

# **From *Incarnated Faith* to *Jesus' Lifestyle*. Navigating cultural transformation with an intergenerational study of the *Christian Worker's Youth* in Spain.**

Berta Escolà i Parra | [bertaescolaparra@gmail.com](mailto:bertaescolaparra@gmail.com)

University of Groningen. 1st of July 2023.

First supervisor: Peter Berger | Second assessor: Kim Knibbe

Word count: 18.0204

## **Abstract**

Through the study of the *Joventut Obrera Cristiana* [Christian Workers' Youth], this thesis analyses the adoption of three Catholic cultural categories by some segments of the Spanish working class. The research shows that the Francoist dictatorship (1939-1975) provided the perfect environment for the reconciliation of the workers with the Catholic Church. Through their interaction, the Spanish working class adopted some traditionally Catholic cultural categories, thus overcoming what until then, had been a border between two distinctly adverse cultures: the Catholic and the working class culture. Moreover, the paper examines how the selected cultural categories transformed during the course of Francoism to the present day. This study contributes to the understanding of culture's creation and transformation.

## **Keywords**

Catholicism, Francoism, Cultural Categories, Social Mobilization and Historical Change

## Summary

This thesis aims to answer and explain how the militants adopt the Catholic cultural categories throughout the history of the movement to contribute to the understanding of cultural creation and transformation. Based on the hypothesis that the JOC culture is the result of the pairing of the new cultural categories, the *Valors Cristians* with their working-class culture, this interpretative research uses qualitative methods to analyse how the adoption of *Valors Cristians* happened and how they transformed during the course of two selected periods: Francoism (1939-1975) and present day (2002-2023).

The paper argues that the particular environment that National Catholicism created provided a fertile creative environment that encouraged the adoption of some Catholic cultural categories by some segments of the working classes. This is how the JOCs culture was born. Embodying the working class takes on the *Valors Cristians*: presenting structural problems such as hunger, homelessness, and poverty, and more importantly collective solidarity as a matter of faith in the form of Incarnated Faith.

Moreover, the *Valors Cristians* have transformed in the present-day JOC. The research has suggested that the professional context of new capitalism, as well as other factors, have led to a new reading of the categories that focus more on the self.

Through this analysis this study contributes to the understanding of culture's creation and transformation.

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to all of those who have given me support throughout this research. Plenty of people have contributed to the elaboration of the thesis that follows with their advice, insights, and presence.

Firstly, I could not have undertaken this journey without the members of the JOC who kindly welcomed me into their lives. Particularly, I would like to acknowledge some of the *militants* of the federation I have been a part of for the past few years. Sonia, Jordi, María, Adrian, and Alejandro, without you this research could have never been. Also, I want to thank the *ex-militants* who have generously shared their time and experience to contribute to this thesis. Above all, I am grateful for the movement. Being a part of the JOC has been a life-changing experience.

Secondly, this thesis would not have been possible without the support of my supervisor Peter Berger. His encouragement and feedback have helped turn this paper from chaotic scribbles into (hopefully) proper research. I am also grateful to my classmates for their editing help, late-night feedback sessions, and, more importantly, moral support. Thanks should also go to all of those scholars who, throughout my academic life, have inspired me to continue researching: Manuel Delgado, Gerard Horta, Raúl Marquez and the members of the research group Spiritual Popularities (EPOGÈ) from the University of Barcelona.

Lastly, I would be remiss in not mentioning my friends and family. Their belief in me has kept my spirits and motivation high during this process.

## **Glossary of key terms and abbreviations**

Caudillo is the title given to Franco by his supporters, roughly equivalent to Duke or Fuhrer.

Consiliari [council] is the name of the adult figure that guides and councils the JOC groups. Originally it was a position exclusively for priests and members of the church. But since the 1990s the JOC started to welcome the incorporation of laics as Consiliaris.

Francoism is the name that Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975) receives. It would be the equivalent of 'Nazism' in Germany or 'Fascist Italy' in Italy.

Joventut Obrera Cristiana (JOC) [Christian workers' youth] is an international Catholic working class movement born in 1919 in Belgium. The Spanish section of the movement had a key role in the Anti-Francoist resistance and in social mobilization.

Militant/s [member/s] is the name that the members of class social movements traditionally receive in Spain. As it is the case with the members of the JOC. The use of the term references the idea of being at war against the oppressors, even though it does not necessarily imply the use of violence to that end.

National Catholicism is the name of the Spanish political system during Francoism. It was characterized, like other fascist regimes, by the state's control of every aspect of life, with the particularity that this model was rooted in Catholicism.

PSUC is the communist Spanish Party that existed in secrecy during Francoism.

Revisió de Vida [Life revision] is a ritualized practice characteristic of the JOC that intends to examine the *militants* conduct through the lens of Catholicism.

Teología de la Liberación [Theology of Liberation] is a theology born from Marxist philosophy and biblical themes. It emphasises the liberation of the oppressed and the fight against the oppressor, sustaining that followers of Jesus must work towards a better society to achieve social and political change. The theology spread in Latin American countries and was an ideological seed for their insurrections.

## Timeline

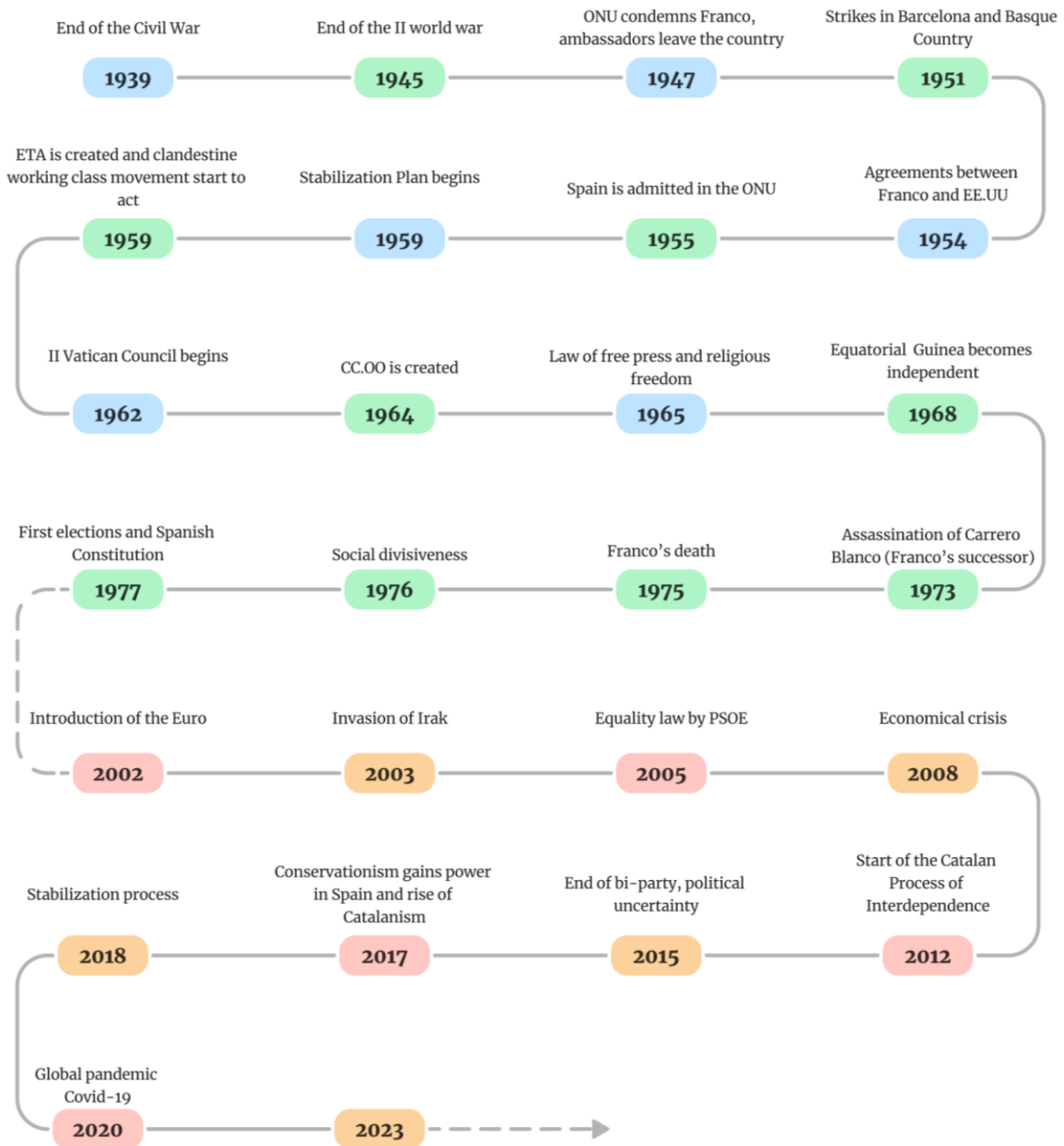


Table 1. Historical Spanish timeline from 1939 to 2023. Own work.

## 1. Introduction

During the first months of 1939, after half a year of confrontation in what would soon be called de *Batalla de l'Ebre* [Battle of the Ebro] the longest, largest, and more bloodstained battle of the Spanish Civil War, the Nationalist army managed to break into the Catalan territories and conquer the capital, Barcelona. The invasion marked a turning point in the war since the Catalan territories were the last substantial bastion of the Republic. A few months later, Madrid fell, securing the claim of the Spanish Nationalists over the country. Franco's victory was followed by the establishment of a dictatorship in Spain and the defeat of the working class revolution that had followed the outbreak of the war in July (Costa, 1996).

Franco's victory represented the restoration of the bourgeois order and the end of two years of anticlerical terror and assassination from the Republican side. The association in the workers mind between the Nationalist military coup and the Catholic Church had translated into the assault on the Church during the outbreak of the war (Delgado, 1999). As Jordi Alberti (2007) recounted, thousands of temples and places of worship burned to the ground. Sacred images that had once gathered entire communities were violently destroyed until there was nothing left. Moreover, a yet unknown number of priests and religious affiliates were murdered in spectacles of terror. A destructive madness possessed the civil population once the news of the nationalist uprising reached their ears. It was not the first time this had happened. In the years prior, the Republican parties, known for their distinct anticlericalism, had encouraged similar frenetic manifestations. However, nothing was comparable to the pogrom episodes that happened as a response to the Franco's military insurrection.

Therefore, it is not surprising that in the early years of the dictatorship, Franco counted on the support of the Church and the bourgeoisie for the establishment of a new political system: National Catholicism. National Catholicism was, in many ways, similar to its European fascist counterparts: exalting the national race, a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social control and suppression of the opposition. However, what differentiated Francoism from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy was the visible manifestation of the hegemony of the Catholic Church in all aspects of public and private life (Rodríguez, 1997). Religious agents contributed to the Francoist imaginary, presenting the Nationalists as 'saviours' of



religion from 'godless communism', consequently becoming a key source of legitimization.

The regime urged the Christianisation of every aspect of life in an attempt to control the population from within (Costa, 1996). After the Spanish Civil War, religious life had almost been eradicated, and the immediate post-war years were defined by restoration programs in a joint attempt of the Church and State to rebuild Catholicism. Hence, the famous quote by Antonio Comín – a well-known Spanish Communist leader – that describes life under Francoism: “God existed by decree, hell was just around the corner” (Quoted in Martínez, 2000: 68).

By the 1950s the Spanish society appeared completely different. The population, including the working classes, no longer ascribed to atheism and the Church had spread its reach in all spheres of life: crowds filled the Sunday masses, children prayed every day at school where communion was compulsory, and almost every social activity gathered religious motives (Alberti, 2007). However, within the population, traces of discontent with the dictatorship started to come to the surface, and, to the surprise of Nationalists, religion seemed to be leading them. The growing vexation came from within Catholic movements that the regime had established years before in their attempt to Christianise the working classes. Now, these same movements were the ones planting the ideological seeds to oppose Franco: educating, directly and indirectly, the masses in left, critical, and democratic values that would later be the foundation for the transition to democracy (Dowling, 2012). Of the numerous Catholic movements involved in the resistance, one particularly stood out: the *Joventut Obrera Cristiana*<sup>1</sup> [Christian Workers' Youth].

The JOC – as I will call it from now onwards – is an international Catholic working class movement created in 1919 in Belgium that arrived in Spain in 1936. After the Civil War (1936-1939), the Spanish JOC was adopted by the Francoist state as part of National Catholicism's strategy to convert the working classes and extend the government's control of them. Yet, by the 1950's, the JOC had turned its back on its benefactor, protecting those whom it was supposed to control. Springing back to an unprecedented peak, the JOC became the leading force of resistance against the regime, having a strong

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<sup>1</sup> The JOC defines itself as a Christian movement rather than a Catholic one. This conceptualization stems from the well-spread Catholic preaching that Catholicism is the only authentic form of Christianity.

hold on the working class youth (Martínez, 2000). The movement grouped the new generations born under the dictatorship and educated them to become *militants*<sup>2</sup> [members]. Soon these young workers became prominent figures of the Anti-Francoist resistance. At its highest point, the movement joined forces with *PSUC*, the Catalan Communist Party that still existed in secrecy (Delgado, 2012).

The JOC's success owes a lot to the cultural intersection that the movement embodied: being one of the first Spanish cases that intertwined categories from the seemingly contradictory Catholic and working class cultures. This syncretic nature allowed the JOC to navigate with considerable ease the tumultuous fascist landscape, therefore securing its claim as the leading force of Anti-Francoism. Moreover, the JOC continued to exist throughout the transition to Spanish democracy to the present day. During this process, the movement experienced countless transformations while never losing its Catholic side.

### *1.1 Research question and sub questions*

Departing from this context, this thesis aims to answer: How did the JOC *militants* adopt the Catholic cultural categories throughout the history of the movement? Fulfilling this goal will contribute to the understanding of cultural creation and transformation and it will help overcome the common perception that Catholicism is an instrument of alienation and inequality (Delgado, 1999), arguing that the same cultural categories, once re-read in other terms by sectors of society, can become a source of reasoning and strategy for resistance.

I have chosen to delimitate the scope of this diachronic research into two particular periods. First, the years through which Francoism extends, from 1939 to 1977. And second, the period from the introduction of the Euro in Spain (2002) to the present day (2023). The reason for this arrangement responds to both an analytical and a methodological purpose. On one hand, the determination of these two remarkably differentiated periods – in time but also form – will contribute to the comparison of both timelines. On the other hand, because of the extension and time limitations of this thesis, I have settled that delimiting the timeframe is the most effective way to approach this

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<sup>2</sup> The term 'militancy', in English, is a militar nomenclature that refers to the fact of being an active, determined and often willingly violent contender against a system. However, in the context of class movements in Spain, being *militant* does not necessarily imply the use of violence. Instead, is a metaphor for mobilization in which the members constitute an 'army' against the oppressor, symbolically encouraging a sense of collectiveness and common cause.

research without giving up essential data. While the two chosen periods presented a more stable and cohesive use of the cultural categories, during the years between 1977 and 2002 the JOC transitioned into the present-day model, addressing this evolution would require an amount of time and data that I did not have. However, I hope that in the future I have the opportunity to address this temporal void.

According to this division, this project intends to answer a double sub-question:

<b>Research question</b>	
How did the JOC <i>militants</i> adopt the Catholic cultural categories throughout the history of the movement?	
<b>Sub-question 1</b>	<b>Sub-question 2</b>
How did the JOC <i>militants</i> adopt the Catholic cultural categories during Francoism (1939-1977)?	How did the JOC <i>militants</i> adopt the Catholic cultural categories during the present day (2002-2023)?

Table 2. Research question and sub-question. Own work.

### 1.2 Thesis outline

This thesis is divided into six chapters that are organized as follows. Firstly, in Chapter 2 I will present a brief depiction of the theoretical background that sustains this thesis, clarifying the most important concepts as well as the hypothesis.

Secondly, in Chapter 3, I will explain the data collection and analytical methods I have employed during the research. Essentially answering: How was the data collected? And how was the data analyzed? While explaining the reasons why.

Next in order will be the analytical section of this thesis, which consists of two chapters. Each chapter will address a separate research question. Chapter 4 will be dedicated to answering the first question. Thus, I will explain the reasons why the approximation between Catholicism and the working class happened during Francoism, and I will describe how the JOC *militants* adopted the Catholic cultural categories.

Chapter 5 will address the second question. I will describe how Catholic categories are adopted by the JOC's *militants* nowadays. The consideration of the new readings will explain that these interpretations constitute the foundation for the moral component of the modern JOC activism.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I will reflect upon the presented analysis. According to the results of this thesis, I will explain how the Catholic categories have transformed with the movement. Moreover, I will elaborate on how the indications of this study case contribute to the understanding of the influence that the religious approximation to the working classes had on the emergence of the New Social Movements.

## 2. Theoretical framework

This chapter presents the theoretical background that sustains this thesis, composing a foundational review of the relevant theories that will serve as a roadmap that undergirds the hypothesis and develops the arguments. As the focus of this research is the adoption of Catholic cultural categories by the JOC, and their transformation throughout time, it is necessary to examine theorizations on cultural categories, cultural creation and cultural transformation. First, I will locate the JOC study case within the scholarly debate, briefly touching upon the historical research that has been done on the JOC. After considering their limitations, I will present the theoretical framework of this study and its relationship with the ethnography.

### *2.1 Research problematization*

Given the JOC's uniqueness and its political role, it is not surprising that the JOC has been the object of multiple studies. Particularly, the cultural mixture of the movement has captured the attention of numerous historians (Costa, 1996; Cintes, 2011; Martínez, 2000) who, through recollecting testimonies and documents, were able to describe in detail how the movement operated during Francoism. However, the publications have some limitations.

To start, the mentioned historians argued that the reason behind the JOC's adoption of Catholicism is that the particular circumstances of the time led the working classes to use the Church as a cover-up to act freely under the regime. As I will discuss later in Chapter 4, I do agree that the socio-political context that National Catholicism provided created a compelling environment for the approximation of the working classes to Catholicism. Yet, I do not think that the working class approximation can be simply explained by their use of the Church as a cover-up. Instead, I argue that the interaction encouraged some segments of the Spanish working class to adopt cultural categories from the Catholic Culture.

In social sciences it is often argued that culture results from the contingency of political, historical and economic factors, but also from the underlying symbolic framework in which it takes place. Because of that, when anthropologists study a certain group of people, it does so through its social and cultural framework: revealing its hidden symbolic undercurrents. Therefore, to comprehend the JOC's syncretic culture, this research must

find out how the JOC *militants* adopted the cultural categories they employ and how they transformed them throughout its history.

Secondly, these scholars give far too much importance to the conversion of the working class, and I do not blame them. The JOC's *militants* tend to consider themselves followers of the *Valors Cristians* [Valors Cristians], as one of my informants told me once when I approached him about the matter after noticing that he – alongside some other *militants* – had not taken communion<sup>3</sup> during the mass: "Christian? No. I mean, my parents do believe [in God]. But I do not. I agree with *Valors Cristians* though."

At first glance, one could easily assume that my interlocutor's answer was the result of secularization. Indeed, recent studies<sup>4</sup> have pointed out that while only 48.1% of the Spanish population identifies as 'religiously engaged', from this religious segment of the population a majority identifies as spiritual but not religious: 59.4% (Griera, 2021). The JOC does not seem to fit into this 59,4% spiritual segment. To be spiritual the *militant* must engage individually with a superhuman force. Instead, the JOC's present-day *militants* seem to consider faith as a sidebar of what the movement is for: a community and learning space to adopt certain conduct and ideological guidelines through *Valors Cristians*.

Nonetheless, from a cultural perspective, it is irrelevant whether the JOC members believe in God or not. Rather, the question should be, what exactly are those *Valors Cristians* that JOC members talk about? To answer this, I will refer to the work of some of the most relevant theorists of cultural creation and transformation. Developing such an encompassing theory is not an easy task, but thanks to the work of Marshall Sahlins (1985) and his successors, the paved path.

## 2.2 Cultural change

Sahlins starts his theorization on cultural change under the premise that as social beings, humans share a common symbolic framework that allows us to communicate our experience of reality and live in society. this shared symbolic<sup>5</sup> framework is what we

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<sup>3</sup> The communion is a form of worship part of the Christian service where bread and wine are consecrated and shared.

<sup>4</sup> According to the most recent survey of the *Baròmetre sobre la religiositat* [Religious barometer] (Griera, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Unlike some other theorists of the structure, such as Marx or Giddens, Sahlins talks exclusively about a symbolic structure, leaving material institutions out (Sewell, 2005).

know as culture, and it is constituted by a countless number of symbolic categories that people pair with their experiences: what we know as cultural categories.

In the matter at hand, Spanish society has historically held two differentiated cultures, whose structure seems to result from each other's antagonism. I am talking about Catholic culture and the working class culture. In Spain, as well as in most part of the western world, religion and the working class movements have had an ambivalent relationship during the past centuries. The emergence of working class identity and anticlericalism are intrinsically linked. They both nourished from industrialization and the ideals of the British and French Revolutions. This link has a lot to do with religion's long-term alliance with the upper classes.

The connection between the Catholic Church and the Spanish far-right ideologies dates back to the beginning of the nineteenth century when the idea that "the historical destiny of Spain is the defence and affirmation of Catholicism" (Rodríguez,1997:73) was born. This perspective stems from a radical rejection of modernity, in both cultural and economic terms, and a desire to revert to an idyllic medieval past, more specifically, the sixteenth century. A period during which, according to them, Spain was a self-sufficient nation chosen by God to spread Catholicism around the world. The far-right ideologies contend that, to restore this glorious past, it is necessary to re-establish the economy and reconstruct the traditional religious institutions (Rodríguez, 1997).

In response to this long-lasting coalition, the Spanish working classes developed a vehement hatred towards the Catholic Church, as the embodiment of power and oppression. They believed that religion upheld class inequality: encouraging its followers to give up on their struggles for compensation in the afterlife. This is why numerous class movements have traditionally sustained that believing in an omnipotent God sways people to accept omnipotent forms of power (Rodríguez,1997). Consequently, the working class culture is deeply defined by its critical posture to non-materialist reasonings – values, religion, spirituality or morality – arguing that they are fallacies behind which oppressors hide. Hence why class movements tend to reject religious authority in social and political matters. So relevant is the antithesis of this two cultures link that one cannot understand the events that marked Spanish history<sup>6</sup> during the twentieth century without

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<sup>6</sup> The twentieth century opened with Primo de Ribera's dictatorship (1923-1931), which defended the prevalence of the Catholic Church. Afterwards, the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1936) encouraged

acknowledging the behind-the-scenes cold war between Catholicism and Anticlericalism through which the two cultures kept developing as parallel structures, until the emergence of the JOC.

Based on this context, this thesis departs from the idea that the *Valors Cristians* that the JOC embodies are cultural categories the working class adopted from its counterpart culture. Hence, the JOC constituted one of the first spaces in which the cultural categories from both cultural systems intertwined. To explain how this happened, Sahlins' theories on cultural transformation will be significant.

According to the author, the symbolic structure is deeply influenced by alien cultural categories and material agents. As he states, while humans observe and understand the world through pre-existing cultural categories, the act of consistently paring reality with our culture's pre-existing categories ultimately transforms them. When a person uses a particular cultural category, they are putting this category at a dual risk. On one hand, no matter how extensive a category is, the intensity and incoherence of reality cannot be captured by it. On the other hand, the subjective experiences and agency of the person employing this category are also subject to several variations (such as personal history and personality traits) that will shape the person's use of the category. Consequently, every time a person uses a new cultural category, cultural transformation is deemed to happen.

So, in terms of this thesis topic, the working classes would have paired the new cultural categories, the *Valors Cristians* in relation to their old ones, rooted in the working class culture. When looking at the JOC's statements, for example, it becomes clear that the JOC explored a particular interpretation of *Valors Cristians*:

Religious responsibilities truly put us at the service of everyone, the poorest and the alienated, because they allow us to see them as brothers and sisters, children of God, and a companion for eternity. (Cardijn, 2012 [1952]: 113)

Particularly, Joel Robbins (2004) differentiates three possible outcomes. I will use the hypothetical example of 'austerity', a Catholic cultural category that the working classes could have adopted, to illustrate it.

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frenetic manifestations of anticlerical violence. Finally, Francoism (1939-1975) re-established Ribera's model, founding National Catholicism.



<b>1</b>	Equivalent translation	The agent finds a new category that fits the meaning of an old one, therefore expanding its meaning.	Expansion
<b>2</b>	Similar equivalency	The agent finds a new category that is similar to an old one but a little different, consequently his understanding or relationship of the old category will change.	Modification
<b>3</b>	Contradictory meanings	The agent starts using the new category in opposition to the old one, ultimately substituting it.	Substitution

Table 3. The three types of cultural change from Robbins (2004). Own work.

In the first case, the worker could find that the category of austerity fits well with the working class imagination of an ideal society without consumerism. Hence, by adding the Catholic category, he would be expanding his understanding of this idea, adding to it some symbolic representation for example.

However, it could also happen that the worker considers that austerity has some similarities to his principles as a worker but that still differs a little bit from his previously used categories because it adds a moral component. In this case, the worker might start to incorporate in his life some moral framework that was not there before. Consequently, the new incorporation might have transformed his relationship with the idea that the category reflects. Finally, it can also happen that the worker thinks that austerity is different from what he had ever seen before and therefore adopts the new category.

Overall, the point is that to one degree or another, the adoption of new cultural categories will translate into cultural transformation, either in the form of expansion, modification or substitution. From this understanding, cultural change would be inherent to culture's reproduction, which like a certain famous philosophical river, was constant: "Such is the flux that one can never step in the same culture twice" (Sahlins, 2005: 59). Let us break this process apart.

A more in-depth analysis also prompts the identification of alternative factors besides the ones that Sahlins and Robbin mentioned that also led to the modification of categories. One is particularly worth mentioning and has been argued by both Duvignaud (1990

[1973]) and Sewell (2005) and is the idea that the emotions of collective effervescence contribute to extending a contagious excitement that favours collective creativity:

Joy and rage blend into one another, making acts of either generosity or savagery possible. (...) moments when the pressure of rapidly unfolding actions leads to emotionally charged cultural improvisations that determine the shape of future history. (2005: 867)

I believe this to be the case of this thesis object since as the historians suggested in their memoirs, the political and social escalation during the 1950s in Spain was the ideal context for the JOC to arise. Indeed, the agitation of the time must have encouraged the creativity required for the use of new cultural categories.

Based on this theoretical framework, this thesis will describe how the *Valors Cristians* were adopted by the JOC *militants* and how they have been modified throughout the history of the movement. Moreover, the analysis will also consider whether the introduction of these cultural categories transformed the *militants'* understanding of the world and mobilization.

### 3. Methodology

In this chapter, I will explain the methods carried out, essentially attempting to answer: How was the data collected? How was the data analyzed? This thesis is an interpretative research – based on qualitative methods – that focuses on disclosing the study subjects' interpretations and perceptions. Given the subjective nature of the data, which comes from sources with individual experiences and discourses, this study required a careful examination of the variables and interlocutors' selection. Moreover, this thesis constitutes the continuation of a previous study I conducted during my bachelor's degree. Hence, the methodological decision-making process was based on my previous experiences in the field. Accordingly, this chapter will first familiarize with the preceding research advancements and limitations. Secondly, I will describe and justify the selection of the study samples and study cases, clarifying in the process the methods carried out. Finally, I will present how the data was analysed.

#### 3.1 Preceding research

My first encounter with the JOC dates back to 2018, when, encouraged by one of my bachelor's courses, I had my first taste of fieldwork. Despite the briefness of this first contact (only four weeks), the JOC remained in the back of my mind for the full extent of my bachelor's. From the beginning, the JOC characteristic faith stood out to me. As the note from one of my first encounters with the JOC retells:

"We [the youth] have not abandoned the faith..." one of the members of the table said "If we do not go to mass, it is because we are in other places" she continued.

"Nowhere have I lived my faith more than during volunteering or in the moments of action in the movement" In the audience some of the other JOC *militants* nodded in agreement. The girl concluded her speech by saying: " This is our way of experiencing faith." (Fieldwork diary, 2021)

I was curious. I wanted to comprehend what kind of faith could embody working class mobilization. Yet, this expression that made my interest flourish, became my greatest limitation. Looking back now, I believe I established my research aim without familiarizing myself with the nature of the movement. In a sense, the study was built backwards, or as it is often said in Spanish: *empecé la casa por el tejado* [I started building the house from the roof]. Due to my unfamiliarity with the movement, I never had a solid goal. This made me overlook countless dynamics such as the relationships or the political

baggage that would have otherwise served my understanding of the movement. Nevertheless, my bachelor's thesis served me to familiarize myself with the field and establish a consistent rapport with the *militants*. During one-and-a-half years of fieldwork, I gained perspective on how the movement worked, how it positioned itself as a social movement, and more importantly, I learned about how its *militants* understood and made sense of the world around them.

This time, however, I wanted to comprehend how the movement intertwined categories of Catholic and working class cultures and I wanted to describe how it had transformed them during the last decades. Hence, although the methods were similar, fieldwork was structured differently.

### 3.2 Fieldwork

Without a doubt, one of the greatest challenges this research faced was the lack of time for fieldwork. I only had seven weeks to recollect all the data I needed. So, from the beginning, it was clear that I had to delimitate my objectives methodically. Given my research question and sub questions, I had two goals during fieldwork. On one hand, I had to understand how the *militants* had interpreted *Valors Cristians* during two differentiated periods. On the other hand, I had to learn how the *militants* put those values into practice in their daily life. Consequently, preparing for entering field work required three steps: (1) Drafting of the categories, (2) Sample selection (3) Methodology. Which went as follows.

1	<b>Drafting of the categories</b>	
	Altruism, Siblinghood and Soteriology	
2	<b>Sample selection</b>	
	Francoism	Present-day
	People between 40 to 90 years old.	Federation of <i>Nou Barris</i> .
3	<b>Methodology</b>	
	Interviews in the format of Life stories, Archive work.	Participant observation and Interviews

Table 4. Table of fieldwork methods

To start, I went through my old notes in an attempt to select some Catholic cultural categories that were susceptible to having been interpreted and adopted by the movement. In this step, my previous fieldwork experience was essential, since it was only thanks to my familiarity with the context that I accurately drafted some of the most relevant categories that the movement extracted from the Catholic doctrine and adopted as part of their everyday functioning. This was very useful to orient my research and have some direction when talking to the JOC members.

The categories I drafted were revised and validated throughout fieldwork. As a result, I came up with the following four categories that my informants referred to as *Valors Cristians* and that is the focus of my analysis. It is important to point out that these definitions reflect my interlocutors' perspectives and do not intend to be accurate theological extractions.

**Altruism (Selfless action)** consists of the capacity to act for others' benefit without looking for anything in return. This selfless action is represented by Jesus and Mary whose ultimate sacrifice was for the greater good.

**Siblinghood (Children of God)** is the idea that humans are God's creation and that all humans share a common sense of kinship as Children of God.

**Soteriology (Salvation)** is the idea that God is merciful and will forget their follower's sins. However, to acquire salvation faith is not sufficient, one must also follow Christian teachings.

Secondly, the thesis research question is divided into two sub-questions, each corresponding to a different time frame. Therefore, I had to determine which data I required to answer each of them. For the study of the movement during Francoism (1939-1975), I decided to search for old members that had been active during the period I was studying. This meant that I had to recollect the witnesses of JOC members between 60 and 90 years old. Because of the difficult access to this interlocutors, I eventually choose to extend the minimum age requirement of my interlocutors to forty years. I assumed that even though this younger segment had not experienced firsthand the events I was researching, at least they must have heard stories about the preceding period.

On the contrary, the present-day JOC sample was, for obvious reasons a lot easier to reach. I contacted some of my old informants beforehand to adjust myself to the current

state of the movement. I found out what groups were active, which events were happening during my stay in the field, and so on.

The JOC in Spain is structured in Federations that spread throughout the territory, originally the Federations corresponded to the dioceses<sup>7</sup> of the Catholic Church, however now a days because of the lack of *militants* there are less Federations than dioceses. Each Federation is constituted by numerous JOC groups (composed from 5 to 10 *militants*) that meet on weekly basis and perform the movement's rituals and activities, besides the groups each federation constitutes specific commissions that are in charge of different organisation tasks: economic commission, initiation commission, mobilization commission, etc.

This time, I opted for delimiting my sample to the Federation of *Nou Barris* because it was the federation that held more activities and because this year some of the members of the federation had assumed national-scale responsibilities in the movement, which allowed me to also ask about broader issues when necessary.

Finally, I established the methods necessary for each period. For the first analysis, I conducted a series of formalized interviews in the form of Life stories, which let me intertwine discourse analysis with life events analysis. The Life stories consisted of long interviews sometimes more than one session in which my interlocutor and I recollected the events of their lives, including their time in the JOC. This was particularly useful when researching the interpretation of categories since it allowed me to capture the events that happened during that period, learn about my interviewer's interpretation of the cultural categories and analyse the impact that this internalization had in their lives.

For the second group, I opted to rely on participant observation and informal interviews. Given my rapport with the group, it was easy for me to navigate their daily functioning with ease. However, whenever I required some clarification on what was happening, I made non-structured interviews in which I asked the *militants* to develop further on specific themes or events we had experienced together without planning the questions or recording our conversation. Overall, the fieldwork for this thesis consisted of six life histories, seven not-structured interviews, seven events related to the movement and four group meetings. For further information consult the annex.

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<sup>7</sup> Is the ecclesiastical district under the jurisdiction of a bishop.

### 3.3 *Data analysis*

When engaging with the data for the analysis, it was crucial to consider the subjective nature of the information. Interpretation has a central role in this research. Therefore, the data that I extracted from my methods had a subjective origin: the interaction and dialogue between my interlocutors and me.

Despite the academic aspirations that would like to turn the anthropologist into a sort of "big brother" who sees without being seen, during fieldwork I inevitably altered with my presence the captured moments. The JOC members were often aware of me and my reason to be there, so it was inevitable that, to a certain extent, they showed me the best version of themselves. Rituals were theatricalized, explanations made in detail and conduct at their best. It was only after being in the field for a few weeks that those behaviours started to fade away. But even then, during the analysis it was clear that I had to contrast the informants' testimonies with each other, always trying to find a coherent more common interpretation and practice of the categories I was studying.

Another aspect that I took into consideration was that all the data extracted during fieldwork was the result of my subjective relationship with the source and my understanding of it. In a sense, all ethnographies are in part auto-ethnographies. This should not imply the denial of the value of all anthropological practice, but rather the revealing of a whole new dimension. Consequently, I made sure to materialize my voice and experience in the analysis (Devereux, 1967).

## **4. Incarnated Faith. The adoption of Catholic cultural categories during Francoism (1939-1977).**

Once having provided the necessary context for the components of this research and explained the methods carried out to fulfil its ambition, I can now delve into the components of the analytical process. As previously disclosed, the analysis of this thesis consists of two chapters. Each chapter will address a separate research question. First, Chapter 4 will explain the reasons why the *Valors Cristians* were adopted by the *militants* of the JOC and describe how did this change the working class culture within the movement. Afterwards, Chapter 5 will discuss how the present-day JOC engages with the *Valors Cristians*. Due to the question's requirements, each chapter will focus on a particular period. This double analysis conforms to the thesis's aim to comprehend how the adoption and transformation of some Catholic cultural categories by the JOC shaped the movements culture, providing the elements to discern a bigger-scale shift within the Spanish social mobilizations.

Accordingly, this first analytical chapter will attempt to answer: How did the JOC *militants* adopt the Catholic cultural categories during Francoism (1939-1977)? To start, I will explain the reasons why the adoption happened. Secondly, I will describe how the JOC *militants* interpreted the *Valors Cristians* from its working class culture. Finally, I will show that the JOC's interpretations of certain *Valors Cristians* transformed the *militant's* culture, consequently establishing a symbolic foundation for the transformation of the movement's mobilization.

### *4.1 A God by decree*

The enigma of a young generation of workers that seek refuge under the remains of the same churches that their parents had attempted to destroy has captivated numerous Spanish historians. Why would the historically anticlerical working class grow so close to the Catholicism? The answer they reached is quite straightforward: because it was the only option available (Cazorla, 2010; Cintes, 2011; Martínez, 2000). According to them, National Catholicism forced this approximation by imposing religion in all aspects of social and private life, providing the ideal breeding ground for the approximation between religion and left ideologies to happen.



Franco ruled Spain as *Caudillo*<sup>8</sup> by the grace of God, and as so, he lived up to his title. Under Francoism the Church was granted government subsidies and a regained control over the education system and culture (Rodríguez, 1997). The immediate post-war years witnessed large-scale projects of restoration of parishes. Church and State joined together in the re-Christianisation of every aspect of life in an attempt to control the population from within. The scope of the clergy's reach into people's lives gave the Church a privileged vantage point from which to keep an attentive eye on the population. As an informant once told me, it was not uncommon for members of the State or affiliated institutions such as the *Confederación Nacional de Sindicatos* (CNS) [National Confederation of Unions] to ask members of the clergy for a referral about certain individuals.

One day, we talked to the union. We asked some questions about the legal requirements for salary. The next day, our *consiliari* called us. He said that the union had told him to *dar-nos caña* [scold us], that we should not be asking questions. (Rafi, 2021)

From work references to aptitude tests, the State took the clergy's word very seriously. Overall, the Church worked as an extension of the State's hand within the population, particularly, the working classes, which according to those historians would have eventually surrendered to this influence. However, I would like to go one step further and argue that this approximation was the result of the wills of the agents of the time. But to understand that a further contextualization of the period must be presented.

Firstly, Franco's State prompted a new economic model, which aimed for the self-sufficiency of Spain through the state's control of prices and an isolated national economy. However, it soon became clear that the scheme was unsustainable. The already declining post-war economy crumbled without the help of international markets. The national income fell back, and with the prices of food escalating, near-famine spread all over the country (Martínez, 2000). Poverty was particularly wrenching in the countryside, where the loss of men during the war had left the fields unattended. Many fled the rural areas and migrated to the metropolis, searching for wage jobs in the local industries. Metropolitan cities, like Barcelona and Madrid, became surrounded by growing shantytowns, where migrants and workers crumbled together in miserable conditions (Cazorla, 2010). Secondly, the working class's agonizing situation was only worsened by

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<sup>8</sup> is the title given to Franco by his supporters, roughly equivalent to Duke or Fuhrer.

the state's repression on the losers of the war (Martínez, 2000). All republican institutions and political organizations ceased to exist and the death or exile of most of the republic and working class leaders left the citizens with almost no capacity to mobilize, while most democratic organizations were either dissolved or remained in secrecy with minimal action (Cazorla, 2010).

By the 1950s, however, the worst years of hunger and repression had passed. Even though the dictatorship continued to monitor and punish expressions of opposition, sanctions diminished. With the end of the Second World War, the early signs of the Cold War prompted the re-structure of the world fronts. The world was no longer divided on the premise of fascism against anti-fascism. Instead, the intersection was set between two antagonistic politico-economic models: capitalism vs communism. This new paradigm encouraged the United States to align Franco's regime with the Western Block. As a part of their strategy to secure Spain as an ally, the States introduced capitalist advisors (technocrats) to promote the economic stabilization of the country. Finally putting an end to the autarky. The new policies opened Spain to the international market and engaged the Spanish industries in a new period of growth. However, economic growth did not translate into people's lives. Although, there was more demand for labour and food rationing ended, now that the dictatorship seemed to settle for the long run, the precarious life conditions awoken a silent outrage (Cazorla, 2010; Martínez, 2000).

It is precisely at this particular crossroad of events – where precarity, oppression and religion came together – that the approximation between religion and working classes emerged. The working classes had a pressing lack of organized support, and the Churches were eager to evangelize the working classes. So, they adopted social functions that in a democratic context would have been typical of unions, neighbourhood associations and working class movements (Martínez, 2000). Thus, the approximation of the working classes and religion was, to put it simply, born out of necessity. Under National Socialism, religion was the only mean available for survival.

Within these working class Churches, the Catholic movements started to emerge. They offered education, entertainment and sources of socialization that had otherwise been prohibited under the regime. The JOC soon became one of the biggest organizations due to its targeting of the working youth. While for the older generations, the Church remained an enemy; the new generations born under the regime found in the JOC a space where to reunite, socialize and with time, mobilize.

The economic and political context of the 1950s encouraged young workers to consider ways to improve their lives through social mobilization, and the JOC provided the perfect space for that. Being a confessional movement, the JOC had the special privilege of being recognized as a legal organization. Therefore, it held rights that no other clandestine organization would ever have: the right to meet, use the church's facilities, access copy machines, have a free press, etc. As the historian Joan Beltran once explained:

The JOC were the perfect cover-up for all of those workers who did not have other spaces where to act without risking their lives and being prosecuted. So, more and more people, often open communists, went to the JOC looking for a welcoming space. (Interview referenced in Martínez, 1998: 160)

Hence, being the only available medium, religion became for certain segments of the working classes the mean to express their concerns and actively act upon them. However, this fortuitous alliance fulfilled a much bigger role than a perfect cover up.

The particular circumstances of the time blurred out the border that had consistently separated religion and politics since the French Revolution before Francoism. In their interaction with religion, the JOC's *militants* found in the *Valors Cristians* elements through which to understand the world. Reasonings that answered their class rooted struggles and that conveniently fitted their left-ideologies, leading to a working class reading of Catholicism. In the next section of this chapter, I will explain how the JOC *militants* adopted the *Valors Cristians* from the Catholic culture they had just recently familiarized with from their old cultural categories.

#### 4.2 *Incarnated Faith*

So, the generations born under Francoism found themselves in an environment where on one hand, the precarious circumstances made the cultural categories of the working class culture survive (although precariously), and on the other, catholic culture spread throughout all spheres of life, claiming to have the answer to all human struggles from a power beyond.

Through this constant contact categories of the imposed Catholic culture, particularly some of its *Valors* merged into the culture of segments of the working classes. However, rather than extending the right ideologies in the working classes – as Franco had hoped –, the *Valors Cristians* that the working classes adopted were interpreted from their old cultural categories. Precisely, as introduced in the theoretical framework (Chapter 2), as

social beings, humans understand the world through the cultural categories that exist in the society in which they live (Sahlins, 1985). Precisely, the innovation of the JOC was defending the idea that religious responsibilities were intrinsically connected to class struggle. This practice was so different from what the workers understood as Catholicism that they gave it a new name: *Incarnated Faith*, because it incarnated the spiritual dimension of Catholicism into the people's daily lives. Essentially presenting structural problems such as hunger, homelessness, and poverty as matters of faith.

The *Incarnated Faith* draws from a series of *Valors Cristians* that were effectively adopted by the *militants*.

An element that brilliantly embodies the practice of *Valors Cristians* is the *Revisió de Vida* [Life's revision], through the description of the ritual documented by the historian Ferrando Martínez (2000) I will illustrate how the categories are put into practice by the JOC *militants*.

Categories: <i>Valors Cristians</i>	Adoption: Incarnated Faith	Transformation
1 Altruism	Collective revolution	Expansion
2 Children of God	Class awareness	Modification
3 Soteriology	World change	Substitution

Taula 5. *Valors Cristians* readings during Francoism.

To start, given the central role that people's actions occupy in Catholicism, it is not surprising that one of the core elements of its dogma refers precisely to actions, particularly selfless actions: **Altruism**. The encouragement of altruism in the form of charity, empathy and care has always been a part of the catholic practice and is considered a source of faith.

This category fitted extremely well the imagination that the working class had of social mobilizations because they also function on the premise that the worker's actions and sacrifices are being done for a greater good that goes beyond their interest. Consequently, the adoption of altruism expanded the *militants'* understanding of mobilization. Interestingly, in the JOC, Jesus is considered the central religious figure, instead of God, who remains present but in the distant background. The reason for this has a lot to do with the idea that while God represents spiritual faith, Jesus embodies altruistic actions.

Secondly, another valor that is essential in the JOC is the well-known idea that humans, as God's creation, are the **Children of God**. This idea has been adopted and re-interpreted

in numerous ways throughout Christian theology, however, one of the most common premises that are extracted from it is the idea of equality. As Children of God, all Christians see each other as siblings and therefore as equals under God's will.

Of course, this sense of brotherhood becomes useful when it comes to justifying certain aspects of the working class culture which also stem from the hope of an equal world. What is interesting is that, unlike altruism, which was for the most part adopted without alterations, the category of Children of God was modified. The JOC *militants* interpreted that even though all humans are siblings, and therefore equal, those who encourage inequality acquire an immoral encompassment and are excluded from the kinship. In other words, from this reading, the only ones capable of sharing a sense of common kinship are the members of the working class, the "you shall love your neighbour as yourself" turns into "You shall love your comrades as yourself".

Finally, the last category I wanted to discuss is the idea of **Soteriology**, also known as Salvation, which also experiences a transformation during its adoption. In Catholic culture, humans are inherently good and if they lose their path because of the world's sins there is always the potential to redeem and access Salvation through action and faith. However, when adopted by the *militants* Soteriology is read in bigger scale terms: the world salvation. In this case, the path to achieving salvation is education and mobilization.

This section has explained how the *Valors Cristians* were adopted by the JOC *militants* and has described the transformations the categories have experienced in this process. We have seen that while altruism was adopted from the Catholic Culture in quite a literal way and simply expanded the *militant's* perception of it, Children of God and Soteriology were transformed in the process. Now all that is left to do is consider if the adoption of those *Valors Cristians* has in any way altered the working class culture within the JOC.

In the following section of the Chapter, I will show how this interpretation plays out in real life through a study case of one of my informants and her depiction of the *Revisió de Vida* [Life' revision] The *Revisió de Vida* is a ritualized practice celebrated regularly in the *militant* groups of the JOC that intends to reconsider the militancy's life through the lens of Christian morality. The exercise, reminiscent of Penance, carries the *militants* in an examination of their conduct, where the *militant's* actions are (1) collectively *viewed*, (2) *judged* on the lens of the movement's conduct guidelines, and re-addressed through a suggested (3) *action*.

The first stage – the (1) *Viewing* – consists of a description of an event by one of the *militants*. The event presented must be relevant to this person's life but also answer to silent themes of the working class. Frequent topics are academics, work, economic circumstances, and personal relationships. The *militant* is asked to expose with honesty and clarity the details of it in front of the group. Afterwards, the other members of the group contribute to the conversation with the so-called 'parallel events', which consist of similar experiences they have had. The participation of other group members draws attention to the social and structural dimension of the shared event, turning the reviewed event into a collective object in which all members can find themselves reflected.

Once the event has been exposed, the group moves on to the (2) *judging* part of the exercise. In this stage, the reviewed event is contemplated from the point of view of Jesus: the members consider what would Jesus think or do regarding the circumstances described. To that end, the presence of Jesus is invoked and reflected upon a biblical text of the priest's choice, which usually shares some proximity to the theme discussed. Through this exercise, *Valors Cristians* are transposed into the *militant's* life.

Finally, the last part of the *Revisió de Vida* is the (3) *Acting*. It consists of guidance for the future actions of the militancy. Once having considered what are the good and bad behaviours, it becomes easy to discern what direction the *militant's* actions should take on. In the afterwar context, Acting translated into the mobilization of Catholicism against Franco's regime.

Through the narration of the experience of this event by Ernestina I aim to show how the already described *Valors Cristians* are put into practice and how their use has transformed the way the *militants* understand the world and mobilizations. Particularly, I will explain how these changes led to a new form of social mobilization that is founded in moralism.

#### 4.3 *From materialism to moralism*

I met Ernestina for the first time two years ago when I interviewed her for a paper on religion and gender. At the time Ernestina was a sixty-seven-year-old Christian woman, the daughter of a family of farmers who lived in the south of Spain (Jaén). When the war ended, her parents decided to move to Barcelona in hopes of finding work. She told me that her father was a distant figure, and like most working class men at the time, was quite reluctant to trust the church. That was not surprising. Being on the losing side of the war, Ernestina's parents had lost everything that they had truly believed in, experiencing first-

hand the aggression of the church towards his family: her parents had been married by the state, which in the new regime was no longer valid.

However, Ernestina's view was far from her father's. She was from a new generation born under the regime. Due to her family's economic difficulties, Ernestina had to work from a very young age. When she turned thirteen, she started working as a maid for a well-provided family. There she got a place to sleep, eat and a small wage to pay for her expenses. Yet, that money was rarely spent, Ernestina had to remain in the house every day and night. Except for the occasional errand, her only free time was on Sunday afternoons when for a few hours she was allowed to leave the house.

Precisely, it was on a Sunday afternoon when a friend invited her to a JOC meeting. "We meet at the local church, we hang out together and visit places," she told her. Ernestina, who was fourteen-year-old at the time, accepted immediately. She would have taken any opportunity to get out of the house. Her father disapproved of her decision and warned her "You do not know where you are going. Those black crows (the priests) are going to absorb your brain. I am telling you, watch out!" Despite this, her attendance at the JOC's meetings became more and more regular and soon it was no longer about leaving the house but about much more.

She told me that one of the turning points for her conversion and militancy was the first time she did a *Revisió de Vida* [Life revision]. At that point, Ernestina had been in the group for more than two months. Yet, she had not told anyone that she was a maid. As she explained to me, at the time, working as a servant was denigrating: "For a woman it was considered the second worse kind of job one could do, only after prostitution". So instead, she told everyone that she was currently living at her aunt's house. That day, however, when the *Consiliari*<sup>9</sup> asked her to share something in the (1) *viewing* the first part of the *Revisió de Vida*, she forced herself to talk about her work.

The opportunity was difficult to miss. So, Ernestina took a leap in the dark and explained to everyone the truth. To her surprise no one reacted, they simply inquired with questions on the motives of her hiding and how her work made her feel. What followed took her even more off guard. As a part of the *viewing*, the other members of the group contributed

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<sup>9</sup> Is the name of the adult figure that guides and councils the JOC groups. Originally it was a position exclusively for priests and members of the church. But since the 1990s the JOC started to welcome the incorporation of laics as *Consiliaris*.

to the conversation with 'parallel events' that reflected similar experiences to the one Ernestina had shared. "No one had ever asked me what I thought, not even my family, my brothers, nor anyone! And that confused me. That day made me realize that I was someone". Precisely because of its collectiveness, the Viewing contributes enormously to solidifying a sense of class awareness, thus, generating an awakening in the *militant*: "When you see that everything that worries you has also happened to others, suddenly you see things with different eyes", she said.

What is significant here is that for Ernestina the 'conversion' to Catholicism and her 'class awareness' – both cultural categories from their corresponding cultures – seem to emerge together. Because of the mystique element attached to this, Ernestina's awakening, as she described it, comes as a total transformation of her being, rather than a mere process of realization of her victimhood. After that, she was longer the same person, she explained to me, as if a curtain had been drawn back and showed that the reality that surrounded her was intrinsically perverse and undesirable, and more importantly that it was her moral responsibility to oppose it. This brings me to the next point.

For Ernestina going through the (2) *Judging* was an educational exercise, "I was young, and I sat there and listen. Sat and absorbed everything", there she learned that being a maid, the same way as being any kind of worker was a good thing. "They taught me a mystic around work as well as the dignity that comes from being a worker".

But if being a worker was not wrong, what was wrong? The answer was quite simple, the wrongs were in the immorality of the system: their employers, the abusers and more importantly, the dictatorship. The JOC always made sure to end up every revision with a reflection on the action that must be considered to solve the situation.

Precisely, because of its use of the Catholic cultural categories the JOC never really focused on the wrongs of capitalism or the critique of the economic system. Instead, their emphasis seemed to reside in the immorality of injustice in the workers' lives, rather than its origin. As Cardijn, the founder of the Belgian JOC said:

Religious responsibilities are opposed to any abuse of science, technology and material or political power when the workers only see a means or an intruder. They oppose it to respect and enhance the dignity, happiness, and vocation of everyone. (Cardijn, 2012 [1952]: 113)



Moreover, the (3) *action* was presented as more than a mere political display of the people's wishes, but as a double course that had to join both collective mobilizations but also internal renovation of one's soul.

To achieve any structural reform (salary, joint management, co-property, social, economic, and political democracy, etc) we must understand, and make others understand that a structural reform external to the people would be insufficient and inefficient if it is done without an internal transformation: educational and liberational, moral spiritual and personal. No reform will ever be profound and prolonged without the restoration of the values, duties and ethical aspirations of the people and society. (Cardijn, 2012 [1952]: 71)

Consequently, the JOC's working class culture resided in the denouncing of the neglecting of the historical left, emphasizing the immorality of capitalism, and calling upon a revolution that prioritized an inherent revelation of oneself (or soul). The workers had not only reinterpreted Catholic cultural categories but through this same process, their culture had transformed as well.

#### 4.4 *Closing*

Once having considered the JOC's *militants'* adoption of the *Valors Cristians* during Francoism it is clear that the approximation of the working classes with Catholicism was more than a mere cover-up, the result of the circumstances of the time as Beltran (1998) claimed. Instead, I have argued that the particular environment that National Catholicism created provided a fertile creative environment that encouraged the adoption of some Catholic cultural categories by some segments of the working classes. This is how the JOCs culture was born. Embodying the working class takes on the Valors Christians: presenting structural problems such as hunger, homelessness, and poverty, and more importantly collective solidarity as a matter of faith in the form of Incarnated Faith.

Moreover, I have explained that the adoption of these Catholic categories led to a transformation of the working class culture, making moral responsibility a central theme in the JOC. Unlike its predecessors, the JOC emphasis resides on the immorality of injustice in the workers' lives, rather than its origin. This translated into an action that, although political, came from a moral justification, which gave it a spiritual transcendency never seen before.

As presented in the study case of Ernestina, this double and mutual transformation happened organically, as the result of the interactions and the blurring of the border

between religion and politics, only sustainable at the time. Then it should not come as a surprise, that these transformations fell apart once the dictatorship ended and this particular environment crumbled.

That, however, was not the end of the JOC, since in its despair a new reformulation of its premises happened, this time rooted in elements of the capitalist and secular society Spain was preparing to be after the transition to democracy.

## **5. Being Light and Salt. The adoption of Catholic cultural categories during the present day (2002-2023).**

In the previous chapter, I exposed that the particular crossroad of historical circumstances of the 1950s led to the church's approximation to some segments of the working class. Yet rather than being a simple cover-up for the class movements to act, the alliance with the church led to the adoption by the working classes of some Catholic Cultural categories. Particularly, the *militants* found in the *Valors Cristians* elements from which to express their concerns. I also explained that the adoption of *Valors Cristians* was a crucial aspect in the shaping of a new counter working class culture that left behind the traditional materialism of class movements for a more moralist perspective on things. It denounced the neglecting of the historical left, emphasizing the immorality of capitalism and calling upon a revolution that prioritized an inherent revelation of oneself (or soul).

In this chapter I will examine the present-day JOC, attempting to answer How did the JOC *militants* adopt the Catholic cultural categories during the present day (2002-2023)? First, I will present the ubiquitous role that *Valors Cristians* have in the present-day JOC. Through the analysis of three study cases, I will explain how the Catholic core values of the JOC are still central to the movement's ideology. However, I will show that they have transformed. Finally, I will explain some factors that led to this transformation of the categories. Diving into some contextual elements that have changed the working class youth experience: secularism and new capitalism. Finally, I will reflect on the influence that *Valors Cristians* have had in the transitioning process from a working class movement to a New Social Movement.

### *5.1 Being Light and Salt*

Comprehending the full extent of the present-day JOC engagement with *Valors Cristians* is not an easy task. To facilitate the analysis, I will present and analyse three study cases where the JOC's *militants* put *Valors Cristians* into practice. First, I will introduce an example of a present-day *Revisió de Vida*, which I recollected during participant observation. This ritual constituted a turning point in my understanding of the present-day JOC worldview, and I hope it will help illustrate the way *Valors Cristians* are interpreted now a days. This analysis will serve to compare the old and present-day *Revisió de Vida*, providing the elements to discern a shift in the interpretation of *Valors Cristians*. Secondly, I will describe a federation emergency meeting I recently attended.

The motive of the reunion was to address the lack of involvement of the militancy. It will be interesting to see how *Valors Cristians* are used to engage the *militants* and navigate the conflict. Finally, I will present a problematic case: the establishment of a feminist protocol. I consider this case particularly relevant because it helps illustrate that some of the *Valors Cristians* were able to transcend the generations of the JOC to the present day.

#### 5.1.1 The economic *Revisió de Vida*

Two months after my incorporation into one of the JOC's groups during my first fieldwork period, I was invited to take part in the first of the numerous *Revisió de Vida* that I attended throughout the extension of my fieldwork. At that time, I still struggled to understand the JOC's reason to exist, and the experience became a turning point towards overcoming it. Like all *Revisions de Vida*, my first *Revisió de Vida* had a theme. This time, the chosen topic was economy. It was January 2022, so the year had just started, and the *militants* had been asked to determine the amount of contribution to the movement that they would make that year. Interestingly, rather than just giving a guideline amount, as most class movements do, the JOC annually encourages its militancy to carry out an economic *Revisió de Vida*. This revision intended to mentor the *militants* in their decision-making so that the economic contribution that results is coherent with the values of the movement. Besides the specificity of the encounter, the *Revisió de Vida* was structured just as Ernestina's was, starting with a *viewing*, followed by *judging* and ending with *action*. It went as follows.

The day before our meeting, our *consiliari* informed us that the following sessions would be dedicated to the economical *Revisió de Vida*, according to the protocol she send us a series of questions for the *viewing* that we had to prepare and expose the next day.

Where does the money that covers our expenses come from?

What other benefits do I get? (Clothing, leisure activities, food, transport, training, etc)

Does someone provide it for me?

Based on what I have, what criteria do I use to manage the money? How do I distribute them? And who benefits from these? (Fieldwork Diary, 2020)

The questions were formulated in a way that forced us to not only consider income as money but also in terms of care.

During our conversation, each group member presented their *viewing*, answering the questions accordingly. Some of the *militants* were still studying and living in their parent's

homes, while others worked and managed to live on their own. One thing that shocked me about the *viewing* was the clarity with which the members expressed themselves. When it was my turn to speak, I felt incapable of recreating their manner of speaking. As I wrote in my notes:

They express themselves with clarity. Despite jumping back and forth between Spanish and Catalan their speech is consistent. The way they expressed their opinions and identified their feelings with apparent ease was impressive. Next to them, my voice was cracked, and my words were muddled. (Fieldwork Diary, 2020)

We were speaking the same language, yet not the same words. The *militants* had learned from early on that their thoughts and feelings were sacred and that had to be presented according to the fitting performativity.

But moving back to the *Revisió de Vida*, the ritual continued with the *judging*. This stage started the following day since the *viewing* lasted for the full extent of the first session. First, we collectively read the ‘Widow’s Offering’ text from the Bible:

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

Jesus said, “This poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything, all she had to live on.” (Mark 12: 41-44)

Reading this text in common allowed us to materialize the most relevant *Valors Cristians* for the economic *Revisió de Vida*. The scene, which reminisced the *militant's* contribution to the movement, intended to force de *militants* to consider if they were giving everything, they could to those in need.

Yet, what surprised me was that despite the strong message of the fragment, which invited the members to give “all they had to live on”, the *acting* continued with what I could only interpret as a precautionary step back. Our *Consiliari* started talking that donations come in all shapes and sizes and that we have to think not only in terms of money but also beyond. In the same way that the *viewing* had included other forms of non-economic benefits, the *acting* was incorporated as an alternative to practical donations in the form of actions and goodwill.

Unlike the class movements who would consider efficiency above moral reflection, the JOC prioritized the coherence between the *militants'* conduct and the *Valors Cristians*. However, even the JOC had historically considered action central, and the *militants'* contributions had always been economically driven. Yet here, the present-day JOC was presenting a new kind of contribution to the movement in the form of indirect actions. This characteristic became more and more recurrent the more *Revisions de Vida* I encountered. Here and there the movement's actions kept being reduced to participating in other campaigns (local food donations, volunteering) and quite standard forms of indirect mobilization and actions (writing statements on social media). Yet, it was not until I found out about the cultural category of *Being Salt and Light* that this seemingly contradictory attitude made sense to me.

Despite being a long-lasting Catholic premise, the cultural category of Being Salt and Light is one of the most recent contributions in the movement, only starting to appear in the JOC's manuals from 2000 onwards. In a sense the idea of Being Salt and Light substitutes the category of *altruism*. While it follows the premise of selfless action towards the other, it also introduces new elements. The concept comes from the Gospel of Matthew in the Bible which says:

You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Mt. 5: 13-16)

To put it briefly, the JOC's interpretation of this text is that when the world succumbs to injustice, action must take the form of the salt that brings flavour and the light that illuminates life. According to Matthews' message, through being exemplary followers of Christ and his commended lifestyle *militants* can make a substantial impact on those around them without requiring big manifestations of faith. The idea of *Being Salt and Light* is also presented as a healing exercise. As Pepe, one of the JOC's priests told me once:

Jesus instructed us that the only way to achieve inner peace is through others. The idea is that helping others and providing a healing exercise for one's soul. And is only through that, that one's purpose and sense of self can be built. (Pepe, 2023)

All in all, the economical *Revisió de Vida* has shown how the cultural category of *altruism* has been substituted by the category *Being Light and Salt* which despite being similar to the previous one, serves the *militants* justification of a more passive form of mobilization.

### 5.1.2 The emergency meeting.

Being the second biggest federation of the Catalan JOC, the Federation of *Nou Barris* has historically been one of the paramount centres of militancy. From calling up strikes to local solidary actions in the neighbourhood, the *militants* from this traditionally working class district in Barcelona have a long history of class struggle behind their backs. Yet, nowadays, the federation is a mere shadow of what it used to be. Even though the lack of *militants* has affected them as much as the rest, the circumstances worsened because of the unstable assistance of at least a third of the federation's militancy.

This normative situation was impeding the proper running of the federation to the point that events had to be cancelled last minute (because of lack of participation), there were often not enough people to assume responsibilities, and incapacity to adopt new initiation groups. The concern had escalated to the point that Jordi – the federation's responsible –, was forced to call upon an emergency meeting. It so happened that Jordi was a close informant of mine. Thanks to this, I was allowed to witness the developments within the federation and attend said encounter.

The idea of an 'emergency meeting' was to address the current situation of the federation "without pointing fingers or making anyone feel guilty". The most involved *militants* had suggested establishing a standard of assistance: a required amount of participation needed to be a part of the militancy. Regardless, this appeal was soon dismissed by Jordi and the federal *consiliari*, who argued that each *militant's* reasons for not attending were different. "By establishing a general rule" they argued, "we would be mistreating those who had a good justification for not attending". But what did they mean by good justification? Well, throughout my fieldwork in the JOC, I noticed that a so-called 'good justification' requires a set of circumstances that are beyond the person's control.

For example, Jordi presented the case of a *militant* to argue against the 'accounting appeal'. As he described, one member – whose name remained undisclosed – had recently

stopped attending the JOC's meetings. This *militant's* lack of attendance was due to domestic problems. Jordi and the consiliari defended that this *militant* should not be called upon for his lack of assistance. Instead, he should be encouraged to participate, so that he can be accompanied throughout his struggle.

The day of the meeting was a Sunday morning. We all met in one of the churches linked to the JOC. The church lent us a space where we could stay erupted. Jordi and some of the other *militants* made sure there was tea and some snacks for everyone. As is common, they had organized some activities throughout the morning to guide the reflection and enhance the collective spirit. As soon as the *militants* arrived a welcoming dynamic started in the form of a collective game, 'the death chain' with which I was unfamiliar. The dynamic went as follows.

First, Jordi instructed us to choose two people in the group and not tell anyone who we had chosen. Once everyone made their decision the game started. We were told to wander around the hall. At a certain point, Jordi touched someone's shoulder. That person had three seconds to be saved by those who had chosen them. If the others did not get there on time the touched person would die – by sitting on the floor–. We played the game a few rounds, and only one person ended up lying on the floor. To be honest, while I was playing, I could not figure out the point of the game. But then, by the end of the last round, Jordi asked: "Has anyone saved someone that was not in their mind?". Around half of the *militants* raised their hands. Then I understood. By asking everyone not to say out loud the names of the people who we selected, Jordi was opening the possibility of people changing their chosen names throughout the game. Maybe the person I had chosen was never going to get 'killed', so I could always save someone that I had not chosen but was at actual risk of dying. The game constituted a metaphor for social mobilization a message to be open to broad justice and to act upon the needs of those around us, no matter where their struggles come from. No one has to be left behind.

Here, the *Soteriology* that was observed in the previous chapter – in instances of the revolutionary display – comes again into play. However, this time, from a different angle.

During the decade of the 1950s, the category of *Soteriology* was the root of hope for a future worth fighting for. Yet, in the present, the inherent potential for good is re-read on a micro-scale. Today, the JOC's *militants* no longer dream of democracy. Instead, they aspire to enhance the inherent good within themselves. Consequently, the modern JOC



transformed the category of *soteriology* from the premise that not only reality but also people are capable of change, somehow going back to the meaning it had within the Catholic Culture. As the *consiliari* explained during one of the conversations preceding the emergency meeting: “Sometimes people act wrong because of an evil they carry inside. People should have the opportunity to do things differently” (Pepe, 2023).

The meeting ended quite late that day, but despite people’s exhaustion I felt that the bounds of the *militants* had been strengthened. If the meeting succeeded in accomplishing its goal has yet to be seen. While we were cleaning up, I asked Jordi and another militant that was with him what did they think of the future of the JOC. And their positive outlook surprised me:

The JOC will end, sooner or later. I think we have some time left and the end will be gradual. But it will definitely happen. But that’s okay. In the end the JOC’s goal is to make the world a better place and this is something that will continue to be done everywhere. Our spirit will remain.

### 5.1.3 The feminist protocol

A couple of years ago, sexual aggression happened within the JOC. Both the victim and the aggressor were part of the movement. The incident led to the automatic expulsion of the perpetrator. Yet, *militants* felt that the pushing lack of resources had to be resolved. Consequently, a committee was formed to write down a ‘Purple Protocol’ that established the necessary steps to follow when the movement faced sexual aggression.

The commission that the JOC constituted was formed by both *militants* and *consiliars*, which negotiated the premises of the document. Upon interviewing some of the involved members I found out that the commission had two main positionings. First, the *militants* who composed of the young generations of the JOC, defended the creation of a standard ‘Purple Protocol’. Secondly, the *consiliars* were there to make sure the protocol followed the *Valors Cristians* in which the JOC was sustained. In most cases, both views were coherent with one another, except when it came to one of the (dis)agreed terms: the extension of *soteriology*.

One on hand, the *consiliars* sustained that the protocol had to consider giving the aggressor a second chance to re-conduct their lives, albeit only in case of genuine repentance. “Any form of Christianity that is not hopeful is not true. It is our core belief

that all situations can be reversed” (Pepe, 2023) one consiliari told me. Similarly, another said:

“(during our meetings) I tried to emphasize that Jesus taught us to always give people a second opportunity. We have to understand that until quite recently, masculinity was still prevailing, and some people do not know otherwise. Is our task to educate them towards the right direction” (Jaume, 2021).

On the other hand, the *militants* argued that the expulsion of the aggressor was a necessary counteraction. One *militant* I had the chance of talking to told me: “I understand that as a movement we have to think what brought someone to do such an evil thing. But as a person, it feels wrong to keep him inside the movement after what he has done. Personally, it is quite difficult for me” (Marta, 2023).

This contradiction is extremely relevant because what the *consiliars* are defending is the classical interpretation of the category of *Soteriology* that the movement had defended during Francoism – in terms of the possibility of redemption and self-improvement no matter what – but now the new generations seem to struggle with the continuation of this category and considered that it could not be limitlessly applied, therefore transforming it.

In the end, the section approved the possibility of salvation but under restricting circumstances. The final protocol resulted as follows.

As a working class and Christian movement, we believe in restorative justice, always starting from the emotions expressed by the assaulted person. As a general rule, we will follow the situation table that is in the protocol (...) In front of the alleged aggressor, the following steps will be taken:

1. The events will be catalogued as a, b or c by the level of gravity according to protocol. When classified as b or c, the alleged aggressor will be temporarily removed from the acts of the movement until the reference committee makes a decision.
2. A meeting and/or conversation with the alleged aggressor will be organized. Then two will be offered.
  - If the aggressor does not acknowledge his guilt, he will be expelled from the movement.
  - If the aggressor acknowledges the facts. If the aggression has been categorized between a and b, the accompaniment will be implemented, and a Revisió de Vida will be proposed, as well as specialized training. If coexistence with the assaulted person is impossible, he will be removed from the responsibilities and acts of the

movement until the reference committee makes a decision and/or there is a mediation, which will be agreed upon by both parties so that they can live together and safely. If the aggression is categorized as c, the alleged aggressor will be permanently removed from the movement until he leaves the JOC or must be expelled according to the ROI.

In other words, the only space for *soteriology* would be provided in case of minor assaults and event recognition, which makes me conclude that the old category has been modified, more specifically limited, in the hands of the new generations to be 'more according to their times' as the *militants* said.

#### 5.1.4 Closing

After presenting the three study cases and analysing the interpretations of the *Valors Cristians* in them I can now delve into the overview of the transformations we have seen so far. As shown all three examples have provided instances where the previously discussed *Valors Cristians* have appeared in one way or another. However, it seems that those same values that during Francoism so well fitted the left ideologies of the working classes, have now transformed.

Categories: <i>Valors Cristians</i>		Adoption: Incarnated Faith	Adoption: Being Light and Salt	Transformation
1	Altruism	Collective class revolution	Being Light and Salt	Substitution
2	Children of God	Equality	No one can be left behind	Modification
3	Soteriology	Drive to transform the world	Empathy and inner good	Substitution

Table 6. *Valors Cristians* readings during Francoism and present-day.

As laid out during the economic *Revisió de Vida* and the emergency assembly, the way the *militants* understand *altruism* has transformed. The JOC still consider itself an altruistic movement in the sense that aims to improve the world through unselfish acts. Yet, the movement's mobilization is far from what it used to be.

During Francoism, the JOC's active gestures of resistance against the regime took the form of strikes, rallies and other manifestations. The enemy was fixed and tangible: all mobilizations were directed towards the state's institutions (Martinez, 2000). However,

the present-day JOC's mobilizations take the form of indirect actions. What they call *Being Light and Salt*. A new category that despite encompassing the category of altruism it suggest indirect goodwill, simply requiring the agent to be a good Christian. Consequently, in Robbins classification the category of altruism would have been substituted by the category of *Being Light and Salt*.

Moreover, given that mobilization has been left in the background, other elements have taken the spotlight within the movement's actions. The emphasis of the JOC now resides in the self.

The category of *Children of God* has become the justifying argument of community. As seen in the emergency meeting, the category is no longer used in terms of class, but has also return to its meaning within the Catholic Culture. Furthermore, the category of Soteriology has also gone back to the individual sphere and has faced for the first time some limitations.

Overall, it seems that despite still being present the *Valors Cristians* of the present-day JOC are completely different categories from the ones their predecessors had. The personal experiences and the socio-economic circumstances in which the present-day *militants* are pairing this category with reality are so different from the ones of their predecessors that it is not surprising that as a result those *Valors Cristians* have mutated to be "more fitting to the current times".

### 5.2 Values beyond Politics

The modern JOC can no longer be considered a political movement. The *Valors Cristians* that used to be the core and motor of the movement's mobilization are now used to advocate for a new form of mobilization based on the tainted spread of one's kindness. The change is such that the *militants* express a certain disdain towards politics (and politicians) as if their existence and their lifestyle were above all of them. Even though democracy has normalized the role of parties and unions, this normalization has led to a bureaucratization that leaves moral requirements in public life at a bare minimum (Cervera; Parra, 2022). This is the reason why the JOC *militants* see themselves, and more importantly, their values, beyond politics. As Pepe shared with me:

We (the JOC) are often dismissed as positivists and moderates; we no longer talk about revolution. But we don't have the strength to do it yet, nor the ability to mobilize. Instead, we go step by step. We are not politicians, what we do goes beyond politics (Pepe, 2023).

But what has led to this transformation?

### 5.2.1 Alejandro's story

In this section of the chapter, I will attempt to explain which material factors have led to the transformation of the JOC culture. Through the study case of one of my informants whose experience reflect the reality of most of the JOC's *militants*, I believe I can touch upon some of the material factors that have transformed the JOC's culture.

I interviewed Alejandro (as I will call him) for the first time soon after my first incorporation in the JOC, around 2019, when the nature of the movement was still a mystery to me. At that time, he caught my attention because of the contradictions that he seemed to embody. He was homosexual and atheist in a religious community, and a university student in a working class movement. However, I soon realized that even though Alejandro would often reflect upon his incongruities, they never really constituted a dilemma in his militancy. Instead, what became a real obstacle to his participation in the JOC, was his professional life.

When I met Alejandro, he was a Medieval Literature student who, like many people of his generation, did not have much hope for the future that his studies in humanities would offer. He had been the first of his family to attend university, and, thanks to governmental aid, he was able to do so for free and with a small yearly subsidy. Yet, Alejandro was always troubled by money, often taking on part-time jobs. He dreamed of finishing his studies and becoming a high school language teacher. Not so much for a vocational aspiration, he was not particularly inclined with the idea of teaching Lorca to a group of unwilling teenagers, (his words) but because he wished for the stability that a position in the public school system would provide him. From staying at his parent's house to save money, to continuing with his studies grudgingly, all of Alejandro's efforts had one single and durable purpose, finding some tranquillity later on in life. In a sense, he had grown to reject the way of his parents, who had spent most of their lives in precarious positions. His father, with whom Alejandro never had a good relationship (because of his conservatism and silent disregard of his son's sexuality) had been a janitor most of his life. He worked from repair to repair and from hall to hall until, a few years ago, he injured his back in a work accident. The incident left him with a lawsuit and an early retirement. This was not the life Alejandro wanted. He wished for a life where he was in control. He looked forward to the peace that comes from a 9 to 5 monotony and not struggling to make ends meet.

Now, years later, thanks to my reencounter with him, I had a chance to see how life had turned out for him. Alejandro had finished his studies and just recently started working as a substitute teacher in high school. However, his life was far from what he wanted. As he told me, the closer he got to the stability horizon he always dreamed of, the further it moved away from him. The thing is that while Alejandro was enveloped by limited professional opportunities and pragmatic clarity, so were many other graduated students of his generation. "Most of my classmates ended up pursuing an educational career out of necessity. Even though it was not among our first choices when we finished our undergraduate studies," he explained to me. The economic crisis and more recently the pandemic has increased the demand for access to the teaching master's degree by 60% (Sennet, 1999). The result is that an immense and, needless to say, highly competitive reserve army of labour (to use Marx's term) has been created. Now Alejandro is expected to prolong for at least five more years the struggles of an unsteady income, assuming temporal substitution positions and expanding his education with side competencies in an attempt to stand up among his counterparts.

The reason why I am presenting Alejandro's story is because it is far from unique. During my time in the JOC, I encountered countless similar recounts. What struck me about Alejandro and his generation is how different their professional experience is from their predecessors. Until quite recently, one could easily start and end their professional life within the same company. But now, the same careers that used to imply a lifelong road of personal and economic development, have been cut short. According to the *Observatori Català de la Joventut* [Catalan's Youth Observatory] (2022), in Catalonia, the segment of citizens under 25 has a high prevalence of temporary contracts (43,1%). Their salaries remain average, yet the lack of continuity makes emancipation difficult.

I will not go into much detail on the reasons behind this transformation, since it would not fit the purpose of this thesis. But what I want to argue here is that life under modern capitalism is a distinctly different environment from the prevalent work model of the 1950s. The workplace has become an adverse environment, and this has an impact on the JOC.

To start, the new work model constitutes an obstacle for militancy. During our meeting, I asked Alejandro if he kept going to the JOC's meetings, and to that, he smiled regretfully: "Not as much as I wished". He had once been a hefty defender of an involved militancy, arguing that only through an active militancy members would adopt the values and the

premises of the movement. As an atheist who did not engage with the religious side of the movement, he believed that the JOC should be experienced through militancy. He had often complained about how difficult it was to involve people. But now he was on the other side of the story. According to him, the never-ending struggling story that is his professional life has drained him to the point that he no longer has time for what he knows would be of great help to him, going to the JOC. Nonetheless, even though fatigue is the motive most *militants* refer to when asked about their lack of participation, it does not seem a good enough reason to me. Had not the working class fought for generations from the most uncertain positions for motives that sometimes were not even their own?

As seen, people pair the pre-existing categories with reality. So how could you expect the JOC *militants* to continue to talk about a sense of siblinghood inside class when you sustain a working model based on the constant change of people and schedules? Work is stripped of all social interactions, which according to Marxism is where class awareness is born. Yet, when you take people away from this environment, the working class – understood as a shared identity that is born from a collective sense of belonging to an exploited class – ceases to exist.

Precisely, despite their deeply punished and temporal professional lives, the JOC *militant* do no longer believe in the *Soteriology* and no longer have an intrinsic need to fight exploitation and follow labour vindications. Their estrangement from the work identity has shifted the motive of social mobilization from class struggle to alternative concerns that better fulfil the new generation's concerns.

The past generations of the JOC had an ultimate goal: abolish the dictatorship. They believed that through fighting their problems (class struggle, exploitation, lack of freedom, etc) would be solved, which was mainly a *soteriological* statement since it was founded in the hope that the world could be saved. But now that the dictatorship is no longer there, injustices continue to happen, and the social movements face an infinite war front. To navigate this distress the JOC introduced a new way of thinking about militancy that fulfilled a more comforting role: individual *soteriology*.

We have seen the JOC is a mere shadow of the giant movement that it once was. As we have seen the JOC's ability to undertake structural changes has been reduced to the bare minimum, however there is still one sphere in which the movement holds on. In a context in which the consequences of the economic system have a striking effect on the lives of

workers – as seen in the previous section – the JOC has worked as an antidote for its militancy to survive their daily struggles.

The JOC offers through its practices an attractive model that confronts through its dynamics the ideologies and morals typical of a logic of flexible capitalism. Referring to his JOC group, Juan, one of my informants, explained to me:

(The group) has always been a space where we can share concerns that maybe with a group of normal friends they wouldn't come out with, or it wouldn't be so natural for them to come out. (...) without feeling out of place or unaccompanied. (Testimony Juan, 2015–2022)

Within its logic, the JOC forces the *militants* to slow down and encourages them to introspect. Moreover, the community around the movement creates social networks now a days difficult to find.

### 5.3 Closing

In this Chapter, I have attempted to first describe how the *Valors Cristians* have transformed in the present-day JOC (2018-2023). Through the use of three study cases, I have shown that despite remaining to be a core element of the JOC, the *Valors Cristians* interpretation is different to the one of their predecessors.

I have suggested that factors such as the professional context of new capitalism has led to a new reading of the categories. While altruism has been substituted by *Being Light and Salt*, a category that simply requires the agent to be a good Christian and spread through its existence goodwill, the categories of Children of God and Soteriology have been modified and somehow reduced to a more individual sphere, with readings more focused in non-exclusion and individual salvation.

Overall, the emphasis of the JOC now resides in the self. This new version of the *Valors Cristians* have become extremely useful to justify a new form of movement that attempts to take care of the needs of a society that on the one hand lives in a rapidly changing economic environment and on the other no longer has the traditional religious networks.



## 6. Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to answer: How did the JOC *militants* adopt the Catholic cultural categories throughout its history? Based on the idea that cultural change is the result of its reproduction this thesis has described how in the hands of the agents of its time and influenced by the context around them, the JOC *militants* adopted the *Valors Cristians* from the Catholic Culture and has modified them throughout the course of its history. Moreover, the analysis has considered that the introduction of these Catholic cultural categories has transformed the *militants'* understanding of the world and mobilization.

In the first analysis I have explained the particular environment that National Catholicism created provided the perfect creative environment that encouraged the adoption of some Catholic cultural categories by some segments of the working classes. This is how the JOCs culture was born. Embodying the working class takes on the *Valors Christians*: presenting structural problems such as hunger, homelessness, and poverty, and more importantly collective solidarity as a matter of faith in the form of *Incarnated Faith*.

Moreover, I have explained that the adoption of these Catholic Categories introduced the JOC's cultural new categories with more moral conkers. Unlike its predecessors, the JOC emphasis resided on the immorality of injustice in the workers' lives, rather than its origin. This translated into an action that, although political, came from a moral justification, which gave it a spiritual transcendency never seen before.

In the second analysis I have speculated that factors such as the professional context of new capitalism has led to a new reading of the categories. The emphasis of the JOC now resides in more individual and even psychological activities that emphasized community and networking. This new version of the *Valors Cristians* have become extremely useful to justify a new form of movement that attempts to take care of the needs of a society that on the one hand lives in a rapidly changing economic environment and on the other no longer has the traditional religious networks.

This study has contributed to the understanding of cultural change, showing how factors such as political context, economic circumstances can shape the way people understand the same cultural categories. Moreover, it introduces the idea that particular religious cultural categories have the potential to be re-interpreted in numerous ways without necessarily depending on a matter of faith. This is particularly interesting in the present landscape. Which brings me to the last point.

### *6.1 Future lines of research*

The period since the 1960s has witnessed the emergence of a new kind of activism in various Western societies, including Spain. Environmentalism, feminism, anti-racism, gay rights activism, and peace movements are all expressions of this novel plethora of organized social mobilizations known as New Social Movements (Tilly, et.al. 2020). Many of the New Social Movements are revivals of earlier activisms, meaning that they deal with repetitive themes, such as race, inequality, or gender. Yet, unlike their predecessors, the New Social Movements do not display the characteristics of the traditional class movements. For they do not see their cause as a class struggle. Their focus of attention broadens out of conventionally political issues to those of values, identity, lifestyles, and culture. In their terms, the New Social Movements stand up for a free and fair humanity that exists on a hospitable and sustainable planet (Ferrando, 2021). Or, at least, something among those lines.

Interestingly, a relevant characteristic of the New Social Movements is that they rest upon a deep sense of moral responsibility, which despite the laicity of most of its movements, reminisces Judaeo-Christian eschatology. The denouncing of the neglecting of the vulnerable segments of society, the emphasis on the immortality of capitalism, or the calling upon a revolution that prioritizes a transformation of oneself are some of the themes that the New Social Movements engage with, and that could have arguably derived from the Bible or the Torah. Additionally, their use of Judeo-Christian Values – such as ‘integrity’, ‘altruism’ and ‘commitment’ – as political concepts, and their understanding of ‘awareness’ as a psychological (or even spiritual) revelation suggest that within the New Social Movements, the borders between reason and belief blur out (Delgado, 2016).

Moreover, the approximation of religion with the working class movements was not an exclusively Spanish development. During the 1950s, a growing compound of theologies beyond the Spanish borders led to the Christianization of the working classes. Europe experienced massive incorporation of Catholics into Communist parties. Moreover, on the other side of the Atlantic, the *Teología de la Liberación* [Theology of Liberation] spread across Latin America’s insurrectionary movements, laying a religious foundation to justify political mobilization (Delgado, 2012; Gledhill, 1999).

When considering these early encounters between religion and class movements during the 1950s, the emergence of the New Social Movements – only one decade later – acquire

a new light. More specifically, the New Social Movements' focus on values can now be traced back to those first approximations.

I consider that there is significant evidence to indicate that, to some extent, the religious approximation to the working classes might have led to a bigger-scale adoption of religion cultural categories by the working classes and that this might have transformed of the class movements. This close interaction could have contributed to turning the class movements into the new forms of activism that exist to this day. This theory could explain why the New Social Movements continue to display religious-reminiscent values despite the acceleration of secularism in the Western world during the democratization processes that characterized the second half of the twentieth century (Astor, 2020).

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## 8. Annex

<b>Life stories</b>		<b>6</b>
Tere	56	female
Xavi	62	male
Ernestina	76	female
Marta	43	female
Jaume	67	male
Rafi	62	female
<b>Not-structured interviews</b>		<b>7</b>
Maria Carmen	23	female
Juju	43	male
Alejandro and Jordi	19/23	males
Liliana	28	female
Pepe	52	male
José	25	male

Table 7. Interview data disclose. Own work.