

SPAIN'S CATHOLIC AWAKENING

UNDUE importance is perhaps given to the present anti-Catholic campaign in Spain by those English Catholics who are ignorant of the nation's history and unaware that the present measures are for the most part a repetition of the events of the last century. The problem tends to lose its alarming proportions and is narrowed down when seen in its true historical perspective. The problem, however, still remains, and in view of the present state of our world civilisation we may be justified in concluding that it has reached or will reach a decisive stage in Spain's history. The problem of how such a Catholic nation could so unexpectedly become the home of persecution and hatred of religion is found to be deeper when it is realised that Mexico is also a Spanish country, and that anti-clericalism and violent opposition to the Church are rampant in all the Republics of Spanish America and have always formed an integral part of their stormy politics. We should also keep in mind the sufferings of the Church in Portugal and her daughter country, Brazil.

Is there, then, something peculiarly Spanish or Iberian in this problem? I think there is, and its sources are to be sought for in Spanish history and in the manifestation of the Spanish religious spirit. The two are connected. Religion in Spain has been affected by the dead weight of her history. I have already in previous articles in *BLACKFRIARS* expounded the meaning and significance of Spain's *Golden Age* and attempted to give some idea of the enormous tragedy that was the inevitable result of her superhuman and misguided efforts. The decadence that then attacked the country spread to every branch of the national life and has lain heavily upon the Spanish soul for three centuries. Religion could not escape from the universal catastrophe.

Enter into the great Spanish baroque churches of this period and gaze upon the huge altar pieces with their weighty mass of twisted forms and broken lines, their extravagant and heavy ornamentation, and you will be oppressed with a sense of death and failure. Look around at the gaudily dressed statues and ugly shrines, and you will see the religion of St. Teresa become a thing of earth, utterly commonplace and vulgar. You would not be surprised, therefore, to find that this religion in its popular

manifestation lacks an intellectual basis, and has all the instability of a purely emotional appeal. If the history of Spain is a living thing for you, you will understand and not seek for the remedy in the complete destruction of everything around you, but by judicious amputation save the stricken body.

The Azaña government believes in amputation, not as a cure, but in order to get rid of the whole national past and its traditions and to graft upon the present a completely different genus. I feel that such a method is doomed to failure. In one particular, at least, it has already failed. The Government lopped off Spain's religious life but reckoned without the Spanish nature, for now a vigorous and young shoot is sprouting in its place.

Much has been written on the decadence of Spanish religion and its cure, but there has now appeared a book in English which surpasses all others in the profound study the author has made of his subject, in the scope of his treatment, and more particularly in the deep earnestness and religious fervour which prompted him to write it.¹ His book is of extraordinary interest and, to me at least, is full of valuable information in that part of it which treats of South America. It is not written in any polemical or controversial spirit, nor is it primarily intended to serve as Protestant propaganda, but it is a serious, authoritative and learned contribution to the study of this important subject. It is a problem to the solving of which the author has dedicated his life. His work is consequently written with the fire of conviction and the enthusiasm of one championing a cause. In so far as his enthusiasm for the Protestant cause permits it, this book is extremely fair. But all who have the courage of their convictions have a bias, and Dr. Mackay has his bias, just as I have mine in writing this article. This inevitable and very pardonable bias leads to the only weakness in his work, but it is a serious weakness. One half of his picture is painted with great detail and illuminating insight, the other half is painted with large flourishes of the brush in which the clarity of detail

¹ *The Other Spanish Christ. A Study in the Spiritual History of Spain and South America.* By John A. Mackay, D.Litt. (Student Christian Movement Press, 1932; 9/-.)

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is subordinated to the effect of the whole. In other words, he has viewed Spanish Catholicism as an outsider, has observed several general characteristics and has concluded that these hold good in every particular instance. I am not in a position to dispute his picture of South American Catholicism, but I do know that sanctity and a true Christian spirit have been much more abundant among the Spanish clergy and laity than he is apparently prepared to admit.

Dr. Mackay is no bigot. He is not antagonistic to Catholicism as such. On the contrary, he recognises the expression of 'true Christianity' in many of its manifestations and can speak with warmth and admiration of many of its past and present achievements. But he has a horror of two things: the Society of Jesus and, the 'Virgin cult.' These to his mind have been the ruin of Spanish Catholicism. He insists on differentiating Spanish Catholics from other Catholics, for Spanish and South American Catholicism, under Jesuit influence, has become the worship of the Dead Christ.

'A Christ known in life as an infant and in death as a corpse, over whose helpless childhood and tragic fate the Virgin Mother presides; a Christ who became man in the interests of eschatology, whose permanent reality resides in a magic wafer bestowing immortality; a Virgin Mother who by not tasting death, became the Queen of Life—that is the Christ and that the Virgin who came to America! He came as Lord of Death and of the life that is to be; she came as Sovereign Lady of the life that now is' (p. 102).

These are strong and unpleasant words, but they become more comprehensible when expressed in a clearer and milder form:

'These two heads of Argentine Universities (Juan Terán and Ricardo Rojas) are agreed that South American Catholicism has lacked two constitutive features of the Christian religion. It has lacked inward spiritual experience and it has lacked outward ethical expression. People have possessed religion, but have not lived it. Religion has been neither a subject of intellectual pre-occupation nor an incentive to virtuous living. Souls have not been in agony. There has been indifference and there has been peace; but the latter has been that eerie, aesthetic peace which

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haunts the graveyard; the peace of death, not the peace of life.' (p. 122).

The same thing, in Dr. Mackay's opinion, is true of Spanish Catholicism, and it is an opinion which anybody who has had any intimate knowledge of Spain and sufficient 'second-hand' knowledge of South America is bound to endorse, not as a universal but as a general rule. For religion has been for the majority of educated Spaniards nothing more than a meaningless routine or perhaps a highly emotional experience which, by reason of its lack of any intellectual basis, is often more dangerous than mere indifference; or at best it has been a useful insurance policy which they hoped would pull them to a heaven the reason for whose existence they did not understand.

There is, however, another 'Spanish Christ,' the true living Christ of the great Spanish mystics and religious writers of the sixteenth century. This, Dr. Mackay rightly asserts, is the real and truly great religious tradition of Spain, but it died before it bore fruit, and it never passed to America. It was killed by the Jesuits, he maintains, and here is the only blatant example of his misrepresentation of Catholicism. Had he listened to the stories of Spanish cities as they tell their story, he would have had a fuller understanding.

The 'Other Spanish Christ' has lain forgotten for centuries, until at last He was resurrected in Giner de los Ríos and Unamuno, and continues to live in all those who have sought spiritual satisfaction in 'one or other of the Protestant Churches in the Peninsula,' and in a number of South American writers and social teachers of the last and present centuries.

Granted that there has been something radically wrong in the Spanish religious spirit, what is the remedy, and what is being done to apply this remedy? Dr. Mackay sees the only hope in the advent of Protestantism, and covers a great deal of space in proving that there is nothing intrinsically uncongenial to the 'Latin mind' in Protestantism. 'This in any case can be said,' he affirms, 'the particular type of Catholicism which has hitherto dominated the Iberian Peninsula and the republics of Latin America has no spiritual future' (p. 263). There are no particular

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types of Catholicism. There is only one type. Nations, like individuals, sometimes fall away from this type. The only remedy is not to discard the standard of perfection, but to seek to attain it. What *type* of Protestantism does Dr. Mackay desire for Spain and Spanish America? His answer is a fine one:

' This does not mean that what is wanted is a replica of Protestant institutions which have grown up in Anglo-Saxon countries, still less a projection into the Latin world of the sins of Protestant denominationalism. The fact must be emphasised that Protestantism is essentially a movement, a religious attitude, rather than an institutional system or a collection of dogmas ' (p. 262).

All he asks for is a deeper love of Our Lord in each individual heart. It is what we all ask for, but some of us are convinced that for such a religious movement to have any effect upon a nation it must be accompanied by an institution based upon a solid philosophical and theological foundation, offering a clear ethical code as a mode of life, and the supernatural help necessary to live this life. Where there is no organisation, there is disruption. Where there is disruption, there is no national movement.

I am fortunate enough to see every day signs of what I hope and believe will be a glorious awakening of Catholicism in Spain. I write these lines in Madrid, and the air around is full of a new spirit, of a fire and enthusiasm which it is impossible not to feel. The churches are full each day. The subject of religion is on everybody's lips, and Catholicism, as soon as they realised it could be lost, has become a living thing worth fighting and dying for. It has also become something worth studying and preaching. I have attended meetings of *Acción Católica* and have heard numbers of young men, still students or fresh from the universities, discussing with keen intellect and depth of insight all the political and social problems of the day, that their own minds may be made clearer as to the causes of the present disastrous condition in which they see their country, and that they may be intellectually prepared to play their part in the salvation and rejuvenation of the Spain they love so much. Each one then goes out into every quarter of this city and lectures to the workmen,

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receiving in nearly every case eager attention and an enthusiastic welcome. The workmen themselves are organised into Catholic Trade Unions and are fighting magnificently against overwhelming odds. This is happening in every city and town in Spain, and many a rural district has its study circle of farmers and peasants. *Acción Católica* is meeting everywhere with success, and the important fact must be emphasised that it is entirely a lay movement.

Spain and Protestantism, despite Dr. Mackay's hopes, is a contradiction in terms. 'I cannot conceive of Spain without Catholicism,' said Don Antonio Goicoechea in a public speech a fortnight ago, 'for me the phrase "Spain has ceased to be Catholic" can only mean "Spain has ceased to be Spain."' He was speaking at a meeting of the Traditionalist Party, whose programme is surely the most ambitious of any political movement in the world. Their aim is to restore to the nation the broken tradition of its past by wiping out every vestige of modern democracy and nineteenth century Liberalism. They intend to build up a new Spain, a 'corporate state' formed of regional units enjoying complete autonomy, and united by a King who will represent in his person the full monarchical ideal which kept Spain united in the period of her greatness, and by the Church which will be a co-equal partner with the State. Each region will be a self-sufficing unit functioning economically on purely distributist lines, with a society formed into guilds in the traditional medieval conception, and with a parliament that does not represent opinions but interests. One is inclined to laugh at the magnitude of this ambition, but one's laughter turns to astonishment when one sees with what earnestness and enthusiasm the experts of the party are daily hard at work preparing the machinery which will make possible this revolution in every sphere of the national life.

Acción Popular, led by Don José Gil Robles, has a larger following and a more cautious programme, its aim being to restore to Spain a full Catholic social life based on these four fundamentals: Religion, the Family, Property and Order. It has no concern with either Monarchy or Republic, but pledges itself to accept the legally constituted authority. Everywhere in Spain it is meeting with success

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despite the Government's arbitrary oppressive measures. During the past year the party organized eight hundred and sixty-seven 'monster meetings,' of which one hundred and seventy-two were forbidden to be held. Of those held fifty were formed of audiences of over two thousand people, and for thirteen that were suspended, more than five thousand had in each case applied for tickets of admission.

The Traditionalists are also meeting with an enthusiastic reception. The recent inauguration of their great national campaign in Madrid, at which I was present, proved to be an unprecedented success for a party that barely existed before the Revolution. In addition to these two parties there are others which are also Catholic, namely the Monarchists (the Traditionalists are not supporters of King Alfonso, but are the legitimate descendants of the Carlists), the Agrarian Party and the Basque Nationalists. Since the cause of Religion has been definitely bound up with politics, it was impossible to expect the Catholics to unite naturally and spontaneously into one great force. But all these right wing parties, as they are called, are uniting into a Federation known as the C.E.D.A. (*Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas*) in which each will preserve its essential independence and characteristic ideals while fighting as one for the attainment of their common aim. The first general assembly will meet in February.

Far more important than this awakening in the Catholic political parties, and in many ways far more necessary, is the awakening in the religious life. It is true that in some cases it is difficult to see how much genuine religious revival there is behind this political enthusiasm. Political ideals evoke emotional reactions in a Spaniard. Enthusiasm for these political programmes presupposes enthusiasm for the Church and religion. Here the danger lies in the possible dependence of the latter on the former. There has been too much emotion, with the consequent lack of stability, in the Spanish religious spirit, and this must change. Dissatisfaction with the present Government must not lead Spaniards to the Church merely as a useful means to overturn it. This, I am sure, is not happening. The religious revival could not be more genuine, more

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sincere, nor more *alive*. And the fact that it has gripped them, especially the masses of young men, so completely is the most comforting and heartening sign of all.

The first essential factor which contributed to this awakening was the realisation of failure, and of guilt for that failure. Don Esteban Bilbao finished the great discourse with which he opened the Traditionalist campaign in Madrid with these words:

'Let us nourish hope in our breasts; storms hide the sun, but do not extinguish it; the sun only dies to rise again the following day: the only thing that is born and dies in the same moment is the flash of lightning. The lightning of the storms and the lightning of the revolutions is nothing else than the lash of the whip with which God awakens the nations who, like the foolish virgins, fell asleep in the fulfilment of their duty, forgetting the practice of their Faith and the honour due to their own history.'

The Catholics are fully aware that they are largely to blame for this persecution, and resolved to atone for their negligence.

I shall give only one example of the spirit of this Catholic revival. It is the recent Congress of *Juventud Católica* (Catholic Youth) held at Santander in the early weeks of last December. I was not present myself, but each morning in Madrid I read with eagerness the long accounts of the proceedings written by Manuel Graña for the great Catholic paper *El Debate*. First a few figures that speak for themselves. In 1924 there were six hundred and twenty centres of *Juventud Católica* in the whole of Spain; in 1928 there were seven hundred; in 1932 they numbered one thousand four hundred. I can only reproduce a few extracts, and I shall make no comment, for none is needed.

Listen to Manuel Graña:

'The number of those present (in the afternoon of the first day) has increased, and it is said that by Sunday we shall number four thousand. As we enter the session has already reached its height. Fr. Alcocer, a Benedictine from Madrid, is summing up his conclusions on the liturgy. We can scarcely believe our ears. *He is doing nothing else than teaching these young men how to hear Mass*. Good-bye to the twenty-five Our Fathers to St. Rita, good-bye to the litany of devotions that have not the

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remotest connection with the profound humanity of the traditional rites of the Church! The Father attacks the ridiculous prayers and devotions with a fine irony, and asks the young men to read the missal in Spanish.'

Commenting on this in a later number of the same paper Manuel Graña wrote:

'This simple episode (the discussion that followed Fr. Alcocer's address) lends itself to serious meditation. Did not our fathers know how to hear Mass? Did they not teach their children, now young men, how to fulfil the primary obligation of every Christian? Is it that they had no idea of what the Mass is? The fact is that these young men listen carefully to the address, study it, discuss it and pass the resolution that they have to hear Mass 'in a different way' Here is another case. These young Catholics are also going to 'read the Gospel.' That is another of the resolutions passed at their Congress. . . . One of them opened the sacred text and pronounced an admirable homily: "Who is my neighbour?" Apparently these youths had never received at school a clear and concrete answer to this simple question. This exposition evoked enthusiastic applause, it was for them something new, being something so old. Is it that our old methods of religious instruction have failed, as the Bishop of Ciudad Rodrigo told them? Why? Because they did not carry to the brains, the hearts and the muscles of other generations the divine meaning of the Gospels. The young men had only acted as Christians in a vague theoretic way, as their fathers before them; now they are determined to be Christians in fact.'

This spirit was the most striking manifestation of the whole Congress. In the speech which he gave at the end of the first day, the President of *Juventud Católica* (a magnificent young Catholic who is destined to play a large part in the coming revival, José María Valiente) used these words: 'These barbarians have opened our eyes to the true meaning of Catholic Action and its propaganda, and, what seems stranger still, to the true reason for the very failure of religion among the people.'

This is not all. Perhaps the greatest enthusiasm of the whole Congress was reserved for the resolution condemning Capitalism and proclaiming the economic doctrine of *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*. For did not these young men decide unanimously that henceforth they

were to be Christians *in fact*? Listen to one of these young orators and supply (if you can) the fire with which these words were uttered: ' We have done with all this farcical hypocrisy, and are now living in a time of terrible truths. We shall have nothing to do with the red star of Moscow, but we declare war on black Capitalism, the exploiter of the poor!' And he lashed with his tongue those Catholics who go to Mass and deny their workmen a just wage. 'More religion and less Phariseism! More justice and less liturgy!' he cried.

The Congress concluded with a speech from the young President. I quote Manuel Graña's account:

' . . . he next turns to the workmen and speaks to them with a sincerity and phrases so genuine and inspired that he arouses storms of applause and cheers; and himself carried away by his audience, he asks for time to realise in practice the promises of Christianity's social teaching contained in the Gospels and in the two Encyclicals. And in order that the Catholic workmen, those present as well as those absent, should not question his sincerity and the determination of his followers; in order that the rich Catholics should understand that the young Catholics are resolved to fulfil these promises: " I swear it to you," he exclaimed, raising on high the Crucifix that was on the table, " I swear it to you by this Workman nailed to the Cross!" It is impossible to give any idea of what then takes place in the *Gran Cinema*. It seems as if the seats break to pieces as a revolutionary as well as holy madness takes possession of the heads, hands and feet of the young men; and even the white banners on the platform rise and sway like the multitude in front of them, as if they were the standards of invisible proletarian legions hungering and thirsting for justice.'

Permit me one more quotation:

' The young men do not tire and their devotion knows no bounds. We watch them come and go as happy and as proud as if they were going to a feast, and these are the miracles wrought by *Juventud Católica*, miracles which many men, even Catholics, cannot understand. A youngster is reading the Gospel to Bishops and Priests, and they congratulate and embrace him, and several groups are going to pass the night in prayer with the same delight as if they were going to pass it in a theatre. We watch them come and go with astonishment and we think of Spain's future. Immediately we rush up to our

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room and hastily scribble some lines while they kneel in prayer, praising God in the Sacrament with their hymns. We move our pen feverishly with the same intention. It is midnight. It is our way of praying, too, and we have still to repeat this prayer before the telephone. Our time is not wasted, even though, since our collaboration is insignificant, we can do no more than stand near this splendid awakening of a Catholic nation; yes, a Catholic nation, which is setting out with new energy, with the energy of its eternal youth, to continue its Catholic mission in the world.'

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What of the future? There are municipal elections in April, to be followed by elections to fill some hundred odd seats in the Cortes. If these elections show a marked swing to the 'right' the Government will certainly dissolve Parliament and call for a General Election. The Federation of Catholic Parties may then come into power. But they expect little from these elections, for the Government have already taken care to deprive of their posts all the Opposition councillors in nearly all the municipalities in order that the full election machinery may be in their hands. We must expect little, therefore, from these elections, and an adverse result must not be taken as a true expression of public opinion. As to the ultimate future there is nothing but optimism, though far worse times are prophesied than those through which the country is now passing. It is not generally realised abroad how near the country is to anarchy. The Traditionalists expect the present system to collapse in chaos, and out of the ruins will rise their new Spain. They cannot begin to build until the last traces of liberalism and so-called democracy have decayed in corruption. They await the coming of a period of anarchy, and for this reason they are not concerned at what is happening or will happen. Don Víctor Pradera, one of their eminent leaders, said to me: 'I am frankly optimistic. All this has happened several times in Spain. Was the country ever in a more shameful and degrading condition than during the reign of Henry IV? Yet look what his sister, Isabella, accomplished in less than twenty years' time! The only thing I regret is that we Catholics have not been able to form one party, and that we have not yet discovered the one man, the Isabella, who can lead us.'

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Whatever happens politically matters little in face of the beginnings of this wonderful Catholic revival. No Government can kill this, and it is bound to bear a glorious fruit that we may be privileged to see. 'Spain has ceased to be Catholic' were the famous words of the present Prime Minister. Events are already showing the magnitude of that lie.

ALEXANDER PARKER.

STALIN: A MAN WITH A MACHINE

If (hypothesized Aristotle) if but the tool could do its own work, even as the automatons of Daedalus and the walking tripods of Hephaestus, then there would be no need of slaves and 'prentices. And if (thought Antiparos of the water mill) we go on inventing things like this we shall certainly liberate our poor slaving women and return to the Golden Age. And Marx (who mistook the plutarchy born of the Reformation for Christianity) caustically observed that the ingenious Antiparos knew no political economy; and Aristotle not being a Christian could not conceive the intricacies of value-breeding process and other mysteries of industrial capitalism. Actually, the work of the machine, which according to Proudhon should be a protest of the 'genius of industry against humiliating and murderous toil,' is better described by the words which Ure applies to a modern factory, 'A vast automaton composed of various mechanical and intellectual organs acting in uninterrupted concert for the production of a common object, all of them being subordinated to a self-regulated moving force.' Ure's 'benignant power of steam' (quoted sardonically by Kautsky) does not extend its benign influence beyond its true lord and master, the capitalist (whose beaming benevolence pervades the whole working world).