REPUBLICAN NUNS: CONVENTUAL REFORM IN CHILE, 1840-1891

by

Lauren Elyse Conley

(Under the Direction of Cassia Roth)

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the common life reforms as they were imposed in Santiago, Chile in the mid-nineteenth century. It focuses on sources found in the archives for the Monasterio de Santa Rosa de Lima and the Clarisas de la Antigua Fundación. It explores how women's roles were changing under the new structures of the Republican government and how the nuns in the convents were affected by these shifting expectations. It concludes that as motherhood became more useful to the state and church, the prestige that nuns formerly held in society diminished.

INDEX WORDS: Religion, Chile, Women, Nuns, 19th Century

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*Introduction*

> You told me, your reverence, to give an account of the desire I have had to practice mortification; and I respond that what has moved me to mortify my body has always been the knowledge that His Majesty must be served and loved with infinite volition… knowing I am still unworthy of such a job, rather deserving of a thousand hells, I want to have the consolation that, although ultimately I will be buried in the abyss, I used all the moments of my life in His service… I would like to do even more than what I have confessed to you, your reverence, and any martyrdom granted to me, I would take for glory; I beg you with tears and words, born from the depths of my soul and heart… On these occasions I imagine myself a Saint…[1]

This is an excerpt from a letter between Sor Josefa de los Dolores Peña y Lillo (1739-1822), a white veil nun at the Monasterio de las Dominicas de Santa Rosa and her confessor, the Jesuit Manuel José Álvares. She entered the convent at eight years old, originally with intentions not to become a nun, but to study music. She nevertheless took her vows at age fifteen and would go on to become one of the most recognizable nuns in Chile, remembered for her afflictions and visions. She was one of the last of her kind. Not the last of the Dominican nuns, but one of the last to experience monastic life in the way she did. Toward the end of her life in the early nineteenth century, fewer and fewer young girls from elite families were being delivered to convents for education as she had been. The mysticism that had characterized female monasticism was increasingly coming under scrutiny as new secular philosophies frightened the Church into tightening up the hierarchies of spiritual authority. Her fervent expressions of spirituality seemed to extend beyond prescribed boundaries and were largely based on personal conviction. But these more individualized expressions of piety would be replaced by an institutional demand for nuns to follow strict observance of their monastic rule. These rules,

[1] Transcribed in Kordić Riquelme, "Epistolario de Sor Dolores Peña y Lillo", 177-178.

interpreted through the lens of patriarchal Church authorities, included limited engagement with the secular world, and little room for individual interpretation.

In centuries prior, these monasteries were central spaces in colonial Spanish America. However, after definitively ousting Spanish colonial powers in 1826, political elites in Chile turned towards questions of statecraft. One issue that arose was the relationship of Church and state moving forward, including what to do about the maintenance of monasteries and convents. Amid these state maker's concerns over the function of regular clergy—members of the Catholic Church who had vowed to follow a religious rule—the authorities in the Church responded by trying to clean it up from the inside. This study investigates the changes occurring in Chilean convents of the Monasterio de Dominicas de Santa Rosa and the Monasterio de Clarisas de Antigua Fundación in Santiago, from the 1840s to the 1880s, as the Archbishop of Chile, Rafael Valentin Valdivieso y Zañartu began to reform religious life by enforcing the *vida común,* or common life, in hopes of correcting what he perceived as deviation from the strict observance of monastic vows.

The Church had attempted regular reform in Chile since the eighteenth century to enforce monastic discipline more strictly, but Valdivieso brought new tenacity to this call for reform during his service as Archbishop of Santiago (1847–78). In this context, the *vida común* referred to an inflexible observance of the monastic rule, namely the vow of poverty, and it involved a restructuring of the convent in physical and spiritual ways. The term appears across various letters and mandates and comes from original monastic rules, such as the rule of Saint Claire, which demanded that women who took on a religious vocation live in community with one another, giving up personal wealth and living a life of poverty, regulated silence, obedience, humility, prayer and fasting. The calls for reform were based on a nostalgic yearning for the time

when strict monastic rule and ascetic practices were perceived to flourish in the Middle Ages. Reformers enforced the strict observance of times of silence, restructured convent finances, and restricted entry to the convent both for outsiders and new postulants. In many cases, parts of convents were demolished or repurposed. Sometimes convents changed locations entirely, moving from the most central streets of Santiago to peripheral ones, reinforcing in a very literal way the diminishing centrality of these institutions.

I argue that, through these reforms, the Archbishop was responding to mounting pressures for the Catholic Church to reassert its legitimacy and significance in the post-Age-of-Revolutions world as they dealt with new threats from alternative spiritualities and political philosophies and an increasingly secularized state. While the stakes were high in a rapidly secularizing world in the eyes of Church authorities, the extent to which real change occurred in the convents of Chile was limited. Many of the same issues Church reformers were attempting to address remained unresolved for decades as the nuns—some more subtly than others—worked to maintain their ways of life. Despite the limited changes inside convents, their social perception and value undoubtedly changed to outsiders. In the face of new challenges to Catholic hegemony from all sides—new philosophies and religious currents such as spiritism, liberalizing forces in the government, and changing ideas about women's roles in society and family—elite attitudes shifted on the efficacy and importance of praying women. Archbishop Valdivieso's holy campaign brought about changes, though they were generally gradual and sometimes ineffectual. While he still clearly respected the vocation and valued these veiled women, his restrictions on their traditional activities contributed to the sidelining of these religious women as their economic and political value sharply declined.

The republic did not value the work of sexually unproductive praying women in the same way the colonial society did, and this study seeks to situate the nineteenth-century convent in the field of historiography concerned with state consolidation, institutional religious histories, and gender in nineteenth-century Latin America. In colonial times, despite not being sexually productive, the nuns served a significant role as educators and safeguards of Spanish culture for children of sexual couplings, which were often of mixed Hispanic and indigenous descent. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Chilean state consolidated power and took over responsibilities that formerly had been in the hands of the Church, such as credit and finances, marriage, education, and burial. Furthermore, while the republic initially did not seek to purge Catholic religion entirely from legislation, a republican religion that also emphasized women's duty of bearing children for the nation became more important than a religious structure that protected colonial mechanisms of inheritance, social prestige, and the hispanicizing mission.

Many historians have explored this relationship between gender and state formation, both in colonial relations and the shift towards republican forms of government. In discussing marriage and sexual relations, Judith Butler has asserted that there is a desire to be desirable by the state, "to be legitimated" in both one's individual personhood and their choices in their sexual lives, and that there is an impetus for the state to naturalize heterosexuality—that is, sexual bonds between a man and woman.[2] Beyond these works, several scholars have begun to look at the relationship between state and gender in the specific contexts of Chile. Nara Milanich has considered these trends in the context of the family unit in Chile, asserting that the patterns of paternalism and kinship that were established in the colonial period and evolved with the

[2] Butler, "Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?", 17, 35.

development of the liberal state. She pays particular attention to the state's regulation of families and concluded that over the course of the nineteenth century, the Chilean state became rather unsympathetic to single mothers and kinless children.[3] Others have investigated the ways in which women "made space" for themselves and the ways in which the state sought to regulate and control these spaces.[4] This project intervenes by looking at the experiences of nuns beyond independence, while the majority of publications on women in Latin America have turned towards exploring women's experiences in secular society, exploring early employment opportunities, elite women's contributions to literature and the arts, republican ideals of motherhood.[5] I seek to engage in these discussions by centering the convent as a space in which the both the state's formal laws and the informal system of values changed the way nuns were valued in society.[6]

[3] Milanich, *Children of Fate.*

[4] Here I am borrowing the phrasing proposed by Chilean sociologist Julieta Kirkwood, whose work on twentieth-century feminism in Chile was one of the first sustained investigations into the history of Chilean women's political engagement. More recently, scholars have begun to look even further back to the nineteenth century to suggest that women's activism and political engagement did not simply erupt after 1900. See Kirkwood, *Chile: La mujer en la formulación política*; Castillo, "Desde los salones a la sala de conferencias"; Montero, "Trocar agujas por la pluma"; Stuven, "La educación de la mujer y su acceso a la universidad"; Martínez, "Mujeres haciendo espacio en Chile 1800-1900"; Orellana Rivera, *Una mirada a la escuela chilena.*

[5] Notable works on colonial convents include Muriel, *Conventos de monjas en la Nueva España*; Kirk, *Convent Life in Colonial Mexico*; Socolow, *The Women of Colonial Latin America*. For studies on women's experiences in colonial Latin America outside of the convent, see Lavrin, ed., *Sexuality and Marriage*; Cevallos-Candau, Cole, Scott, and Suárez-Araúz, eds., *Coded Encounters*; Johnson and Lipsett-Rivera, eds., *The Faces of Honor*; Few, *Women Who Live Evil Lives*; Gauderman, *Women's Lives in Colonial Quito*. For further reading on women in the period of Chilean independence, see Chambers, *Families in War and Peace*; Grez, *Las mujeres de la independencia.* Post-independence, historiography has generally focused on women entering the workforce in greater numbers. See Milanich, *Children of Fate*. Other works have explored elite women's participation in beneficent societies, such as Arrom, *Volunteering for a Cause.*

[6] This concept of formal and informal forms of institutionalization is explored in Fonseca, "Amor e família".

Before continuing, a brief explanation of the reasons I selected the two convents, the Dominicas de Santa Rosa and the Clarisas de la Antigua Fundación, as the central focus of this study and a general history of the orders is appropriate.[7] Upon first glance, neither convent is particularly exceptional. The Clarisas was one of two convents that followed the Rule of Saint Clare in Santiago, the other being las Clarisas de la Victoria. Neither the Dominicas nor the Clarisas were the largest convents in Santiago at the time—the Monasterio de las Agustinas held that title. But they nevertheless merit study as two examples of enclosed contemplative convents that represent a way of conducting monastic life that was falling out of favor by the nineteenth century. Both orders were founded in the thirteenth century by disciples of Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Dominic of Guzman. The first Clarisas came to Chile very early in colonization, tracing their roots back to Isabel de Landa's arrival in 1567. They had attempted to set up in various places around the territory, with initial hopes of advancing Spanish colonization of indigenous Mapuches. However, due to the fierce conflicts, they moved around several times before settling in Santiago in 1604.[8] The Dominicas arrived later in 1680 as they migrated from another chapter in Lima, Peru. Initially, they lived free of strict enclosure, but still observed vows of poverty, fasting, and self-denial. An enterprising prioress, Sor Josefa de San Ignacio, obtained authorization to found an enclosed monastery in 1753.[9] Throughout this study, I will mention other convents, as there were often strong ties between convents and they dealt with similar issues and mandates. But I pay particular attention to the Dominicas and Clarisas, in part

[7] This convent may appear abbreviated hereafter as the Domincias or Clarisas. When referring to the orders more generally, or other monasteries of the same order, I will indicate this.

[8] de La Taille and Ovalle, "Breve historia del Monasterio de las Clarisas de Antigua Fundación".

[9] Aracana, *Regla i constituciones de las monjas dominicas*.

due to the accessibility of their archives, and also because of how they complement each other. Though both followed similar mendicant rules, they had slightly different missions and distinct relationships with *seglares*.[10]

I have drawn from a range of written sources, including newspaper publications, convent records, personal correspondence, and official documents from the Catholic Church. In analyzing sources like censuses and ledgers, I have worked to understand what they signify in relation to the convent's own history, rather than draw conclusions about how their spending compared to the cost of goods outside the convent. In other words, I draw no conclusions about whether the nuns were spending an egregious amount of money to support themselves; rather, I track how this number changed or remained the same as the Archbishop attempted to reform their spending. Furthermore, I have sought to apply an approach that considers a longer history of the relationship between the Church and convents, not only considering their colonial context, but even their origins in medieval Europe.

Now that we have explored the background of these two convents, their archives, and methodology, we will turn to a more general history of the Church in Chile and the Archbishop Valdivieso before a discussion of the realities of medieval convents and the primary research this project is founded on.

### *The Church in Chile From Colony to Nation*

Understanding the function of the convent in colonial Santiago helps underscore the extent to which its purposes shifted in the nineteenth century. Katheryn Burns and Asunción Lavrin have explored both the colonial and early republican roles of convents in other regions of

[10] *Seglares* literally translates to "seculars," and refers to all groups that were not professed regular clergy. It includes women who had not taken religious vows but may have resided permanently or temporarily in the convent. It also includes the men who came and went from the convents.

Latin America, and much of their analysis holds up for a general history of the Church in colonial Chile. Burns deals principally with colonial Peru and the convents in Cuzco while Lavrin investigates Mexico. Both come to similar conclusions about the colonial church, finding that convents were symbols of prosperity and importance of a city: the more convents a city had and the more lavish their holdings, the more prestige it garnered. Furthermore, the convent functioned as a site of "reproduction" for racial and gender norms, despite the fact that pledges abstained from sexual reproduction if they took the veil.[11] But beyond its traditional role, convents had many other functions: a refuge for laywomen seeking help, a receptacle for abandoned baby girls, a school, or a correction center for so-called deviant behavior.[12] The convent was also a site for establishing racial identity and defining the borders of otherness, as it guaranteed a level of familiarity and institutional permanence as an imported Roman Catholic structure, helping the Spanish elite confront a world that was "still somewhat unintelligible."[13]

While we can draw generalizations about the colonial Church from studies of other regions, colonial Chile also occupied a unique space demographically and economically. Chile, part of the viceroyalty of Peru, was a relatively isolated region with minimal importance economically. Although colonizers found suitable land for growing grapes and wheat or raising cattle, they did not find the silver of Potosí nor Zacatecas. Despite an economy largely dependent on agriculture, Chile did not develop the plantation economy that flourished elsewhere and therefore depended less on the enslaved labor systems that burgeoned in the sugar and mining

[11] Burns, *Colonial Habits*, 16-17.

[12] See *Colonial Habits*, 112-118.

[13] Lavrin, *Brides of Christ*, 6.

industries, though exact numbers are difficult to ascertain.[14] Like other colonies, the *encomienda* system that sought to extract labor from indigenous persons also faltered after initial efforts. But unlike Peru and Mexico, central Chile was not home to a centralized and sedentary indigenous population, but rather hundreds of semi-nomadic affiliated groups.[15] Due to these unique racial encounters, how colonial convents in Chile were involved in the constructions of race likely looked a bit different, and further study is needed on how Chilean convents navigated the particularities of the indigenous and black populations.[16] Preliminary studies in the south of Chile suggest that convents may have fulfilled these obligations in a pattern more consistent with those explored by Burns and Lavrin due to a further isolation from the metropole and more direct and frequent contact with the Mapuche.[17] However, in Santiago it is less clear what role the convent played in colonial conceptions of race and the raising of *criolla* children.

In addition to serving as sites of social significance, convents also participated in the colonial economy. One method of economic engagement was through "hipotecas voluntarias," or voluntary mortgages, which describe the way that money circulated through markets among property owners and ultimately returned to the ecclesiastical institution from which it was

[14] Celia Cussen presents a succinct recap of the historiography on slavery in Chile in "The Economic and Cultural Aspects of Slavery in Colonial Santiago, Chile," 145-58.

[15] For a study on Jesuit attempts to evangelize the Mapuche, see José Quidel Lincoleo, "Rol y presencia del *mapudungun* en la colonia frente al proceso de evangelización.".

[16] While there is a growing body of work on race in Chile, most of it deals primarily with the Mapuche. There have been efforts in recent years to consider black and mixed-race populations in Chile. For an excellent review of this historiography see Celia Cussen, "The Economic and Cultural Aspects of Slavery in Colonial Santiago." However, a comprehensive study of the role of the convent in race-making in Chile has yet to be produced.

[17] See Valdés, *Las primeras monjas de Chile* for an exploration of one of the convents in Osorno, a city to the south of the Bío Bío river and the historical nation of Araucania.

borrowed through a kind of rent.[18] Convents were also a frequent site of investment, as elite families founded ecclesiastical endowments, *capellanías,* typically with the intention of ensuring perpetual prayer for a deceased family member.[19]

In the late colonial period, the Catholic Church underwent several important reforms. Though convents and religious orders functioned quasi-independently of the Crown, and even to some extent independently of the secular Church, the Crown's Bourbon Reforms still affected them. The Bourbon Reforms were largely intended to make colonies more lucrative for Spain following the War of Spanish Succession (1701-14), and controlling the regular clergy was a priority as they had taken advantage of a lack of oversight from the Crown and profited remuneratively.[20] The Crown also attempted to secularize various legal proceedings, such as the drafting of wills.[21] The Bourbon Reforms also famously involved the expulsion of the Jesuits under decree of Carlos III in 1767. Though these reforms had real effects on the colonies and the branches of the Church therein, the same debates and efforts to rectify the Church spilled into the nineteenth century.

Nonetheless, the Bourbon reforms were not enough to prevent the fracturing of relations between Spain and its colonies after the Napoleonic invasion. As independence movements rumbled through Spanish Latin America (1808-33), the Catholic Church did not recognize the new states, leaving the status of the *patronato real* and legitimacy of the Chilean Church

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[18] Hortvitz Vazquez, *Memoria del nombre*, 1.

[19] For a detailed explanation as to why colonial elites found value in financially supporting the Church, see Hortvitz Vazquez, *Memoria del nombre,* 37-85.

[20] Schwaller, *The History of the Catholic Church in Latin America,* 88, 108.

[21] Schwaller, 109.

unclear.[22] Nevertheless, some political elites saw that getting friendly with the Church was an opportunity to legitimize their governments in the eyes of the Catholic world, and courted a friendly relationship.[23] While there were others who advocated for absolute separation of church and state, and plenty of clergy that sought to establish authority by developing closer ties to Rome rather than the state, there was also interest on both sides for developing a mutually beneficial relationship between the new government and local ecclesiastical authorities. But, unsurprisingly, the terms of this relationship would be debated and redrawn for decades to come.

Many roles and functions of the Church changed after independence. As Erick Langer suggests, there was a period of reduced oversight in the early decades of Latin American republics due to the state's inability to enforce control. These decades of hands-off treatment came to an end with the "third conquest," the period in which consolidated state institutions sought expansion, control of frontiers both literal and metaphorical, and incorporation into the new ideas of national identity.[24] Similarly, there was a short-lived period of religious freedom in the early years after independence, before the Church in Chile gradually reasserted itself in full force in the 1830s with the re-organization of dioceses and elections of new bishops.[25] Concurrently, the Chilean state overhauled, and the new constitution of 1833 heralded the beginning of a conservative government that upheld Catholicism as the state religion and declared itself responsible for various religious duties, including appointments to ecclesiastical

[22] The *patronato real* was an agreement between the Crown and colonies for the establishment of ecclesiastical bodies and their maintenance. It was how the colonial church derived its authority, and the Church was concerned about the status of the *patronato* after independence and whether the state would fulfill the former role of the Crown.

[23] See Sanchez-Solano, "Catholicism, Faith, and Power."

[24] Langer, "Indigenous Independence in Spanish South America."

[25] Rodrigo Moreno Jeria, "Obispos y la organización," 29.

positions and enforcing religious piety. While the Church had won some concessions in the constitution, there was still a considerable governmental effort to wrest power out of holy hands, and, as the century progressed, politics were increasingly unfriendly to the Church. Over time, decreasing the land holdings of the Church was justified on the grounds of putting them to a more "productive" economic use.[26] President Manuel Montt further imposed restrictions on the Church after a liberal uprising during the Civil War of 1851.[27] These included abolishing entailed states, eliminating the mandatory tithe, upholding the expulsion of the Jesuits, commandeering sectors in education formerly occupied by the Church, and establishing civil marriage proceedings for non-Catholics.[28]

Tied up in these negotiations between Church and state was the regulation of birth, marriage, cemeteries, and education. While there is not enough space here to summarize each of these battles over jurisdiction, by the end of the nineteenth century, each of these was solidly under state dominion. Cemeteries, logically a concern of the Church, which cared for souls after death in a number of ways, became a particularly contentious issue in the nineteenth century. State authorities were forced to take on responsibility for cemeteries by an influx of non-Catholic foreigners to make some concessions concerning cemeteries and burials as early as 1819, a

[26] Schwaller, *The History of the Catholic Church in Latin America*, 132.

[27] The Revolution of 1851, or Civil War of 1851, was a brief conflict between Chilean liberal insurgents and supporters of conservative president Manuel Montt over claims of fraudulent elections. Violence broke out in multiple cities and there were hundreds of casualties, with liberals briefly taking and holding Concepción and La Serena, to the north of Santiago. Nevertheless, Montt put down the uprisings and arrested and deported many political dissidents.

[28] Schwaller, *The History of the Catholic Church in Latin America,* 138.

problem Congress definitively settled in 1883.[29] In particular, education, formerly a particular duty of nuns, changed hands as both the establishment of state-supported education and the simultaneous effort on the part of the Church to address Catholic educational reform resulted in fewer and fewer young women entering the convents to learn at the hands of the nuns.

External issues also worried Chilean political and ecclesiastical elites. One of the most obvious was the conflict that became known as the War of the Pacific (1879-84), one of the few wars ever to take place between Latin American countries. The War of the Pacific had immense impacts on the development of national identity as Chile incorporated new regions into the official borders, along with the inhabitants within them. But this also demonstrated the perceived superiority of Chileans over their defeated Latin American counterparts, especially Bolivia. Elites based this alleged superiority on a rhetoric of virility and superior racial mixing, which led to an optimistic belief that Chile could be the imperial power of South America.[30] A strong imperial power with allegedly superior stock would require sexually productive women to provide soldiers and workers for the nation. All these political preoccupations contextualize why there was an impetus for changing expectations of women, and how—though Catholicism remained part of the Chilean identity—women became more useful outside the convent, both for the state and the Church.

## *A Spirit of Reform*

It was within this tumultuous transition from colony to republic that Valdivieso attempted his religious reforms. Raphael Valentin Valdivieso y Zañartu was born in 1804 to a well-

[29] León León, *Sepultura sagrada, tumba profana*, 39, 56. It is also interesting to note that critics of state oversight of cemeteries labeled it in sexual terms, declaring that it was "promiscuous" for graves to not be in Church hands. This simultaneous feminization of the state and death would make for an interesting rhetorical study.

[30] Crow, "From Araucanian Warriors to Mapuche Terrorists"; Crow, "Troubled Negotiations."

connected family. He initially began a career in law and served in the Chamber of Deputies before following an ecclesiastical calling. He was ordained in 1834, served as a missionary in what is now northern Chile and as a dean in the department of theology at the University of Chile until his ordination as Archbishop in 1847. He had a rather industrious career as Archbishop and seemed to be both publicly and privately concerned with corruption and abuses in the Church, participating in Vatican I (1868-1870), writing extensively, and making frequent visits to the convents and monasteries of Chile.[31] There was considerable concern that, in the years following the wars of independence (1808-33), many communities across the religious vocations had become undisciplined and lost sight of their purpose.[32] In addition to his work on reforming *regulares*, he sought to reform the process of appointing priests, and to bring *cofradías*, a religious organization generally composed of laypeople who shared a particular social identity, under closer official supervision and regulation. He did not hesitate to intervene in his authority as Archbishop when he deemed the government's action inadequate. His calls for reform were not entirely unique, as there had been previous efforts, like that of Fray Tadeo Silva in the 1820s, who lamented the deviance from the common life amongst *regulares,* who instead lived lives permeated by class hierarchies and individualism.[33] Valdivieso's predecessor, Manuel Vicuña Larraín, also had made efforts to bring the monasteries into line. Nor was Valdivieso the only contemporary who expressed concerns about the state of the convents. But Valdivieso's tenure as Archbishop brought three decades of sustained and insistent oversight, and purportedly extensive success.

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[31] Vergara Antúnez, *Vida i Obras*, 176.

[32] Moreno Jeria, "Obispos y la organización", 30.

[33] Vergara Antúnez, *Vida i obras*, 61.

Even prior to his ordination, Valdivieso had begun to publicize his intentions of cleaning up the convents and removing the secular riff-raff from their walls. Upon his election in 1847, the *vida común* was "almost nonexistent" among monasteries and convents.[34] Valdievieso, on the other hand, was intent on reducing the number of *seglares* in the convent. Nevertheless, the Archbishop was "very far from wanting to impose [the reform] by force," and rather ordered that each nun be consulted for their individual consent.[35] This desire for consensual adaptation to the reform somewhat explains the mixed results across convents. Each one seemed to move on its own timeline, with exchanges regarding the proper implementation of the rule stretching for decades in some cases. It would not be left up to consent for the postulants entering the convent after the promulgation of the *vida común*, however, ensuring that no matter how gradually the nuns adapted the reform, it would eventually become the convent standard.

Stakes became even higher for church reform as the century rumbled on, and this was reflected in Pope Pius IX's invocation of the Vatican I council in 1869 to discuss official doctrine concerning church authority and the nature of knowledge and faith. The council debated papal infallibility and whether and how God could be known, and how every Catholic should adjust their belief and behavior as a result. Multiple Chilean clergymen participated in the council, including Valdivieso. They concluded that they would uphold papal infallibility and doubled down on the fact that God existed and could be known through natural reason and faith.[36] This council was in part a response to several threads of new spiritualities and

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[34] Sánchez Gaete, "Órdenes religiosas y congregaciones," 59.

[35] Vergara Antúnez, 348.

[36] O'Malley, *Vatican I*, 168.

philosophies, including liberalism and spiritism.[37] It also was the impelling force for the ultramontane movement, a sect of Catholic thought which, broadly speaking, was concerned with asserting the infallible authority of the Pope and "active resistance in the face of a secularized culture."[38] Though Vatican I took place well into Valdivieso's tenure, we can view his call for convent reform as a part of the same larger commitment to Church reform that permeated the nineteenth century as it responded to new threats from heterodoxy, modernity, and liberal-republican ideals.

### *Medieval Origins to Modern Visions*

Vital to contextualizing Valdivieso and other Church authorities' arguments about returning to the *vida común* is an acknowledgement that this perfected monastic life never really existed, and that the extent to which these vows were ever observed in the way that nineteenth-century ecclesiastics perceived them to be is questionable. These definitions of a pious life had always been rife with contestations and a lack of clarity, and reform has been a near-constant story in the monastic life.[39] Looking back into medieval relationships between friars, nuns, laypeople, the Church, and rulers, much of the discourse happening in nineteenth-century Chile looks far less novel. Historians have also suggested that the primary motivation for the creation of nunneries in the first place, at least in the case of the Dominicans, was primarily to rehabilitate

[37] Spritism was a global phenomenon, finding devout followers throughout Europe and the Americas. It was essentially a practice of communing with the dead, and many believed it to be compatible with their otherwise orthodox beliefs in Catholic or Protestant Christianity. For a discussion of the spiritist sect in Spain, see, "Specters of the Secular."

[38] León León, *Sepultura sagrada, tumba profana,* 43.

[39] In "Early Monasteries and Foundations (500-1200)," Gerchow, Bodarwé, Marti, and Röckelein write "From the middle of the eighth century, the Frankish church underwent reforms that repeatedly addressed the common life," 17. Also consider the Gregorian reforms of the eleventh century, and Humbert of Rome's reforms, which sound remarkably similar to Valdivieso's.

women who had slipped into heresy and guard against heterodoxy. While, of course, these were two very distinct temporal contexts, it seems that the convent has often served as a site of enforcing ideological hegemony, from when the Church tried to consolidate authority and homogenize belief in medieval Europe, to the Spanish Crown protecting its economic and social interests in its colonies, and as the state courted legitimacy in the nineteenth century.

This is not the only thread of continuity from the Middle Ages. Images of holy, ascetic women from the medieval period lived in the minds of nineteenth-century Chileans. In an almanac from 1867, on the occasions women are mentioned, they are almost exclusively invoking saints or mystics from the thirteenth century. Saint Isabell of Hungary, an early follower of Saint Francis, appears as an exemplar for her exceptional care for the poor.[40] Lucia de Narni, a medieval mystic, is lauded for her particular devotion to Mary.[41] Saint Gertrude is remembered for her visions, as she "once saw beneath the mantle of Maria an infinity of souls, that the august Queen of the heavens contemplated with lively affection."[42] Not only are these mentions of medieval saints reflective of the romanticization of medieval monastics that permeated the ranks of ecclesiastical authorities in mid-nineteenth-century Chile, but also are they indicative of the diminution of the prestige of contemporary nuns. While the almanac quotes

[40] *Almanaque relijioso dedicado a Maria Santisima para el año de gracia 1867* (Santiago: Imprenta del Correo, 1866). Digitized in "Miscellaneous", Endangered Archives Programme British Library, Ref #EAP821/1/1/77, item 61. Also known as Princess Elizabeth of Thuringia, or Heilige Elisabeth von Thüringen.

[41] *Almanaque relijioso,* item 113.

[42] *Almanaque relijioso,* item 115. This refers to Saint Gertrude the Great, a German benedictine nun and mystic.

and references contemporary priests, bishops, and popes throughout the almanac, it ignores their female counterparts even though they were still producing written works.[43]

Nevertheless, on a more personal level, it seems nuns still mattered a great deal to individuals with ties to the convent. As mentioned previously, individuals and families continued to financially support the convents and paid for perpetual prayers and elite members of society maintained close relationships to the convents as their go-betweens in the secular world. There is also the exceptional example of a piece written by Galo Dueñas, who wrote "Discurso de Profesión Religiosa," or "Discourse on Religious Profession," to "indelibly" commemorate the profession of his daughter to the order of the Carmelitas de San Rafael.[44] In it, Dueñas declared that she had committed to "the life of grace in all its plenitude and excellence."[45] He wrote:

> Content with the triple vow with which He has consecrated you, radiant with this supernatural transformation in which, like the phoenix, you are reborn from your own ashes, God is pleased with you, He calls you with the sweet name of the dove and says: "Arise, walk, my new dove, and come."[46]

Clearly filled with tender affection and pride for his daughter, Dueñas nevertheless asserted that his esteem for the vocation "is not my own doctrine" but "comes from God."[47] Thus we have one obvious example of how important religious women who took the veil continued to be to individuals in society, and it is clear that no one claiming to be Catholic was outright denouncing

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[43] An exploration of the writings of nuns during this time would be an excellent avenue of further study but was ultimately beyond the scope of this project.

[44] Galo Dueñas, "Discurso de profesion relijiosa recitado en el Templo de las Carmelitas de San Rafael, Con ocasion de los votos solemos que hizo la señorita Maria Esther Dueñas i Goycoolea" (Santiago: Imprenta Victoria, 1884). Digitized in "Miscellaneous documents", Endangered Archives Programme British Library, Ref #EAP821/1/1/77, Item 272.

[45] Dueñas, "Discurso de profesion relijiosa," 274.

[46] Dueñas, 274.

[47] Dueñas, 276.

their vocation. Further evidence that the convents continued to hold value in the hearts of some individuals is found in the fact that a few *capellanías* were maintained throughout this period, as in the case of the one instituted by Santiago Larraín Lecaros in 1820, which was maintained until 1917.[48] Nevertheless, it was more common to promote the virtuous Catholic woman as a member of society, especially as a mother and wife, rather than to promote enclosure.

Newspapers were naturally another popular place for discourse over the religious role of women in a non-monastic setting, laying out prescriptions for female spirituality in the home and daily life. Under Valdivieso, the *Revista Catolica* became an "official organ" of the Church and was meant to stymie the tide of secular newspapers, which diffused Enlightenment and Liberal ideas, as well as publicize responses to heterodox beliefs that proliferated throughout the city and promote acceptable social morals. An edition published in 1856 includes a section entitled "The Charity of Women" that gives us insight into Church prescriptions for women. It opens poetically:

> When people are hurt by a common misfortune, egoism becomes universal. No one feels for one another… No one cries for one another, because their tears barely are barley shed for themselves over their own wounds… None sympathize with the misfortunes of others, afraid of increasing their own. Only *Women,* angels of the sky, descend to the earth in relief of mortals, feels for all, sympathizes with all… Only *They,* guided by faith and charity, know the true secret of religious and social morality… Who but *Women* could be God's Ministers and representatives on Earth to teach by example, abnegation, and sublime virtue?[49]

Valuing the spirituality of women, the author places them on a pedestal of virtue, built up by their ability to shed tears for the world. This was clearly an invocation of the Virgin Mary, who was frequently depicted as crying and interceding for the sinners of the world. The author further

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[48] Hortvitz Vazquez, *Memoria del nombre,* 102.

[49] "La caridad de la mujer," *Revista Catolica,* August 23, 1856, 1630-1631. Microfilm, Biblioteca Nacional de Chile. Emphasis in original.

characterizes women as the bastions of religious morality, with the implication that they must teach these morals to the next generation through motherhood, their "ministry".

Other Catholic newspapers likewise wrote about feminine religious values. In an issue of *Libertad Catolica* from 1872, a woman submitted an editorial entitled "Two Words on Women" In it, she wrote that "many men have written against women" saying that "every woman has the devil in her body, and too many husbands know what it takes to remove him." However, she argued "the devil is masculine, and as a result I must believe he is male… Man is the devil. Proof: when the woman places on her shoulders the cross of matrimony, the man goes away from her like a conjured demon." While clearly asserting that woman is no more inherently sinful than man, she used status as mother and wife as proof of women's value and virtue. She continued, "A man before another man never misses the occasion to make fun of women… They don't remember that they have a mother." Of the charge that women are more sinful because of Eve and the serpent in the Garden of Eden, she declared that "if a mother Eve destroyed the purity of the woman, there was a Virgin Maria to rehabilitate her," suggesting a redemption even closer and more accessible to women because of the holiness of the Virgin Mary, sanctified not only through her purity, but also her motherhood and her ceaseless intersession for sinners. The writer doubles down on placing blame on men's shoulders and questions if, when a blind person falls, you blame them or their guide, as "the education of woman is always directed by man." She concluded that "there are good men, men with hearts capable of feeling; these men know how to understand a woman, for these men, my sisters, we have an irresistible power: virtue. The virtuous woman is always beloved by God and venerated in the world."[50] Historian Sol Serrano

[50] Victorina Ferrer, "Dos palabras sobre las mujeres," *La Libertad Católica,* May 13, 1875, microfilm, Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, PCH 300.

has similarly conducted research on how the states ceased to consider nuns as useful as a result of "not accomplishing their role as mothers." She characterizes the period as a time in which the state tried to make nuns "invisible," and while the Church "protected" them, it also "controlled them" and made them "more obscure" because they too needed "consecrated mothers in the world."[51] Thus, to the liberalizing state, the importance of women's sexual productivity and redemption through motherhood became a preferable option to the convent's chastity.

Despite these abundant praises for the virtues of motherhood, it is essential to bear in mind that in practice, being a mother did not instantaneously equate status and respect in society. These mothers had to be the right stock—that is, legally wedded, wealthy, and with legitimate kinship ties—for them to find any sort of validity in the eyes of the state. Unwed mothers, who were often poor and working-class women, were not invited to the table of Marian motherhood.[52]

### *Entering the Cloisters*

Prior to Valdivieso's appointment in 1847, there was a mixed reaction among church authorities to the implementation of the *vida común. S*ome officials expressed hesitancy in implementing the reform, such as the previous Archbishop, Vicuña Larrain. He was approached by the canonesses of the Limpia Concepción de San Agustín (Agustinas), who asked that the common life be enacted in their convent.[53] While he "applauded the proposition," he "did not dare to carry it out" because "in order to accomplish it, it was necessary to expel a great number of young women without homes from the convent" who had gone there "to seek asylum against

[51] Serrano, "El ocaso de las clausuras."

[52] Milanch, *Children of Fate.*

[53] Vergara Antúnez, *Vida i Obras*, 345.

the dangers of the world."[54] However, his tune seemed the have changed in the last years of his appointment, as he sent missives to Monasterio de las Dominicas in 1842 with several prescriptions on changing the function of the convent. He addressed issues with the protocol surrounding sick and infirm nuns, reinforced that the nuns had to donate their dowries to common accounts, and toughened the restrictions on the use of the *locutorio,* the space in which nuns frequently came into contact with outsiders. [55] Vicuña also reminded them that absolutely no one was to be admitted to the sacristy, where priests prepare mass, and that they ought to moderate the number of gifts and letters the nuns sent to outsiders.[56] Another candidate for Archbishop, Jose Ignacio Victor, similarly wrote to the Dominicas and expressed concern with the physical, as well as spiritual, rearrangement of the convent, reminding the nuns that the "walls that protect the cloister of the monastery" must be of sufficient "elevation and height" that "it would not be easy to climb them and drop oneself into the convent."[57] He also made a comment about the "multitude of peons, workers or carpenters" entering the convent, who served as a "perturbation" for the nuns. This suggests that the Dominicas had particularly high foot traffic and instances of *seglares* in the convent, an issue that Valdivieso would revisit later.

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[54] Vergara Antúnez, 347.

[55] These letters were often moderated by representatives of the Archbishop, such as presbyters and other lower-ranking officials. I have chosen for simplicity to consider all of these letters as representative of the Archbishop's will and thus credited to him, though the specific authors may differ.

[56] Don Manuel Vicuña to the Monasterio de Santa Rosa, January 7, 1842, in "Book that contains the mandates of the prelates from the year of 1842 to 1876," Endangered Archives Programme, British Library, Ref #EAP821/1/1/43, items 7-8.

[57] José Ignacio Victor Eyzaguirre to the Monasterio de Rosas, January 27, 1845, in "Book that contains the mandates of the prelates from the year of 1842 to 1876," Endangered Archives Programme British Library, Ref #EAP821/1/1/43, item 12.

Similar complaints are found in the exchanges between Valdivieso and the Clarisas. A letter from 1863 outlines various prescriptions on their habits, cells, and silence. These prescriptions could get incredibly specific, down to what kind of clothes to wear on temperate nights. But the Clarisas also received critiques on their use of the *locutorio.* Valdivieso wrote that "It is not permitted that the *religiosa* receive more than fifteen visits in fifteen days… unless there is an urgent case qualified by the Abbess" and that "the novitiates cannot go to the *locutorio* except once a month and accompanied by her Teacher."[58] This is a clear effort to limit engagement with the outside world, and to ensure that those engagements were always surveilled. There were also many notes on the use of the *refectorio,* the dining hall, regarding the timing of meals, hours of recreation after meals in which "all the *religiosas* can communicate and talk… cheering each other on in charity and in the love of God."[59] This suggests that there was too much idle talk, and that the communication amongst nuns needed to be regulated in addition to their communication with the outside world. Another ruling outlined the duties and conditions of the postulants, suggesting a desire to limit the number of women joining the convent. The letter reads, "No postulant will be admitted that is over thirty years of age unless they are a very exceptional case," and they had to be "of robust complexion" and "capable of work" with a "solid piety." In addition to revealing the qualities desirable in a postulant, namely that they would not be a drain on resources by being incapable of work or frequently ill. This is further remarkable because, returning to the figure with whom we opened this article, Sor Maria

[58] Sr. Presbitero Don Manuel Parreño, "Dictamen de prescripciones en conformidad con la vida común," February 2, 1863, Archivo del Monasterio de Clarisas de Antigua Fundación, #MCAF00094.

[59] Manuel Parreño, "Dictamen de prescripciones."

Mercedes de la Purificacion's frequent illness was interpreted as a sign of her exceptional holiness, making her a target for the devil's bodily afflictions.[60]

As for the specific complaints lodged against the Dominicas by Valdivieso, it seems that their day-to-day life was hardly affected by the calls for austerity. From their ledgers, it is apparent that they were paying for services of "criadas" and "sirvientes" well after reform efforts began.[61] Thus, despite efforts to "avoid excessive and frequent expenses," the spending habits of the Dominicas did not undergo a drastic change throughout the nineteenth century.[62] Direct comparison of their expenditures year to year is difficult as I did not have access to an evaluation of the real value of Chilean currency throughout the time period. Nevertheless, we see many of the same items appearing in their spending reports both before and after the reforms, many of which seem like small luxuries. For example, a ledger from 1805 lists the following items: sugar, ham, yerba, paper, chocolate, aji chileno (a kind of pepper), and new shoes for maids and servants.[63] The ledgers from 1850 list many of the same purchases, still paying for the services of servants, as well as yerba (leaves of a plant containing caffeine), sugar, and chocolate.[64] Whether or not nuns ought to have access to sweets and chocolate, these items do not exactly align with a

[60] It is remarkable that there were such concerns over letting infirm women into the convent, as in previous times, frequent illness in religious women had been understood to be a sign of virtue, since only women who were exceptionally holy would merit attack from the devil in the form of bodily suffering. For an example of this in Chile, see Sebastián Diaz, *Vida y virtudes de Sor María Mercedes de la Purificación.*

[61] *Criadas* is translated as housemaid, and *sirvientes* as servants, but there was a difference in the implications of each word, how they were employed, and what their duties typically entailed. For the purposes of this article, however, they are considered interchangeable because the significance is that there were paid laborers employed in convents.

[62] José Ignacio Victor Eyzaguirre to the Monasterio de Rosas, January 27, 1845, item 12.

[63] "Monastery of Santa Rosa, 1790-1850," Endangered Archives Programme British Library, Ref #EAP821/1/1/36, items 337-351.

[64] "Monastery of Santa Rosa, 1790-1850," Endangered Archives Programme British Library, Ref #EAP821/1/1/36, items 1413-1425.

diet based on "mortification through fasting and abstinences."[65] An ecclesiastical catalog from 1853 likewise lists fifteen servants employed in the Dominicas' convent.[66] In addition, a number of renovations within the church and monastery occurred through the decades. A series of letters between 1857 and 1858 track the sale and replacement of the central altar, or *altar mayor*. These altars were often highly ornate, and Sor Luisa de San Rafael, the prioress at the time, documented various requests regarding the new altar's decoration, which came out to a total cost of 3,855 pesos.[67] For comparison, the total cost of maintenance expenses for the convent in 1850 was 9,068 pesos.[68] And this was not the convent's only recorded renovation. Sor Luisa also requested license to pay a Master Vores for the gold-gilded molding above the altar as well as the painting of the sanctuary.[69] While physical changes within the convent could be indicative of reform, these changes seem more accurately to indicate that the Monasterio de Santa Rosa continued to find considerable financial support to maintain a level of opulence within the convent.

A letter from Archbishop Valdivieso in 1863 expressed his support in the Dominica's progress in implementing the reform. He stated that the nuns "deserve a great respect" for their apparent advances, though the extent to which there were real or significant changes for the Dominicas seems limited, at least in regards to the limitations on spending and the increase in

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[65] Aracana, *Regla i constituciones de las monjas dominicas,* 64.

[66] *Catálogo de los eclesiásticos,* 15-16.

[67] Sor Luisa de San Rafael to Archbishop Valentin Valdivieso, September 22, 1857, "Licenses 1845-1870," Endangered Archives Programme British Library, Ref #EAP821/1/1/44, item 9.

[68] "Monastery of Santa Rosa, 1790-1850", Endangered Archives Programme British Library, Ref #EAP821/1/1/36, item 1425.

[69] Sor Luisa de San Rafael to Archbishop Valentin Valdivieso, September 22, 1857, "Licenses 1845-1870," Endangered Archives Programme British Library, Ref #EAP821/1/1/44, item 35.

austerity.[70] In 1867, however, the Archbishop and higher ups of the convent approved and implemented a new constitution.[71] And by 1870 it seemed that the issues over the infirmary and the care of sick nuns had been definitively resolved by the creation of separate cells reserved for recovering nuns that allowed for silence to be maintained even in the infirmary.[72] Nevertheless, by 1876, Valdivieso was again raising an issue with the number of servants and men coming into the monastery.[73] Though data were not available on the number of *seglares* in the convent in 1876, it is telling that the catalog for 1883 made no mention of the number of *seglares*, though it had been reported in previous catalogs. Perhaps they were truly expelled from the convent, or perhaps authorities no longer found it important to document. Or perhaps they were still present, much to the chagrin of the Church officials who wanted them gone, who may have tried to minimize the visibility of this failure by no longer publicizing their numbers. Another discrepancy that appears between the archives of the Dominicas and Clarisas is the continued separation of the white and black veil among the Dominicas. Typically, black veil nuns were those who were able to pay the complete amount of the convent dowry and were eligible to be elected to the highest positions of authority within the convent, while white veil nuns paid a smaller amount and were precluded from holding certain offices and were often assigned more menial work. As late as 1883, there were still distinctions between nuns who had taken the black

[70] Raphael Valentin Valdivieso to the Monasterio de Rosas, January 16, 1863, "Book that contains the mandates of the prelates from the year of 1842 to 1876," Endangered Archives Programme British Library, Ref #EAP821/1/1/43, item 17.

[71] Valdivieso to the Monasterio de Rosas, in "Book that contains the mandates of the prelates from the year of 1842 to 1876," Endangered Archives Programme British Library, Ref #EAP821/1/1/43, Item 21.

[72] Jose Miguel to the Monasterio de Rosas, January 12, 1870, "Licenses," Endangered Archives Programme British Library, Ref #EAP821/1/1/44, item 372.

[73] Valdivieso to the Monasterio de Rosas, in "Book that contains the mandates of the prelates from the year of 1842 to 1876," Endangered Archives Programme British Library, Ref #EAP821/1/1/43, Item 38.

veil and those who had taken the white veil in the Monasterio de Santa Rosa.[74] Elsewhere in Latin America, the eradication of the black veil had been a priority for ecclesiastical authorities as part of the *vida común* reforms as it was perceived as an outdated system that perpetuated inequality,[75] yet it seems to have persisted, at least in some convents in Chile.

Overall, the Archbishop clearly expected both convents to reform their conduct, observing silence more perfectly, using the spaces of the convents appropriately, limiting contact with *seglares* and servants, and standardizing the use of their habits. The proper regulation of the prelates was also an issue mentioned in both sets of communication between the Archbishop and the convents, and there were tangible results on these counts. The number of *seglares* decreased, as did the number of *religiosas,* suggesting that the reform was effective in its prescriptions on the postulant and novitiate processes. It seems that day-to-day life did not change drastically for the nuns inside these convents, however, and they seemed to continue to have faithful supporters on the other side of the grille.

This story of long, drawn out, and marginally effectual reform was not the same story for all convents, however. Other convents, at least in the interpretation of Valdivieso's biographer, were more open and shut cases. The Agustinas, the ones who had approached Valdivieso's predecessor about implementing the *vida común,* were one such example. It is recorded that Valdivieso mandated that the reform be implemented in their community on October 10, 1846. Though there were apparently some difficulties in the process, they had definitively adopted the

[74] *Catálogo de los eclesiásticos de ambos cleros, casas relijiosas, iglesias i capillas del arzobispado de Santiago de Chile a principios del año de 1883* (Santiago: Imprenta del Correo, 1883), 19-20.

[75] Lavrin, *Brides of Christ.*

common life in the regulation of their *refectorio,* meals, clothing, and in their use of convent funds by 1856.[76]

In addition to some convents quickly adopting the reform, there were also new visions of what regular life for religious women could look like. One example is the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which arrived in Chile from France in 1853. Valdivieso apparently courted the establishment of a chapter of this order due to their ability to fulfill demands for charity and education in a way that the traditional contemplative convents could not.[77] The French Revolution had forced these regulars to alter and re-envision their way of living and provided a new alternative for the Church in Chile. This order was unenclosed and emphasized "sanctification of one's neighbor" in their rule, resulting in a community more focused on outward missions and service than other contemplative orders. [78] The Society of the Sacred Heart was growing throughout the nineteenth century, in part due to active attempts on the part of Anna du Rousier, the founder of the Society in Chile, to recruit women to their ranks. Du Rousier emphasized renewal to the vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity, as well as the *vida común*, personal prayer, but did not see it incompatible with developing bonds with secular persons.[79] The Society of the Sacred Heart served as a kind of competition for the older, contemplative orders that were rapidly losing relevancy, and this order informed many of Valdivieso's ideas on what a modern convent ought to look like.

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[76] Vergara Antúnez, 347.

[77] Vergara Antúnez, 415-416.

[78] De la Taille-Tretinville, "Una nueva Regla," 150-152.

[79] De la Taille-Tretinville, 155.

## *Conclusions*

When Valdivieso died unexpectedly in 1878, there was great mourning from many sectors of society. However, a symptom of the ongoing power struggle between Church and state, a succession crisis followed his death as the state and the Pope fought over rights to appoint the replacement. It took eight years for another bishop to finally be installed, and the dispute was so severe that diplomatic relations between Chile and the Pope were suspended temporarily.[80] This did not mean, however, that Chile discarded religion. The state was never fully secularized during this period, though after 1860 there was a perceptible growth in government hostility toward the Church.[81] But until the Civil War of 1891 which marked the end of the liberal republic, the tantalizing possibilities of economic (and even imperial) expansion caused social and political elites to make room for new religious priorities. One of the few places women could have religious authority based on individual lived experience increasingly became about communal identity, charity and social services.

The convents of the Clarisas and Dominicas provide examples of a protracted adoption of the *vida común*. As they struggled to reconcile these new demands and watched the number of postulants gradually decline, other orders committed to more active engagement with society saw their numbers growing considerably. The Clarisas and Dominicas continued to be supported by devoted individuals in society, but these ties were not enough to prevent their orders being eclipsed by new alternatives both for women who took the veil and those who remained untethered to a formal religious vocation. The implementation of the *vida común* was successful in decreasing the number of *seglares* in the convents, and lowering the rates at which nuns took

[80] Salinas Araneda, "Relaciones Iglesia-Estado", 285-304.

[81] Salinas Araneda, "Relaciones Iglesia-Estado", 277.

the habit. While these reforms were not as dramatic or drastic in Chile as they were elsewhere, they did still ultimately result, as a largely unintended consequence, in the diminution of taking the veil as a vocation. Nuns' numbers decreased, making it harder to maintain the convents. Many ultimately chose to downsize and relocate or close their doors permanently.

The implementation of these reforms in Chile played out later and was in responses to different social and political pressures than in the cases of Peru and Mexico. Lavrin reports that the implementation of the *vida común* in Mexico resulted in "the best-known defiance of women in colonial Mexico" as the nuns fought collectively against these changes on the grounds that their way of life was grounded in tradition.[82] It was not nearly as climactic in the Chilean context, though these nuns still resisted change. For them, resistance was sometimes as subtle as continuing to purchase chocolate. Despite dealing with the same issues of paid labor, postulant entrance, and financial restructuring, the majority of the debate between church authorities and nuns over the reforms took place in Cuzco and Mexico at a time in which Spaniards were primarily concerned with maintaining and reproducing their Spanishness. The reform arrived in Chile as they were working out what it meant to be Chilean—and they concluded that nuns would have limited participation in this identity.

[82] Lavrin, *Brides of Christ*, 14.

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