

OBITER

CATHOLIC CULTURAL AND SOCIAL
ACTIVITY IN SPAIN

ONE of the implications of the statement—if we accept it as true—that Africa begins at the Pyrenees would seem to be that we must not apply our own more or less insular standards in judging things Spanish, more particularly when we find ourselves in disagreement with, and tempted to criticise, what is being done or said in the Iberian Peninsula. In Andalucía, for instance, beggars abound, but to beg does not arouse the same sense of shame in a Spanish peasant as it would in an English factory hand. The Spaniard finds it normal that the rich should give to the poor and when he begs it is with dignity and true humility, but with no sense of humiliation. Though we may smile at the story of the Spaniard who asked for alms because, he said, God had taken away from him all desire for work, there is not the slightest doubt that in Spain such a remark would be made in all seriousness and with perfect sincerity.

All Spanish culture has its roots deeply embedded in the Catholic faith, and the heritage is a very rich one. Five hundred years ago and more the *autos sacramentales* grew out of an attempt to bring the liturgy home to the people by miming and acting the Offices of Christmas, Easter and Corpus Christi. Many of Spain's greatest writers were priests—we have only to instance the great names of the playwrights Tirso de Molina, who wrote *El condenado por desconfiado*, a play centred round a hermit who was lost and a criminal who was saved, dealing with the problem of grace, predestination and God's mercy, and Lope de Vega whose output far exceeded that of Shakespeare—and mystics such as St Teresa and St John of the Cross, are great names in Spanish literature as well as great saints. After the Golden Age a decline set in in Spain as elsewhere, but the background and trend of literature were still Catholic. In the revival of the novel as a literary genre in the nineteenth century, Pardo Bazan's *La Prueba* and Valera's *Pepita Jiménez* treat of religious problems and are profoundly Catholic. To Galdos we owe *Nazarín* and *Dona Perfecta*, though perhaps one needs to live in a Latin country to appreciate that the slight anti-clericalism of the latter work is in no sense anti-Catholic.

How, one may ask, has this Catholic culture which seems to seep through the very soil of Spain, been working itself out in the last twelve years? What are its manifestations?

In the field of Catholic studies one of the most notable achievements has been the *Biblioteca de Autores Christianos*, whose purpose has been the publication of religious classics in an edition which should be both scholarly and popular—scholarly in that it aims at producing an accurate text, with essential footnotes, popular from the point of view of format and price. The series is published under the auspices of the Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca. It includes volumes on Theology and Canon Law, Philosophy, History, Hagiography, Patristics, Scripture, Sociology, Political Theory, Literature and Art. Among works already published are the Bible, and the *Obras* of St Augustine, St Bernard, the *Summa* of St Thomas, St Bonaventure and St John of the Cross. Where possible, texts are bilingual and works are prepared by specialists with all the necessary critical apparatus. The series has been very well received and for what it offers is moderately priced.

Considerable work is being done in the sphere of Biblical Studies. Doctor Antonio Gil Ulecia has published an *Introducción General a la Sagrada Biblia* which is clear and precise and at the same time fully documented and scholarly. Two reviews are concerned with Biblical studies, *Cultura Bíblica* and *Estudios Bíblicos*, the latter published by the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas. Both are scholarly periodicals of a high standard. The 'Asociación para el fomento de los estudios bíblicos en España' has three series of publications: *Colectanea Bíblica* (Andrés Fernandes: *Problemas de topografía palestinese*; Antonio Gil Ulecia: *Imperio mesiánico en la profecía de Miqueas*), *Florilegio Bíblico* (popular pamphlets such as: *David, fugitivo y triunfador*, *Un hombre de carácter*, *Neemías*, etc.) and *la Vulgata en España* (T. Arguso: *La Biblia de Calatayud, un codice desconocido*). It also publishes an annual report of such events as the Biblical week, the first of which dates from 1941.

The Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas is publishing a considerable number of works on theological and biblical questions as, for instance, the *Comentarios ineditos de Domingo Banez a la Prima Secundae de Santo Tomás*; *La Ascensión del Señor en el Nuevo Testamento*, by Victoriano Larranaga, s.j.; or the *Epistolario de San Braulio de Zaragoza*. The Consejo also publishes the *Revista Española de Teología* which appears quarterly.

La Ciencia Tomista (Salamanca), the Thomist quarterly, is the scholarly review one has the right to expect from the Order of Preachers. The bibliography shows an acquaintance with European, not only specifically Spanish, theology.

In the sphere of liturgical studies, Cardinal Goma's *El Valor Educativo de la Liturgia Católica* (2 vols., Rafael Casulleras, Barcelona), which reached its third edition in 1945, marks a step forward. The historical introduction gives some account of the liturgical movement in France,

Belgium, Holland, Italy, Germany, Austria and England and discusses the Protestant liturgical movement.

Of a more general nature is the review *Clavileno* (Madrid, Velazquez, 107) a bi-monthly devoted to culture and the arts, the first number of which appeared in January-February, 1950. In the May-June number, Helmut Hatzfeld, of the Catholic University of America, wrote on the influence of St Teresa's writings on El Greco (the two lived contemporaneously in Toledo). He illustrates his remarks by the three pictures: 'The Burial of the Count of Orgaz', 'Christ embracing the Cross' and 'The Crucifixion', the latter painted after St Teresa's death. The November-December number contained three *villancicos*, or Christmas carols, among them the Avila carol 'Entre el Buey y la Mula' (one wonders if St Teresa herself sang this).

These notes would be seriously incomplete without some mention of the 'Opus Dei', a secular institute for men university students (girls are admitted to some of its activities), whose headquarters are in Madrid. In order that no one may be misled, perhaps it should be mentioned that in spite of the title the members do not assume the obligation of reciting the Divine Office. The 'Teresianas' are a 'modern' religious order for women, whose members are mainly engaged in secondary and high school teaching. They wear lay dress. They now number more than one thousand and have houses in many parts of Spain. 'Acción Católica' flourishes and takes some interest in active participation in the Mass, and in the Gregorian chant.

K.P.

* * *

FRIEDRICH HEER is deservedly becoming better known throughout Catholic circles in Europe, and it is to be hoped that English translations of his essays will soon be available. In a recent issue of *Frankfurter Hefte* he discusses the true source of the Christian's strength—which enabled Christians at one time to drive out devils, and which is still available for those who resort to it. He warns us that the transformation of energy in the atom can be seen as an image of transubstantiation: 'it depends on us whether it is to be a "sacrament" of the Devil or a "sacrament" of Christ (if we may use the terminology of Augustine and the Victorines—those theologians who were so intensely aware that each earthly thing is a sacred sign and may be an image either of the Christ or of Antichrist).'

* * *

NEW LIFE (July) contained an important analysis of the religious practice of young Christian workers in England.