will spread it further. There should be no need to lay special emphasis on the importance of the apostolic work. Nor is it justifiable to give strict rules on how to use these manipulative techniques to find new members.

6.8 Q: How do they catch new members?

A: The most important instrument is the so-called "vocation trap". They tell people about the non-selfish life of saints and what good things they did and they then make them feel guilty because they do not do that much; with the implicit promise that when they join the Opus Dei they can become little saints in their everyday life. This trap, of course only works for people with good hearts who want to do good. And I do not doubt that most of the people who have been caught by the Opus would have lived a just life and would have become good people and would have done a lot of useful work if they had never met the Opus. Once they have been caught, their good hearts are abused to catch more members instead of performing useful charity. Here is an example of their manipulative way in catching new members: In #563 of "The Way" Escriva writes:

> *Federalise with the guardian angel of the person you want to win for your apostolate - He is always a good "accomplice".*

Imagine a young girl with a good heart who was brought up with a Catholic spirit, and then a person tells her: "Well, this night I will pray to your guardian angel so that he might help you to find the right decision" (leaving no doubt about what the "right" decision is). This girl would feel very bad with the idea in her head that her angel would be terribly sad because she did not decide to join the Opus. From my point of view the abuse of such innocent symbols of our childhood beliefs to bring people under control of an evil ideology, that they do not even understand, is a spiritual rape.

6.9 What is the role of women in the Opus Dei ideology?

A:Let us see how they think about women:

> ... Woman are so sinful and are responsible that we have been dislodged from the garden of eden. And the only possibility for them to lessen their guilt is by subordinating themselves... "*You should be like a carpet where people can step onto*" he explained... (Heard by a lot of people at an information evening of the Opus Dei in Dornbirn Austria. easter 1994. from the book "gottes rechte kirche" by t.m. hofer)

6.10 Q: What kind of person was Josemaria Escriva?

A: He was a priest who founded Opus Dei in the year 1928. He was born into a time of war, so perhaps his idea was to found a kind of "army" for God. (Many aspects of the organisation of the Opus show similarities to the structure of an army: replaceability of every member; uncritical submission to orders, ...). According to Carmen Tapia, he was a person with very bad manners. She writes that he could be nice and kindly at time but also very angry. He spoke derogatorily about women. He often shouted. (The most extreme example is In her book. Carmen Tapia writes: when he was angry at a woman (G.) who secretly brought her (Tapia) mail he shouted:

> *"And she there (G.) has to be spanked throughout. Draw up her skirts, tear down her panties and give it to her in the ass!! In the Ass!! Until she talks. MAKE HER TALK!!!"* (translated from the German edition of her book to English)

I think this quote fits well with the sexual obsessions that shine through a lot of statements in his book. Escriva did not live the ascetic live of a saint but always liked delicious dining in his palace-like headquarters in Rome (A building with 24 chapels!). To me he seems to have been a person of medium intelligence who always wanted to be a philosopher. Perhaps he got hurt in discussions with intellectual people and than he tried to compensate for his lack of intelligence with concentration on his religious beliefs, which allowed him to polish up his self esteem again in such a way that he could look down on the people who did not share those beliefs. I am not a psychologist, but this would explain some of his teachings (e.g. the one with: 2+2 = 4, 2+2+God=?). From what Carmen Tapia tells he was very proud. Cite: "... I have met a lot of bishops and different Popes but I am the only founder ...". Also the value intelligence had for him can be seen in what he told them once: "Do not become so stupid as those nuns ... (and he was trying to making a dumb face)"

Given all the Fascist ideology in "The Way", it will not come as a surprise to you to hear that he even had sympathy for Hitler:

> Wladimir Felzmann, an ex-Opus Dei member tells about a talk with Escriva: after he (Escriva) insisted that with Hitler's help the Franco Government has saved Christianity from Communism he added: "*Hitler against the Jews, Hitler against the Slavs, this means Hitler against communism*"

To be fair: When judging about Senior Escriva we have to consider that he was **a child of his time**. And a lot of people at the time held that kind of ideology and those ideas; for a lot of people they might have been quite normal. However, this does not make his ideology any better and does not give any justification for mixing it with his religious teachings.

What an unbelievable arrogance of this man that he named his own work "The Work of God".

6.11 Q: What kind of person is their current chief Javier Echevarria?

A: It looks as if Echevarria is a "worthy" successor to Escriva. One day he was quoted as saying that if you are handicapped since birth this is probably because your parents did some sinful sexual practices. Even though, they later denied that statement and claimed that it has only been said because he was not used to the Italian language, this statement throws a good spotlight on the spiritual attitudes of this person.

6.12 Q: Are they honest and open?

A: No. They are not open. Secrecy is an important principle within the Opus (compare "The Way"). They do not even present all the teachings of Escriva to the public. They have secret books which are only used for internal teachings, etc ... So if even the book which is supposed to be an advertisement for the Opus is full of these negative things, what do you expect is in the internal books? Why don't they present them to the public? Here 2 examples from the "Way" where Senior Escriva asks people to be dishonest:

> #643: *do not reveal the secrets of your apostolate: don't you see that the world is full of selfish not-understanding?*

> #655: *I can not stop to tell you about the importance of "discretion". maybe it is not the spire of your weapon but at least it is the handle of it.*

An entire chapter is dedicated to this kind of dishonesty. While this does not directly ask people to tell lies it asks them to deliberately hold back the truth. According to Carmen Tapia, lies have a good tradition within the Opus. When she had to work in the print office of the Opus, they had to call back papers they had printed out and change them afterwards to eliminate traces of certain persons the Opus wanted to get rid of. So they can afterwards claim: "There is nothing about that in the archives". Most of all they revised the statutes of the Opus Dei after they had been approved by the Pope!!!

7 Q: What attracts people to Opus Dei?

A: As the people within Opus Dei are mostly nice people with good hearts, people do not suspect that this organization might be bad at all. They will be attracted by the positive sides of their spiritual beliefs (see above). Furthermore, people with good hearts like the idea of sacrificing themselves because they want to do good. The 'childhood in front of God" idea especially will be attractive for many people, because this is something most people want deep down inside them: to become children again and give away all the burdens and responsibilities of their every day life. This is exactly what the Opus offers: Not only to become a child in front of God but to become a child in front of the Opus. To blindly follow their advice and rules and to give away responsibility by discussing everything with the spiritual leader.

This is also how most sects work: They offer a clear and simple frame of values in a world that becomes more complex every day - too complex for many people. Just pray a lot, tell everything to your spiritual leader, wear the flagellation belt for 2 or 3 hours a day, and donate some money to us, then you are on your way to becoming a saint. Easy and simple. This is especially attractive for persons in positions with high moral responsibility (lawyers, doctors, etc ...). They do not even have to give up their profession, nor do they have to be afraid that they may be fired because of Opus Dei - because they are supposed to keep that a secret. In my opinion we are not supposed to give away responsibility. God has given us our mind and our conscience to use it - even if this is the hard way.

Furthermore there also might be people who are attracted by the negative sides in Opus Dei. e.g.: The proud thinking of being something better than the average person who doesn't belong to the Opus. Last, but not least, as the Fascistic ideology in Escriva's book is so dominant, it can not be ruled out there are also some people in the organization who are especially attracted by Fascism.

8 Q: What kind of person do they select for their apostolate?

A: They want intelligent people with influence on society, most of all. They usually select people whom they think might be easy to convert. That is, they select people with a Catholic background, especially people who might be searching for social contact, that is: e.g.: exchange students, people who often go to church alone, ..., etc.. Also it is usually not explicitly expressed but they seem to search for physically attractive people, as it is more easy for them to convince new victims of the Opus. When Thomas M. Hofer ("Gottes Rechte Kirche" page 98) asked the Public Relations Officer for Opus Dei in Austria (Martin Kugler) he caught him in a lie: Kugler said: "From a statistically point of view, a majority of Opus Dei members fall into the group of housewives. We do not target our advertising towards rich and intellectual persons". But than he had to admit that in Austria (as in most other countries) more than 50% of the members have academic education. In contradiction to the lies that they spread on their web pages, internal Opus Dei papers confirm that their main target are the important people of society. Of course they only see that as an intermediate step: The final goal is of course the total control over all people, but the strategy to reach that targets people with much influence first.

9 Q: How can an organization that is built of mostly good people be a bad thing at all?

A: First: Even a single person with the best intentions can do wrong things if she/he is not informed well or do not use their mind to think about the consequences that their actions might have. But within the Opus people are not supposed to use their minds and the information they get is filtered and influenced by the Opus. (They are not allowed to read any book. They have indoctrination courses there, etc ...) So the good people within the Opus might still think that they are doing positive things and that they are becoming saints, while they are already losing their understanding of what it is to live in the real world.

Second: An organization is more than the sum of its parts. The difference is the additional structure of the organization. And the structure of Opus Dei is a hierarchical, dictatorship-like structure. Within a dictatorship-like structure a single unscrupulous person on top can corrupt the whole organization. And the founder's presence is still present through the rules he gave this organization. As we have seen he was a person of questionable character. He might have believed himself, that he was doing good work for God. But that does not make the whole thing any better.

10 Q: What is their position within the Catholic Church?

A: I believe that most of the ordinary people in the Catholic Church have a good understanding of the message of Jesus. They understand that God means infinite love and that most of the rules of the Catholic Church are not meant to be taken too seriously. They will like the attractive points of the Opus but they will have little or no understanding of the Fascist ideology and the fundamentalism of the Opus. In opposition, many officials of the church like the idea of having uncritical sheep that can be easily governed and directed.

Our current pope, John Paul II, is especially a friend of Opus Dei. He made the Opus a "personal prelature" in 1982 and he beatified Escriva in 1992 ... So either the Opus has already gained so much control over the Catholic Church that they could establish a conservative Pope that they like and influence the advisors around the Pope, or the Pope just did not see all the bad things in the Opus because he is a very spiritual person. However: A lot of people criticised the Catholic Church because they did not speak up against the Nazi government. So the beatification of the Fascist Escriva by the Pope was a very bad signal to the public - instead of asking the victims of the holocaust for forgiveness a Fascist gets beatified. This again just shows that the Pope is not entirely infallible. In any case: They are in no way representative for the Catholic Church of today. See here `<http://www.we-are-church.org/>` to find out what the average Catholic of today believes.

10.1 Q: Are they a young and innovative part of the Church?

A: No. Absolutely not. They are extremely conservative. Within the Opus Dei changes are not allowed, as this would violate what they call "The Work's Esprit". They never change. The most innovative change they had since their foundation is that now woman are allowed to wear trousers! :) They where not even innovative when they where founded. What they present as new ideas: "That even lay people are called to a live of holiness" are not new but already in the teachings of Jesus. Contrary to "Vatican II" they still claim that they have the absolute truth and only they know what is good or bad. Lay people have no right to decide about religious things, but that we all have to blindly follow their orders. So their spirit is not new but the contrary: They want a Church of authority and of Doctrines instead of a Church of brotherhood of free people only responsible to their own conscience. The real youth of the Church today are the people who want to bring more democracy to the Church and spread the spirit of the Second Vatican Council.

10.2 Q: What is their position towards the "Vatican II" Council?

A: While they pick some things out of the text of the Council and also claim that they have contributed to Vatican II most of the spirit of the Council is totally contrarily to the teachings of Escriva. (Some points however clearly reveal their unholy influence on the text) Here are some snippets from the Text of the Council. (`<http://www.rc.net/rcchurch/vatican2/index.html>`) e.g.:

- Tolerance towards other religions:

  > *In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions. In her tasks of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship. (...)*

  This is in total contradiction with the intolerance found in Escriva's teachings.

- Charity:

> *... For this reason, love for God and neighbour is the first and greatest commandment. Sacred Scripture, however, teaches us that the love of God cannot be separated from love of neighbour: "If there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself... Love therefore is the fulfilment of the Law" (Rom. 13:9-10; cf. 1 John 4:20). To men growing daily more dependent on one another, and to a world becoming more unified every day, this truth proves to be of paramount importance. ...*

Again this is in contrast to Escriva's teaching which separates the love of God and charity. Moreover:

> *Therefore, although rightful differences exist between men, the equal dignity of persons demands that a more humane and just condition of life be brought about. Excessive economic and social differences between the members of the one human family or population groups cause scandal, and militate against social justice, equity, the dignity of the human person, as well as social and international peace.*

We see, the Christian Social teaching of the Vatican is indicative of a democratic and, even, some may say, socialist/ egalitarian perspective, in an extreme, contrary to Escriva's Fascistic ideas. Usually Opus Dei members denounce anybody who cares to much for social needs as being a Marxist.

- Religious Freedom:

> *A sense of the dignity of the human person has been impressing itself more and more deeply on the consciousness of contemporary man, and the demand is increasingly made that men should act on their own judgement, enjoying and making use of a responsible freedom, not driven by coercion but motivated by a sense of duty. (...) However, men cannot discharge these obligations in a manner in keeping with their own nature unless they enjoy immunity from external coercion as well as psychological freedom.*

Compare this with Escriva's talk about Obedience or take a look at the psychological manipulations they use.

10.3 They claim to be faithful to the Pope and the Catholic Church. Does that mean they can not be dangerous?

A: there are 2 points to keep in mind here:

1.) Maybe they follow the church. At least they claim to. But what if they manage to further increase their already great influence on the Church and the Pope and can infiltrate the whole Church with their evil ideology? What if they drive it towards more intolerance? What if a person like mister McCloskey makes the policy then? People are already afraid that their influence is already so great that the next Pope could be an Opus Dei member.

2.) I doubt that they would take "following the Church" all too seriously if we get a liberal Pope. Furthermore Carmen Tapia writes in her book that when she worked at the printing office of Opus Dei they had to change the printing plates with the text of the statutes of Opus Dei that had been signed by the Pope after they had been signed... and she also tells how mister Escriva often had angry words for the Pope. I am not sure if they would still falsify documents today. But a bit of misrepresentation of text as mister McCloskey does it with the Vatican II texts also helps them a lot..

11 Q: What is their ideal picture of a person?

A: If you look into Escriva's book you will find the kind of person that they want to make out of people:

- He wants you to be become a fanatist who does not make concessions. A Warrior who blindly fights, instead of peacefully discussing with others. (#54, #393, #396)
- Blind obedience. (e.g.: #62, #614), never think by yourself (#777, #856).
- Feeling guilty for sexuality (#130). People who feel guilt are easy to control.
- Heartless. You should lock your heart behind 7 gates (#150, #161, #188) and your heart should only belong to God, but of course he means that you should give it to the Opus. (fulfilment of duty #162). Best of all, in a sense, you should remove your heart totally (#166). "Fortunately" he not only demands heartlessness but also gives you a way to reach it: killing your emotions and your senses (#181, #188)
- Without scruples! (#258, ff) (Do not ask me what this should have to do with becoming a saint - I have no idea. Being without scruples is like not listening to your conscience. Maybe this is just a mistake in the translation from the Spanish to the German version of the book - but it is the heading of a whole chapter. Maybe someone can enlighten me about that a bit.)
- Selfishly searching for your redemption and your own happiness. (#297)
- Beautiful, intelligent and looking down on others like they are only animals (#367).
- You should be a perfect instrument. A tool to be used by them. (e.g. #484)
- Secretly working behind peoples backs. (see the chapter about "Discretion" e.g.: #643)

12 Q: What about their influence on our society?

A: Besides direct influence in politics via people that are under their control (look here some names: `<http://www.cath4choice.org/pubpolicy.html>`) they try to infiltrate the mass media. In the year 1979 the chief of the Opus Dei of that time (Portillio) gave some statistical material to the Vatican. Due to an indiscretion the secret information become public. According to the data from Portillio the Opus Dei had members in: 479 universities and higher schools, 604 newspapers and other periodicals, 52 radio and tv stations, 38 news and advertisement agencies and 12 movie productions companies. (according to T. M. Hofer / P. Hertel) This was in 1979. Today they even try to infiltrate public web chat boards with their agents.

12.1 Q: Are they involved in politics?

A: Yes. A lot of Opus Dei members are involved in politics. Right wing politics of course. They try to get influence within institutions of the European Union, and even high members of FBI and CIA are known to have good?????? Here are some examples:

Peru:

From: `<http://users.cybercity.dk/~ccc17427/newsflash.htm>`

> *Cipriani (Roman Catholic Bishop), a member of the conservative Opus Dei movement in the Roman Catholic church, is one of Fujimori's closest friends and one of the few who have had access to him during the crisis, sources said. One of the hostages, Peruvian Foreign Minister Francisco Tudela, is also close to Opus Dei. ...*[...]
>
> *What about the relationship between the military and the Fujimori regime?*
>
> *The support which both have given to one another in the past has only served to act as a cover for state terrorism and corruption. The government and high-ranking military officials are very corrupt...*

From: `<http://www.blythe.org/peru-pcp/intro/intro1.htm>`

> *In some regions of the jungle and in Ayacucho, for example, there are priests that train and lead the Army's paramilitary rondas. Among these paramilitary priests the most notorious is the archbishop of Huamanga "Cristiani" of Opus Dei, and the infamous U.S. born killer-priest known as "father Mariano".*

Argentina:

From: `<http://www.ort.org/communit/jpr/AWRweb/Americas/argentina.htm>`

> *Another former ultra-nationalist in office was Rodolfo Barra, who became Menem's public works secretary in 1989. Barra also served as a supreme court judge from December 1993 to June 1994, and was minister of justice for the next two years. As a secondary school student in the 1960s, Barra joined the Union Nacional de Estudiantes Secundarios (UNES, National Union of Secondary Students), the youth branch of the right-wing Catholic organization Tacuara, and was in charge of UNES publications, according to the Buenos Aires weekly news magazine Noticias (22 and 29 June 1996). More recently, Barra has been identified with Opus Dei, a conservative Catholic organization founded in Spain, which has no extremist connections. Yet by June 1996, when he proclaimed his repentance regarding his Nazi youth, he had lost the confidence of a section of Argentine society.*

El Salvador:

From: `<http://www.unix-ag.uni-siegen.de/aew/salvador.htm>` and `<http://www.latino.com/news/Pope0204.html>` about Archbishop Fernando Saenz Lacalle:

> *... The next paragraph contained a short report from El Salvador: there the Opus Dei Archbishop has assumed the title Brigadier General, in an army that has one of the most brutal track-records in recent history. Now, it transpires, he has banned public observances to commemorate the martyrdom of Archbishop Oscar Romero, felled in 1980 while celebrating Mass - executed on the orders of the military whose insignia the current Archbishop so proudly sports*

Romero was a man in the middle: he had both affection for the left and the right wing sides of the church. (The Official Opus Dei site even uses him to advertise: `<http://www.OpusDei.org/romero.htm>`).

From `<http://www.rdrop.com/users/bortec/wip/elsal.html>`

> *Archbishop Oscar Romero had been a conservative until he was converted by the poor and the military attacks on clergy working with the poor.*

Spain:

From: `<http://rs6.loc.gov/frd/cs/estoc.html>`

> *During the late 1950s and the 1960s, Opus Dei members came to control the economic ministries, and they occupied other important cabinet posts as well. This was in keeping with the organization's aim of influencing the development of society indirectly. Opus Dei recruited its members from among the brightest students, which encouraged a sense of elitism and clannishness. Because of this clannishness and the secrecy that surrounded the organization, some critics termed it the "Holy Mafia."*

13 Q: What about the Opus Dei in Austria?

A: The bishop of Vorarlberg (Klaus Kueng) is known to be an Opus Dei member. The bishop of lower Austria (Kurt Krenn) is known to be a friend of the Opus and has ranged many members around him. He also publicly recommends voting for a right wing political party which spreads hate against immigrants. This should not come as a surprise if you look at the Fascism within Opus Dei. (Interestingly: The Pope excommunicated a priest in South America because he got involved in politics - but this was left wing politics: He wanted to help people. It seems the Pope is a little bit blind on one eye.)

A good overview about the Opus Dei and other right wing sects within the Catholic Church in Austria can be found in the book“Gottes Rechte Kirche” by Thomas M. Hofer.

14 Q: Are they harming anyone?

A:

- First there are the people they indoctrinate. They steal the time and money of these people. They also steal it from society as these people with their good hearts could otherwise be useful members of society. Of course, one could argue that if people are happy with their artificial world of self-flagellation why should they not be? The problem here is the psychological manipulation. Furthermore, as people should not search for their happiness in a selfish way, this organization brings those people away from God!
- Even more harm is done to the families and friends of the people of their victims. Incredible pain that is caused by the knowledge that the person they love is, by means of Opus Dei’s manipulative indoctrination, being transformed into a puppet who blindly follows their orders. While I had to suffer from the pain for a few weeks and it was the most painful experience I ever had, there are thousands of mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters and friends out there who have to suffer from that pain for their entire life!

14.1 Q: Do they brainwash?

A: That depends on where you draw the line between heavy indoctrination and brainwashing. The treatment that Carmen Tapia had to undergo is, from my point of view, definitely a kind of brainwashing. We can also find some points in Escriva’s book that show that he finds nothing wrong with manipulating people: (#851, but especially: #488 - if the tools (the people) do not work as intended - perform surgical therapy - (what ever that means)). For a good introduction on what the term “brainwashing” means and how that usually works read the article form Robert J. Lifon: `<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/national/longterm/cult/misc/lifton.htm>` *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of “Brainwashing” in China.* Even though the position of Opus Dei is exactly on the other side of political extremism the methods of “thought reform” they seem to use on their members is very similar to those that Dr. Lifton has studied.

15 Q: I am thinking about becoming a member. Should I?

A: No. Given all the evil things in Opus Dei it is very clear to me that this Organization can not have anything to do with God at all. Of course there are some positive points in it, but if it were “The Work of God” there would not be so many evil things in it. It is not the work of God but the work of men and as such it has errors and in this case some very serious ones, too. Of course most people there are nice and have good hearts, but that does make Fascism a good thing. There are so many real ways you may serve God in love and charity for our society, and there are a lot of spiritual people outside the Opus Dei too. Just walk through the world with open eyes and always judge with your own mind. Never give others the right to judge for you. Read this FAQ and think about it, if it makes sense or not. Search a bit on the Internet. (Try the search term "Opus Dei" in conjunction with things like "right wing", "Fascism", etc...)

Furthermore: You might think that you can do with your life what ever you want. But this only holds if you do not hurt anyone else, and exactly here is the problem: You will probably have parents and friends who love you and they will have to suffer terribly if they have to fear that you get transformed into a puppet on a string. So even if you think that becoming a puppet and shaking of all responsibility can make you more happy you should not act that selfishly. Even if you sit there and pray all day long for your whole life you will never be able to make up for the pain that you have caused your family and friends. (Remember the 10 commandments?). If you think about not telling them to save them from pain - you are acting even worse: This is like telling a lie. Furthermore, by keeping that a secret you would become entangled into further lies. So the best thing would be, if you leave the Opus immediately before they have indoctrinated you so much, that you do not even realize the suffering you cause.

15.1 Q: They tell me I can leave the Opus Dei at any time?

A: Yes, you can leave them but they will indoctrinate you not to leave and they tell people that they can not become happy again after they leave. And I think this is true: After all the indoctrination one has received people are not functioning too well after they have left. Often they need many years to recover. So do not risk to join them, and if you already are a member then you would be better to leave them today than tomorrow. No one needs to feel guilty for leaving a Fascist sect and there are 1000 and 1 possibilities where you can really serve God outside the Sect. You do not need to throw away the child with the bath: You can keep your spirituality and your believe in God, but do it in on your own responsibility again and not as their puppet. We are not always supposed to go the easy way, you know... :)

16 Q: What should be changed within the Opus Dei?

A: As I have said: I hope these pages can also serve as an inspiration for the organization to change. This document lists a lot of their problems and I think it should be fairly obvious what should be changed. We can hope that they withstand the temptation to make some "cosmetic" improvements on the surface while not dealing with the root of the problem: i.e. the teachings of Escriva. Here are some thoughts on how a reformed Opus Dei could appear:

- No more secrecy - instead people would be encouraged to be open and honest wherever they go.
- Encouragement of individual and critical thinking on all (worldly and religious) matters. Encouragement of individual responsibility. No censorship of books, etc .. anymore.
- Democratic structure.
- More focus on charity and love for the neighbour instead of political indoctrination.

I guess when they start with these all other problems will go away too. The basis of all is of course a critical position concerning some of the teachings of Escriva.

16.1 Q: Is there some change?

The official Opus Dei web site now has a page with *"reflections on Charity by the founder"* on their front, which is not that bad at all and is part of some of Mister Escriva's late writings. Even though the document is in contradiction with "the Way", the book that still forms the basis of the Opus Dei, and recent writings of the Opus Dei priest McCloskey `<http://www.mond.at/opus.dei/mccloskey.html>`, this may well be the indication of a shift in attitude of the organization. We can only hope that this is really the case and that this is not merely a cosmetic trick to present them in a good light to the public. In any event, this is only the start of a fundamental change, which may finally reach the point where they can critically deal with the particularly horrible teachings of Mister Escriva. On the other hand when we can still read *"Msgr. Escriva de Balaguer has written something more than a **masterpiece**; he has written straight from the heart, and straight to the heart go these short paragraphs..."* in their recension of the "Way", then this might seem a bit too optimistic. On the other hand people have reported that the structure of the Opus Dei is not as rigid as it was some 20 years before.

17 Q: My friend/child has been caught by them. What can I do?

A: The problem is: When you get to know that he/she is in the Opus Dei, it might already be too late, as they normally ask people to keep that a secret. So when they allow him/her to tell you than they think that the person is already under their control. Still, you might have a good chance to bring her back to real life. What you can do is:

- Show this FAQ document to him/her. Discuss it with him/her. Ask him/her to read "The Way" carefully. Ask them to read Carmen Tapia's Book.
- Show your concern and show your love for him/her.
- Do not do anything behind the back of him/her. Be open and honest to him/her. It does not help if you use the same methods as the sect.
- Ask him/her to consider to leave the Opus for about a year and then decide about going back or not, without their influence.
- Ask them to talk about the matter with a priest that is not a member of the Opus.
- Show them that there are many ways where he/she can really serve God. There are a lot of good Orders that believe in love and charity. And one does not even have to be a member of an Order. One can also find God in everyday life - without the Fascist mind control of this sect.
- If you are a religious person: Pray for him/her. And pray for all the souls that have been abused by the Opus and the souls of the abusers.

18 Q: What other sources of information about Opus Dei are available?

A: When I tried to find information about them on the net, the only useful things I found were their official home page `<http://www.OpusDei.org>` and the transcript of a Finnish TV documentation: `<http://www.mond.at/opus.dei/opusbold.html>` (The Pope's Bold and Beautiful). In the meantime a lot of new Opus Dei sites are on the web. I maintain a collection of links on my unofficial home page: `<http://www.mond.at/opus.dei>`

Their Official homepage

While their official homepage does not reveal much about them it should be obvious for a religious person that this organization can not have much to do with God. It talks about "govern" and holiness but does not talk about love or charity. A nice part is where they describe the role of the so-called "cooperators":

> *Cooperators are those who, without being faithful of the Prelature, collaborate through their prayer (if they are believers), their financial contributions, or their work. They benefit from the prayers of the faithful of Opus Dei on their behalf. Many non-Catholics and non-Christians, attracted by the spirit of Opus Dei, have become cooperators.*

Do these people really believe that holiness could be bought with money?! Also they try to present themselves as a young and innovative part of the church, while in reality they are extremely conservative and their ideas date back to the stone age. All in all their web Pages are just there to present themselves in a good light so as not to scare the parents of the victims that got sucked into their cobweb.

The Finnish TV documentation

<http://www.modn.at/opus.dei/opusbold.html> The Finnish TV documentation gives a much better view in what this organization is, if you have not heard about them yet. There you can get the view from both people who like Opus Dei and those how have left these organization. (also see: <http://www.clinet.fi/~andelin/octopus.htm>)

The Book of Maria del Carmen Tapia

She was one of the first (50) women who were members of this sect and she had a rather high position and spent a lot of time of time in Rome as a kind of secretary to Mr. Escriva.

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ISBN=0826409377/9757-9712260-452596>
<http://www.mil-libros.com.mx/opus.htm> <http://www.continuum-books.com/womsd6.htm>
<http://www.bookbuyer.com/aisles/titles/028889.htm> <http://washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/books/reviews/beyondthethreshold.htm>

The book: "Gottes Rechte Kirche" by Thomas M. Hofer:

A good book with lots of material about Opus Dei and other right wing sects within the Catholic Church, with a special focus on the situation in Austria.

Inside the Secret World of Opus Dei

An interesting private article: <http://users.skynet.be/sky73819/opusdei.html>

ODAN Opus Dei Awareness Network, Inc.

Also I have not looked at their information packets yet it sounds like they have valuable information about Opus Dei. Here is what they write about themselves:

> *The Opus Dei Awareness Network, Inc. (ODAN) is a tax-exempt, non-profit organization in operation since 1991 which strives to provide education, outreach and support to those adversely impacted by Opus Dei.They publish a newsletter several times a year, and distribute an information packet which includes articles about Opus Dei (many written by former members), past issues of the ODAN newsletter, as well as the "Parents' Guide to Opus Dei," by J.J.M. Garvey, a booklet which compares Opus Dei to the Vatican's directive on cults and sects.*
>
> *The ODAN newsletter in the past has featured the following: 1) Synopses of news pertaining to Opus Dei from both the secular and religious press; 2) Information sheets, detailing some aspect of Opus Dei life; 3) Articles on a variety of topics written by people affected by Opus Dei; 4) Book, video and tape reviews published in order to educate ODAN's readers in mind control issues or an author's perspective on Opus Dei; 5) and much more. 413-499-7168; fax*

413-499-7860. The suggested donation for the information packet is $15 ($20 Foreign); suggested donation for the newsletter is also $15 ($20 Foreign).

The ODAN homepage is here: `<http://www.odan.org/>`

McCloskey's Articles

Father McCloskey is a priest of the Opus Dei. With his articles he purports to prove that all the ideology we find in Escriva's books live in the Opus Dei of today. I have made a page where I have collected the hard core stuff from his articles. `<http://www.mond.at/opus.dei/mccloskey.html>`

Escriva's Book

`<http://www.opusdei.org/books.htm>`

Last but not least: The most important source of information is Escriva's book (The Way/Camino/Der Weg/). It contains 999 paragraphs that sound a bit like "wise" sayings on a calendar. From my point of view, though, most of these lines lack the philosophical wisdom that can be found in typical calendar cites. In his 999 points he has mixed cites from the Bible and his interpretation of it with personal ideas and ideology that have nothing to do with the Bible and with God at all. And this is where the danger is. A reader with a good heart and a strong but uncritical belief in God, who is not aware of this mixture might think the ideology he mixed into the words of the Bible are also a part of God.

Because this book is organised in this small points, the author does not need a logical flow of argumentation but can present his ideas in the form of "Axiomatic truth". This is also a useful technique for brain washing: You "flood" the victim with information that is mutually based on itself but does not need any real foundation - this is tautology, or circular argumentation. In this case there is some foundation taken from the Christianity but most of the ideology is just presented in the form of definitions without explanations.

Before I read the book I expected that the evil teachings would be hidden behind a lot of sweet words and could only be found by reading a bit between the lines, but to my surprise it is not like that: The evil is more or less explicitly there for everyone to read. Most notably this is the Fascism that can be found everywhere.

`<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ISBN=0933932545/9757-9712260-452596>`

19 I still can not believe what you say here. I guess it is all lies.

Well most things here are based on Escriva's own writings. Furthermore I have tried to discuss the topics here with a person who says that he is an Opus Dei member (his name is "Peter M.", he did not say what rank he had in the organization). First he claimed that everything is not true here. But he was not able to bring a single counter-argument. We have to assume that he knows that it has at least some validity. I had his full name here at first but he does not want go public so I removed it when he asked me to do so.

Also people have written me a lot of emails. Some people completely agree with what I say. Among them people ex-members and people who where attracted by the Opus Dei first, but found out about the bad sides themselves. The people that wrote me who disagree with me are usually people who have not completely read through my pages and do not know much about the Opus Dei. They only have some friends there and explain to me that those are nice people. I do claim nothing else in my FAQ. I also say that most of them are certainly good and very good people. Finally some people who write to me seem to have sympathy for the Fascist ideology and they seem unable to see what is so bad about it. If you disagree with something here and want to write to me: those responses are very much welcomed, but I would ask you to read through all the material on my pages first, so that I do not have to answer questions twice. But I do not claim that my pages are completely free of errors, if you have suggestions and comments they are always welcomed.

20 Q: How can I contribute to this FAQ?

A: There are a lot of things you can do:

- If you have important information not covered in this FAQ mail it to me (schaefer@mond.at). I am especially interested in the personal experiences of members and ex-members.
- Translate this document into other languages (I might do the German translation myself as German is my native language). (contact me before you start translating)
- Hand out this FAQ to possible victims of the sect. Make it publicly available in places where you know that members search for victims. (Student hostels, etc, ...)