

recent comparison with France or Germany may suggest. And it must be an instant task of Christians to pray for the Church, that 'she may triumph over all hostility and error, and serve God in safety and freedom'. (Prayer of the Roman Missal *contra persecutores*.) The obligation of prayer does not dispense from a legitimate insistence on effective political action to demand the restoration of basic human liberties. Thus to suppose that 'economic relations' with a state can be separated from the sanctions of human rights as such, is to abandon the authority of the moral law in the affairs of nations. But in the end the Church will survive and triumph through her inalienable spiritual power, and the solidarity of Christians as yet free with their brethren in their captivity is a factor beyond the reckoning of the persecutors.

Whatever the future holds, the answer is at last certain: the gates of Hell shall never prevail against the Church. But understanding in judgment, faithfulness in prayer, unflagging hope and constant charity: these, perennial and unailing, take on a new urgency for the members of Christ's Mystical Body.

ORTEGA AND RELIGION

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ORTEGA as a philosopher has met with opposition from some Catholic circles within the Spanish-speaking world because he not only has apparently forsaken his own Catholic tradition but has ignored religion in his own philosophical scheme. If at most he can be said to have left a place for it, the place is so far unoccupied. It is true that very early in his career Ortega gave up the practice of religion and that at no time has religion in any pietistic way interested him as a topic. It is also true that he has always treated it with respect and he includes the religious sense as one of the five elements in his theory of values. (The others are goodness, beauty, truth and justice.)¹

¹ The most able study of Ortega from a religious point of view is that by Fr. Iriarte, S.J., *Ortega y Gasset, su persona y su doctrina*, Madrid, 1942. Less good is the Mexican Jesuit's *Pensamiento y trayectoria de José Ortega y Gasset*, Mexico City, 1943. Quite different, but not written from a systematically philosophical point of view is *En torno al pensamiento de José Ortega y Gasset*, Madrid, 1948, by the Revd Miguel Ramis Alonso.

This neglect, however, is only superficial and accidental. Ortega's thought is really profoundly religious and one is inclined to classify him as possessing the truly religious temperament of the artist as against the intellectual or mystic. Indeed, one of the difficulties about Ortega's philosophy all through is that it is a very subtle system of thought, closely articulated, but mediated through a highly aesthetic temperament. Ortega's philosophical aim is so fundamental that it is unlikely that he himself will ever arrive at the point of sketching the natural theology proper to it. His object is to change radically the whole approach to knowledge and being by starting from the individual experience of living and, instead of projecting concepts upon, as it were, the screen of the intellect, work to truth within that experience. This is not to dispense with concepts but simply to give them an altered meaning or rather value; they are seen for what they are rather than taken as the full reality to which life must be subservient. Ortega is not anti-intellectual, he is a realist rather than a nominalist, and a critical realist rather than an idealist, in so far as these terms can be applied at all. He is not a rationalist—rationalism is precisely what he wishes to destroy, nor is his vitalism anything to do with an emergent evolution. Life for him is the radical reality, but this is not the same thing as an absolute or ultimate reality. He means simply that everything must be worked out from inside life since it is only in life that we know and conate and move on to the transcendent. For life of itself, as we experience it, points to a reality that transcends it; his theory of values, discussed in *El tema de nuestro tiempo*, turns on their property, that life cannot but accept, of demanding to exist in their own right, once they have been apprehended. There is, no doubt, a temperamental inclination towards a pantheistic or, more properly, panentheistic, dogma in Ortega, but it is never broached irrevocably, its philosophical setting is not therefore rendered incompatible with theism; there are hints, moreover, in recent years, of a more acute awareness of God. But that Ortega is a culturalist and essentially irreligious, as has been maintained, is simply not true: his culturalism leads on and out to the point where the transcendent may, if it will, break through, and his approach to life is religious of its very nature. No other word, surely, will adequately describe Ortega's ceaseless pursuit of truth, his consciousness of the ineluctable need for coming to terms with life, his absolute obedience to what he

conceives to be the conditions of life, and his love for things: all his religious energy, one might say, goes into a loving consideration of creation, of things, that calls to mind the *bodegones* of Velázquez, where respect for creation mingles with the desire to penetrate in understanding and absorb in a kind of yielding to the nature of the things depicted.

It is Ortega's teaching that an adequate account of life is forced to be systematic because the experience of life in each individual reveals it to be systematic. This apprehension of life in the living as systematic, not as something unformed upon which some order has to be projected to make it tolerable, is of profound significance for the Christian view of life. It is a natural preparation for the supernatural affirmation that God is mindful of each soul, has had each one before him from all eternity and, if it will co-operate with him, destines it to an eternity of glory. The very structure of creation, in its broad outlines as in its last detail of each individual life, must be intentional, as it were, 'meant' as we say in popular devotion, if we are to take this supernatural assurance as true. Ortega's view that there is system apprehensible in the order of nature goes out to meet this truth in the order of grace.

Bound up with Ortega's conviction of system is his certitude of freedom. Man is ever confronted with choice, his life is not ready made, as he puts it. Man is free, if only as between being and not being, or rather living and not living. Freedom is inseparable from the experience of life. The doctrine that man is free to co-operate or not in the work of his salvation must obviously rest on an apprehension of freedom in the natural order.

Ortega's refusal to consider anything outside the framework of life, the experience of living, brings him to the assertion that anything, to be real, must be rooted in the life of each one. He does not mean this in the sense of enclosing reality within the subjective apprehension of it, though in fact reality is for us only in our knowledge of it and this knowledge is meaningless unless it has a real rootedness in each individual life. Ortega expressly states that this is true even of reality transcending the individual life, even of the greatest reality, God. But is not this precisely the aim of all Christian spiritual discipline, to make God an ever-increasing reality, life-rooted, so that ultimately God may indwell in the soul? That this knowledge of God which has to issue in a

real presence of God, implanted of course by grace, should have an analogue in a possible view of natural knowledge, is a help rather than a hindrance to its initial acceptance.

Ortega's renovation of philosophy is made by the alteration in the use of reason that he demands. Reason is to be not exclusively conceptual, as hitherto, but, as he calls it, vital. Reasoning is carried on from within life, the perspective of rational knowledge is shifted by being seen as the remove from reality it is, while the concrete living circumstance occupies the foreground, as it were. The result of this is that the history of man is seen as the record, as the very product of his vital reason. Historic reason is the same thing as vital reason: it is what comes about as man lives, and what he does in order to live is vital reason. Life therefore is seen as historic in its very substance. For Ortega, life is set within time, and man had a beginning. This whole historical attitude has a bearing on Christianity, an essentially temporal revelation. Man fell in time, is redeemed in time, time will have an end. As in another aspect, discussed later, Ortega's outlook is wholly incarnational. It may be argued whether Ortega accepts the Christian revelation; it is clear that his philosophy is patient of no other.

Ortega's stress on historic reason makes of each one the end product of all that has gone before. His stress on vital reason makes of each individual a point of view on the universe—an unsubstitutable organ for the conquest of truth. Two further positions arise out of this: one the irreplaceable preciousness of each individual which is answered in Christianity by the tremendous dignity of the individual soul and of the human setting it works through. The other is Ortega's conclusion that even for truth, God has need of each individual to be gathered up into the total truth. In so far as this might mean that God has an absolute need of man, or that God is otherwise ignorant, this of course is unacceptable. Ortega is perfectly well aware of the necessary attributes of perfect being, and we may take him at this point, at least till the contrary is proved, as not maintaining any absurdity. There is undoubtedly in the early Ortega what may be called a temperamental inclination to pantheism, one of the infirmities of noble minds. But among the treasures of Christian doctrine, do we not find that God has called each soul to the proclaiming for all eternity of some aspect of the truth inalienably his own? We

are each called to a peculiar glory consisting precisely in a special ability to praise just that aspect of the infinite glory of God we were made to perceive. Soeur Elisabeth de la Sainte Trinité associated the new name of which the Apocalypse speaks precisely with her special quality of praise. In this way we are a point of view on the infinite being, admirably corresponding to Ortega's irreplaceable point of view in the natural order. And while in the absolute sense, Creator cannot need created, there remains a feeling that the fact of creation implies, if not a need, a great love and delight in the quality of each created one, in his 'point of view'; coming down to the order of redemption, we may freely say that the Mystical Body of Christ needs each of its members.

Lastly, in this itemised consideration of some elements in Orteguian thinking that seem to invite a specifically Christian scrutiny, Ortega's insistence on values *within* life and his explicit defence of 'merely' biological life, his insistence on the closeness of body and soul, of values and the physical, is not only religious in the sense of being profoundly reverent towards created being, but also definitely Catholic in the sense of being anti-Manichean.

This brings us to a more particular consideration of Ortega and his understanding of Christianity as such. In *El tema de nuestro tiempo* (1923), Ortega sums up his view of Christianity. We may express it as that, for the Christian, infinite reality overshadows this life and robs it of value. In the much later *Defensa del teólogo* (1929) he pleads powerfully on behalf of the theologian as against the mystic on the ground that the theologian upholds understanding, intelligence, knowledge whereas the mystic tries to take a short cut to a higher knowledge of reality about which, when he returns, he has absolutely nothing to say. On these two statements we may draw up at least the earlier attitude of Ortega towards Christianity and examine it more closely.¹

In Christianity, infinite reality is offered to us as the fulfilment of life itself. 'I am come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly.' To be alive at all brings man into relationship with infinite life. Christianity makes the positive promise that he shall enjoy that infinite life not only hereafter, but now; that everything he does here is related to the hereafter. Rather than

¹ Ortega has more to say later in *En torno a Galileo* (1933) where, however, he is dealing with another aspect of Christianity: that of the possibility of a Christian humanism. It is not possible to do justice to his treatment of this subject here and it deserves a separate examination.

an overshadowing of this life by the next, it is an enhancing of imperfect life by the contact with perfect life. It is true that the one is not subordinate to, but in view of, the other, but the whole process is one that must be gone through in the interests of life itself, which is what Ortega seeks. He complains in another place that life has been lived for the sake of all sorts of other things including for the sake of religion, and he asks that at last life shall be lived for the sake of life. It is true, there is a weakening of the religious spirit in which the health of the soul is subordinated to externals or the inessentials of religion, a morbid religiosity that is detrimental to the real object of religion itself. It is possible that this degeneration is more common than religious people think. But it is Ortega himself who provides the answer in the quotation from the words of Christ which he places as an epigraph to *El Ocaso de las Revoluciones*: 'The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.' Ortega undoubtedly does Christianity an injustice in seeing in its other-worldliness a hindrance to life; it is necessary to penetrate more deeply. But it might be salutary to enquire why so acute an observer and thinker as Ortega is has been misled in this way.

The Incarnation gives us the right order of things: God becomes man and in doing so lays a stress of approval and acceptance, as it were, on this life. 'Think on whatever is lovely, and do whatever you do to the glory of God', says St Paul in the full understanding of this. What God has created in the first place is exalted in the second. It is in terms of this life that we are to attain to the next, and this next life is itself an infinite enrichment of the essential quality of life, which is to go onward to more life. Moreover, this new life of the next world can be brought to us in some degree here and now: 'We will come to him and make our abode with him.' The texture of this life is sacramentalised, is transformed, that is, as the result of a promise. But the texture of this life as Ortega sees it before the advent of the promise seems a remarkably propitious one for the sacramentalisation. His view of Christianity ought not to obscure the fact that the orteguian conception of life might well prove the best approach for bringing the Gospel to contemporary man.

In the lives of the saints this marriage of finite and infinite life is made. Sometimes there is, it is true, too much shadow, but often there is not, and the question of shadow, and of the propor-

tions between this life and the next life, is seen to depend to a large extent on temperament, and to some extent on a temperamental need for discipline. St Benedict, St Francis of Assisi, St Teresa of Avila are not less Christian than St Simeon Stylites. As regards Ortega's anti-mystical prejudice, it seems to rest largely on a misunderstanding of what the object of the mystic is: not to provide information, but rather the very experience of life at its highest potentiality that, rightly understood, ought to appeal to Ortega. The mystic's preliminary persuasions are not to convince us that he knows but to induce us also to experience.

The almost universal demand for immortality, the whole kernel of Unamuno's point of view which precedes Ortega's in modern Spanish thought, is closely bound up with present fullness of life, but it is not a subject on which Ortega has anything to say. This is not insignificant, perhaps, since contemporary man is not, on the whole, inclined to lay stress on it. It was Unamuno's weakness that he generalised too rashly on the universality of this desire. Unless this life can be shown to be worth while there is not much point in offering people any prolongation of it. It is an age, it may be, in which Christianity has to offer first a new zest in living, and not an age for the preaching of the extremes of asceticism. Ortega asks that life be lived and valued for itself. It does not appear to be heresy to say that religion is for life and not life for religion, provided that from life we move out to the Lord and Giver of life.

The whole Orteguian conception, indeed, seems a parallel on the natural plane of the Christian supernatural life of prayer. Ortega places the fact of life in the forefront of his philosophy. Man is presented with a situation in which he is sentenced to choose what he will be. All the classical problems of philosophy are re-thought in view of this fundamental situation; Ortega's is a philosophy of fact, history, of the self-making of man from moment to moment in view of his circumstance, in accordance with a programme he must set before himself of what to be. Now place by the side of this the Christian life of prayer: the basis of the Christian religion and of its Jewish parent is an historic revelation made in time; Christ bids us find life from the very fountain of life by union with him. He provides the programme of what we must do in order to remake ourselves in his likeness. The circumstances of each man from moment to moment are the

channels of this new life given through Christ. We have but to accept them and go forward to more life. Christianity is factual, historic, centred on a teaching Person and demands a continuing awareness to make ourselves according to a programme of action to be determined by the circumstances of each one.

Ortega's attitude to religion in its negative aspect is largely explained by his temperament. In bidding us attend to life as the radical reality, Ortega notices rather the fact of freedom, exercises the faculty of reason, stresses the biological or biotic component of a whole. But introspection within life, as he requires, also reveals the contiguity of our life with a mysterious other, and if perception is acute enough, the dependence upon this other. If the Orteguian school can develop in the hands of sympathetic Catholic thinkers, we may find it affording us some illumination on the problems of the proof of the existence of God, on the real value behind the ontological argument for the existence of God, on the inner experience of God. Ortega, extraverted, aesthetic, in love, as he might well be, with the outward manifestations of creation, rather neglects the interests of the introverted, intuitive mystic who so irritates him by his blank silences. But if we explore the possibilities of Ortega's *vital reason* in this direction, we may find it yields new illuminations. There is no need to claim infallibility for the new method. All that is required is a certain cheerful adventurousness to see whether Ortega has not something new to tell us.