Is this book a slap-in-the-face to Catholicism or to the convents? Only if one judges this book by its cover (the paperback version). People who think of themselves as "good Catholics" probably will not read it. However, they are making a mistake. This is not a trashy book, nor are the authors anything but honorable women who have finally found their niche in life. The book is an account of the sexual turmoil of 42 former sisters and 9 women who decided not to leave their orders. Each story is filled with a touching pathos. These are earnest and resilient women who attempt to find themselves in a chauvinistic world.

They often refer to themselves as "naive"—clearly an understatement. During their convent years, they saw sexuality in the same manner as a 12-year-old boy might (confusing and obsessive). When the writers discuss "the sex act" within the convent, most readers will be totally lost. "Sex" seems to include holding hands, an act that drove many of the sisters to profound feelings of guilt. Just as the sex act is ambiguous, so is celibacy. The Catholic Church never defines its terms. This left the contributors to *Lesbian Nuns* confused about their own personhood, and it leaves the reader not specifically sure of what he/she is reading. This is a book about lost children—adult women with the minds of adolescents.

There are three major themes in the book: devotion to Catholicism, devotion to nuns, and false expectations of convent life. All themes appear to be necessary conditions for joining or leaving the convent, but there is a common denominator among the themes—naiveté.

1. Devotion to Catholicism: While young girls, all contributors were profoundly influenced by the doctrine of the Catholic Church. Since most had little interest in courtship with males, all thought entering the convent to be the best vocation. They could be close to God. Jeanne Cordova writes:

   I made a vow to the Infant of Prague to enter the convent when I grew up and give my life to the service of God. Just like in the movies where the star falls in love and gets married, so it would be with me and Jesus. (p. 5)

2. Devotion to nuns: Besides attachment to Catholic ideals, all expressed emotionally and intellectually stimulating experiences with nuns. Kate Quigley vividly portrays these feelings for all nuns when she writes:

   My devotion to the nuns in junior high school knew no bounds . . . . We felt the nuns loved us, and we loved them back. As a teacher myself, I now marvel at the amount of time the nuns spent with us in spite of their enormously crowded schedules. Given this mutual affection, it was not surprising that many of us considered entering the community. (p. 88)

3. False expectations of convent life: Prior to entering the convent, they had ambiguous ideas of what to expect. Any feeling of "unsureness" was exacerbated by Vatican II. Maria Cristina summarizes the problem for most of the sisters when she writes:

   I decided to leave the cloister because of the radical changes made by the ecumenical movement and Pope John XXIII. The rules, the habit, everything I had known and grown to love through all those years was changing. These changes were not made at our request or with our knowledge. My vow of obedience said I had to accept without question everything that happened, but I could not accept...
those changes. And once there was conflict, everything became heavy and impossible to accept. (p. 214)

Clearly, the most intellectually interesting reason for leaving the convent is Vatican II. Ms. Curb (the coeditor) points out that most nuns contributing to the book left after Vatican II (p. xxiv), but she offers no causal explanation. I believe the book is about the sexual implications of Vatican II and the residue of the "sexual revolution" of the 1960s. The contributors all expressed signs of relief upon defining themselves as "lesbian." Many social scientists suggest that achieving personal identity is the essence of humanity. Perhaps this was the sisters' first chance of coming to grips with their personal identity which had been lost in the organizational structure of the church.

Four other points should be made about the book.
1. The Glossary was necessary and a great help. For example, it is important to understand what a "cincture" is in the passage: "Sister Barbara grabbed my cincture and started pulling me around by it. She was laughing and teasing me and wouldn't let go" (p. 84). (A cincture is "a belt of cord, hemp, or leather used to gather the religious habit at the waist," p. 364.)

2. It seems unreasonable to state that "several hundred lesbian nuns and ex-nuns" were interviewed (p. xxiii). It would have been no more difficult to state the exact number of respondents.

3. As the editors point out, most nuns are not lesbians. Frankly, sampling theory leads us to believe that there have always been and always will be lesbian nuns. Consider the fact that lesbians make up 5 to 10 percent of the female population in the United States. It is therefore unlikely that only nonlesbians would be attracted to the convent.

4. Ms. Curb discusses a questionnaire she used (p. xxiii); unfortunately, she did not include it within the text. Most readers from academia would want to examine the questionnaire to see if the study could be replicated on a random basis.

Even with these minor drawbacks, the book forces the reader to ask some important questions. Vatican II demanded self-searching, but what will be the long-term social effects of Pope John Paul's II philosophy of blind faith? How will present-day nuns react to their sudden loss of freedom? Will masses of young men and women be drawn to religious life because they can be assured of the sheltered environment? Or will we see a schism within the Roman Catholic Church? After all, the former nuns state that they saw much "hypocrisy" in their church, and many educated Catholic married couples cannot understand the relationship between worshiping their God and abstaining from birth control.

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Surrogate Wife: The Story of a Masters & Johnson Sexual Therapist and the Nine Cases She Treated, by "Valerie X. Scott" (pseudonym) New York: Dell; 1971. Accord-