

THE INQUISITION AND EARLY PROTESTANTISM IN SPAIN

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PART I

THE “BLACK LEGEND” AND SPANISH CATHOLICISM

THE accusations made against the present Government of Spain in regard to its treatment of Protestants may be regarded as the latest phase of a “black legend” concerning this Catholic country which has been handed on, with accretions, from century to century since the period of the English Reformation, which is also that of the first emergence of modern English nationalism.

That nationalism, in the Elizabethan age, became closely associated with the Protestant cause, whose great opponent in the world of that time was the Catholic Spanish Monarchy. The conflict with Spain in the reign of Philip II, culminating in the victory over the Armada of 1588, has become immortalized in the “national legend” of the English-speaking peoples, both in Great Britain and the New World: so that Spain has come to play the role of the Prince of Darkness in that legend. The savage Protestant intolerance which marked the history of England, Ireland and the English colonies in America till the end of the seventeenth century has passed into oblivion, to a great extent, so far as the non-Catholic general public of these countries is concerned: but the Catholic intolerance of Spain, like the heretic-burnings of the unhappy Catholic Queen, “Bloody” Mary Tudor, is recalled frequently by way of denunciation or warning of the horrors of religious bigotry and obscurantism.

One effect of this has been to create an abiding and deep ill-will against Spanish Catholicism, as being stained in a special fashion by the crimes of a past still unrepented. Many who are prepared to think or speak with sympathy of Catholic leaders, or movements in France, or Germany, or Italy will believe nothing but the worst of the Church south of the Pyrenees. Fantastic notions of its “enormous” wealth and power were still set forth by propagandists and believed by educated people during the time of the recent Republic and civil war—a century after the first of a succession of anticlerical confiscation’s which had reduced its clergy and even bishops to the utmost poverty. The ignorance and poverty of the Spaniards were ascribed to the obscurantism and oppression of a clergy which battered on their miseries, instead of to bungling economic policies and to the long-drawn out evils of civil war and unstable government in the nineteenth century. It was assumed that the only Spaniards worthy of the support or sympathy of civilized people were those in revolt against the Church and the Monarchy, who wished to tear down the Bastille of Spanish Catholic tradition and to build all anew: while the defenders of that tradition were automatically denounced as “reactionary bigots” and enemies of the human race.

The Communist propaganda-work, during the Civil War of 1936-1939, had immense advantages from the start, therefore, in disseminating the new “black legend” against Spanish Nationalism and its Catholic leader, Francisco Franco. The soil had been well “conditioned” to receive the latest crop of tares; while the good seed of truth about Spain could gain little hold therein. They had no difficulty in “putting across” the picture of the Spanish Dictator and his supporters as the most sinister and ruthless of “Fascist” reactionaries, stained with every kind of crime: while the mass of atrocities committed by the Republicans were either ignored entirely, or explained away as the “natural” expression of hatred of a freedom loving people maddened by hatred of their oppressors. That false image still holds the field and determines the attitude of British and American democratic leaders as well as their people: and, as one might expect, the policy of the Franco Government towards the tiny minority of Protestants in Spain has been misrepresented so as to fit in with the rest of the picture.

Before dealing with the new legend, therefore, I propose to say something by way of refutation of the older Protestant myth which has given it plausibility, the myth of Imperial Spain as the most monstrously intolerant nation of the Reformation era.

THE INQUISITION—FACT AND FICTION

I am not concerned to defend the purpose or practices of the Spanish Inquisition during the long period of its establishment: but the notion of its exceptional infamy and cruelty is one which cannot be sustained on the evidence. The repression of heresy and infidelity was generally accepted as a political necessity both in Protestant and Catholic Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth century and even later: the use of punishments like burning, and of judicial torture which is held abominable now—except behind the “Iron Curtain”—were normal in the criminal proceedings of the age: they were neither invented, nor developed further, by the Spanish Inquisition.

The modern Spanish liberal historian, Salvador de Madariaga, in his history of Spanish America, has drawn some interesting comparisons between the practice of the Inquisition and that of other persecutors of the period. He points out that the proportion of those condemned to death by its Courts in comparison with the numbers of those accused was about one per cent. In three centuries of the history of the Indies—a continent with a population as large as that of England and Spain combined, the number of fatal victims of the Inquisition “stands nearer to sixty than to a hundred” on his reckoning. He compares this with the five hundred victims slain in English religious persecutions, Catholic and Protestant, during the century of Tudor rule. And along with these he reckons the deaths in the witchcraft trials of the Stuart period, in which the average is nineteen per cent of prosecutions throughout and forty-one per cent in the first four years of James I.

THE WITCHCRAFT PERSECUTIONS

The most moderate estimate of executions for the supposed crime of sorcery between 1542 and 1738 at just short of a thousand—which means that England hanged proportionally thirty to fifty times more people for witchcraft in that period than the numbers burned for heresy in the Indies. In Scotland and New England the witch-burning mania was far more rampant; the judicial methods employed were farcical in comparison with the careful process of the Inquisition: and the carnage was appalling during the outbursts of superstitious terrorism. Torture was used as the chief instrument of inquiry in both countries. In Sweden, France and Germany the persecution of witches was far more rampant from the fifteenth century onwards—that is, during the age of the Renaissance and Reformation—than it had ever been in the Middle Ages: and in Germany the number of slaughtered victims must have risen to tens of thousands. To this we must add, in all these countries, the huge number who languished in gaol for long periods at a time when such a punishment frequently meant death in a more lingering form.

The persecuting laws were operative against Catholics in England and Ireland from the age of Elizabeth until 1778, and imprisonment under them was fairly frequent in the seventeenth century, while the chain of martyrdom’s beginning with the reign of the “Virgin Queen” only ends with the “Popish Plot” era in the reign of Charles II, more than a century later. Nor were Catholics the only ones to suffer; for the old heresy code was still occasionally applied to other religious dissidents, as well as new repressive penal legislation in favour of the Anglican Church.

As regards witchcraft, it is worth noticing that the Spanish Inquisition seldom punished it with death, and “seems to have looked upon it as a crime to be branded mostly with ridicule.” In the Indies, where sorcery was rampant, there were few prosecutions for it and no executions at all.

THE AUTOS DA FE

The name “Auto Da Fe” (Act of Faith) is associated commonly with the burning of heretics both in the popular myth and even the ideas of the educated. The two things, however, as the historian Trevor Davies has pointed out, were in reality completely distinct. The Auto was a solemn public announcement of the sentences of the Inquisition, in an elaborate scene representing the Day of Judgement in a dramatic way, and inculcating the hideousness of heresy. The burnings (if any) were carried out by the secular authorities at the ordinary place of public execution, and were not part of the ceremony at all.

The number of baptized Jews and Mohammedans who fell into the hands of the Inquisition in Spain in the first half-century of its existence—the period of its most intensive activity against the Morisco “fifth column”—cannot be reliably estimated, according to Trevor Davies. “It must have been enormous,” he says: but he adds that the sacrifice

was demanded by “zeal for racial purity and monarchical power much more than religious fervour.” How many of these were burned?

The figure of 10,220 under Torquemada, given by Llorente, is not now taken seriously by any critical historian—though still quoted occasionally by sectarians and by the ignorant. Father Thurston, S.J., a careful and critical authority, reduces it to about two thousands. Trevor Davies writes that “the number of persons burnt alive in Spain was surprisingly small—smaller, perhaps, than in other countries such as England where offences of a non-religious character were punishable by burning.”

Even the strongly anti-Catholic Lea writes: “There is no question that the number of burnings has been greatly exaggerated in popular belief—an exaggeration to which Llorente has largely contributed by his absurd method of computation.” He points out, too, that “in the vast majority of cases” the victims were not burnt alive, but strangled beforehand.

I repeat that all this is not cited to excuse the evil deeds of the Spanish monarchy, in which the Spanish Church was involved as an accomplice, through its close and dependent alliance with the Crown. It is purely to set in due proportion a side of Spanish life which has been distorted out of all proportion by the propaganda of Spain’s enemies and those who hate her Faith. The blot of intolerance on the escutcheon of Spain may be grave enough: but it is not to be compared with that incurred by a number of her European neighbours at the same time—for instance, by the English Government of Elizabeth in Ireland, where Catholics were persecuted with a ferocity remarkable even in the sixteenth century.

THE INQUISITION AND PROTESTANTISM

The machinery of the Inquisition was naturally employed by the State authorities of Spain when the first signs of Protestantism appeared in the country in the sixteenth century: for, like almost all other political rulers of Christendom at this period, those of Spain held the current view that religious dissidence was a danger to social unity and peace, and involved revolt against lawful authority. Dread of this was especially vivid in Spain, in view of the horrid examples of religious war both in France and in the Netherlands, where Calvinism in particular had displayed violent revolutionary tendencies. The danger feared under the Emperor Charles V and King Philip II was that heresy might become associated with factious movements among the nobility, or that its professors might join hands with the Moslem “underground” and the Grand Turk.

The first Protestant suspect appeared before the Inquisition at Seville in the year 1580. He was a cleric of some eminence, Dr. Egidius, a Canon who had been a former favourite of the Emperor. The sentence was a lenient one: public abjuration, a year’s imprisonment and a further year of ecclesiastical suspension. In 1577 a nest of secret Protestants was discovered in the same city, through a mistake in the delivery of a heretical pamphlet “IMAGEN DE ANTICHRISTO.” This pamphlet, by the way, displayed the intense hatred of Catholicism, which has always been a feature of Protestant propaganda in Spain—its frontispiece showed the Pope kneeling before Satan. Over a hundred arrests were made, chiefly of clergy, monks and nuns, of whom sixteen were subsequently burnt—nearly all dead, since they recanted before execution. A further batch of thirty-three was sentenced to various penalties in 1562: nine being condemned to death. Once again, however, only their dead bodies were consumed in the fire, since they had reverted to Catholicism. In the North, Valladolid was a centre of Protestant propaganda: among early adherents to the Reform was another of Charles V’s clergy, Dr. Cazalla, who had travelled with the Emperor in Germany. He was discovered, along with a small group of other Protestants, in 1558, and they all abjured at Madrid in an Auto da Fe of the following year, except one, Herrenzuelo, who died in the fire. Some fourteen prisoners were “relaxed to the secular arm” by the Inquisition on this occasion, nearly all Protestants: sixteen others—including Baker, an Englishman, did penance. Later in the same year (1559) twenty-five Protestants appeared at an “Auto” in the presence of King Philip II himself. Thirteen were reconciled, the rest being handed over to the State authorities for execution. Two refused to recant and were burnt alive, one, a noble Italian, Don Carlos de Seso, showing heroic fortitude: he had already suffered torture. Nine years later, Leonor de Cisneros, the widow of Herrenzuela who had relapsed to Protestantism after a former recantation, also perished in the fire (1568).

With this unhappy lady's death, the last spark of native Protestantism in Spain was virtually quenched. Thereafter, the stray Protestants who fell into the hands of the Inquisition seem to have been foreigners, mostly traders. The chief effect of the discoveries in the twenty years from 1550 on was to strengthen the hand of the Inquisition with a view to averting a war of religion.

So much for Spanish Protestantism during the Reformation era. In the second Part of this pamphlet my task will be to discuss the Protestant bodies which exist in Spain at the present time, and the attitude of the Government of General Franco towards them.

PART II

PROTESTANTISM IN SPAIN TODAY

During recent years, especially when the policy of the democratic nations and U.N.O towards Spain has come under discussion in the press and in political assemblies, reports have been published on the "oppression" of Protestantism under the present regime. Their burden is to the effect that the Spanish Protestants form an "oppressed minority" who are persecuted systematically by the clergy and the civil authorities. Items cited are that they are forbidden legal recognition of their marriages: that they are denied proper cemeteries for their dead: that they are banned from admission to public office: that Protestant soldiers have been punished for refusal to attend Catholic ceremonies, and to these could be added a long list of others. What is the truth about these allegations, which have aroused indignation among Protestants, and have embarrassed Catholics, who have alleged "facts" about Spain flung in their teeth when they speak about the persecutions of their own faith conducted by communist rulers in East Europe and in China?

THE PROTESTANT MINORITY—SOME DATA

To begin with, let us look at the size of the problem. The number of Spanish Protestants is not easy to calculate accurately, since neither the Catholic Church nor the Spanish Government has attempted to make any accurate enquiries, and there seems to be no clear definition as yet about what is to be held as constituting the profession of Protestantism. The figures given in the foreign press differ widely—ranging between four thousand and thirty thousand. In the New York Times the number was stated as about fifteen thousand in the issue of November 24, 1947: by September 20, next year, it had apparently risen to thirty thousand. In 1949 (May 13), the Catholic Herald (English) mentioned the figure of twenty-eight thousand, an estimate enormously in excess of that usually given in Catholic journals. Spanish authorities, who are in a better position to know the truth, generally give a figure near the lowest level of those quoted. The report of the Catholic Episcopal Curias in 1949 reckons that the number of genuine Spanish Protestants ranges between two and three thousand. The only recent statistics which I know of from a Protestant source are dated in 1933, and appear in a book called "Religion in the Republic of Spain," by Pastors Araujo and Grubb. They give 21,900 as registered in various Evangelical bodies of whom 6,259 are "practicing." At that time, of course, there were no restrictions whatever on Protestant worship and propaganda in Spain. If we distinguish Spanish Protestants from the foreign born, the wide difference between the estimates would probably be accounted for.

It would be fair to take 20,000 as a reasonable estimate of Protestant numbers, reckoning half of these as Spanish, which is a very liberal allowance. The population of Spain in 1948 was, in round figures, 28 millions; which means that the total proportion of Protestants resident in Spain to the rest of the population is 0.072 per cent. Even if this tiny group were in reality subjected to social injustices and penalties of a serious kind, it would be ridiculous to compare the offence with the massive persecutions in East Europe, in which the religion of the vast majority is involved in such countries as Poland, Hungary and Slovakia.

As to where the small Protestant nucleus is situated—again, exact data are not available. It seems clear, however, that more than half is composed of farming and seafaring people—there are fairly old communities in Minorca (once a British possession) and in Galicia. The other half consists mainly of poor people in the larger cities with a sprinkling of the middle-class. The "intolerance" alleged to be shown towards Protestants in the armed forces affects at the highest figure imaginable some 365 soldiers, sailors and airmen among the million Spaniards mobilized.

The classification of Spanish Protestants by churches is not easy: but a summary and somewhat superficial classification has been made in the Official Service of Religious and Cultural Associations, with an eye to local convenience, and according to the foreign Protestant organization maintaining these churches. The number of chapels or church buildings maintained by Protestants in 1950 was approximately 207.

The total number of professional Protestant clergy, of all confessions, is 117, of whom forty-one at least are foreigners by origin or nationality. In some congregations, however, the conduct of services is carried out by lay "Elders." It may be interesting to compare the facilities available for Catholic and Protestant worship with the number of those for whom they are provided. Protestants have a place of worship for every seventy-six of their membership as estimated -or every thirty-eight if we consider only Spaniards: and they have a minister for every 170. In the case of the rest of the Catholic nation, even if we take the number of Church buildings of all kinds before the destruction of the civil war the number works out at only one place of worship for 679 people: while, taking the absolute total of Catholic clergy, 31,085 (Anuario, 1950) it comes to one for every 900. Both as regards premises and personnel, in fact, the "persecuted" Protestant bodies are better served than the Catholics!

PROTESTANTISM AND "FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE" (1830-1931)

Apart from the small Anglican community in Minorca, the history of modern Spanish Protestantism begins about 1830: and its origins are British. The development of British trade and finance in Spain during the nineteenth century led to the establishment there of many Protestant foreigners, who prompted the opening of places of worship and the immigration of ministers to serve their requirements. Thereafter, serious consideration began to be given to the hope of rescuing the Spanish population itself from the "errors of Popery." Both for historical and psychological reasons, however, the efforts made in this direction bore little fruit. In his famous book "The Bible in Spain," George Borrow tells the story of his own failures as a missionary in this early period: the same experience is recounted by Richard Ford, who wrote, in his "Handbook to Spain," that "the whole nation is divided into two classes, bigoted Romanists and infidels: there is no middle way." Other Protestant preachers have formed the same conclusion. Among modern writers, the Anglican Hispanic scholar Professor Allison Peers discerns an "instinctive aversion" in the Spaniard from Protestantism; while the Catholic American, Richard Pattee, refers to "the instinctive, almost atavistic rejection of a system of thought and religious way of life utterly alien to every Spaniard, past and present."

The Spanish Constitution of 1856 laid down that nobody could be persecuted for his religious opinions so long as he did not give them the character of acts opposed to the religious idea itself: the latter provision was directed against the militant activities of anti-religious "freethinkers," who had been attacking the Church with increasing vigour during the century, and had inspired the policies which stripped her of all her inherited property in 1836. It is, in fact, the "problem" of these enemies, and not the activities of a rival religious confession or confessions, which has always been the main concern of the Church and Catholic Governments in Modern Spain.

In 1869 came the First Republic, which provided, in its Constitution, for the completely free practice of their worship by non-Catholic foreigners—and Spaniards, too—"if any such exist" are to enjoy the same full liberty.

The restored Monarchy, in 1876, laid down the formula that, while Catholicism was the official religion of Spain, the free private practice of religious worship was guaranteed to all without exception. This situation remained until the downfall of Alfonso XIII in 1931 brought up in a violent form, not the question of "religious freedom" as we understand it in Australia, but that of the status and legal position of the Catholic Church in Spain. This has been constantly challenged by elements hostile to all religious faith, the rationalistic radicals of the last century and the Marxists and anarchists of our own time.

PROTESTANTISM UNDER THE REPUBLIC AND CIVIL WAR

Under the inspiration of these anti-Christian forces, the first step towards the full secularization of the Spanish state and culture was taken in Article 27 of the Constitution of the second Spanish Republic, which granted full freedom of conscience to all, but ruled that all worship must be private unless special permission were granted by the authorities for a public manifestation of religious faith. This article gave to any authorities hostile to the Church the power to put

an end to the processions and Catholic demonstrations of varied kinds which have been a traditional feature of the people's life for ages.

Actually, the war against the Catholic religion began less than a month after the proclamation of the Republic, with the burning by terror-gangs of churches, convents and other Catholic institutions which spread from Madrid to the provinces, in the course of which many art treasures were destroyed. This sort of thing recurred again, with interludes of relative calm, during the period between 1931 and the beginning of the Civil War: and there is ample evidence that the authorities and party leaders connived at this violence and even openly encouraged it, as a means of breaking down the power of the Church. During this period, the handful of Spanish Protestants made no attempt to protest at the savageries and destruction loosed against their Catholic fellow-Christians. They had hailed the Republic with joy, hoping that its advent would provide fresh opportunities for their propaganda: and they continued the firm friends of the "Left-Wing" groups responsible for the terror even to the last.

On January 30, 1936, when there could not be the least doubt of the atheist militant fanaticism dominant in the counsels of the Left, the Chairman of the Alliance of Evangelical Churches publicly recommended his people to vote for the Left Wing "Popular Front" in a manifesto which aligned the Protestant Churches authorities definitely on their side. The harm done by this was later explicitly recognized by the same body which declared "many of the churches and many of the brethren have had to pay dearly for this close association with Leftist elements who could not fail in the long run to do injury to our cause."

There is nothing surprising about the attitude of the Spanish Protestants, to be sure: for, as Pastor Brutsch of Geneva pointed out in his book "The Gospel of Christ: Murdered Spain and Ourselves," one of the characteristics of Spanish Protestantism is that it is anti-Catholic. The Protestant world in general, where it did not actively line up with the Spanish enemies of Christianity, at least showed a complacent indifference to the martyrdom of the Church. Here and there, individual voices were raised, but not a single non-Catholic religious organization protested against a systematic and concentrated persecution of incomparable brutality whose aim was to root God out of the minds and hearts of the Spanish people. If Protestantism today suffers more than ever from the profound repugnance of all classes of nation, the memories of the part played by its adherents in days of sorrow, bitterness and fear are largely accountable for this fact.

There were, to be sure, some shining exceptions to the attitude we have described. Even in Spain, there were cases of Protestants who gave help to hunted priests during the Civil War. They had good reason, however, to fear the consequences of the victory of those who stood for the uncompromising Catholic tradition of Spain, and who had small reason for affection towards the "liberalism" which had brought such dire consequences in its train.

THE FRANCO GOVERNMENT AND RELIGION

The "Spaniards' Charter" in 1945 proved, however, to be astonishingly moderate in the circumstances. In substance, the situation of '76 was restored—Catholicism being established, with sole right to public ceremonies or manifestations, but the private practice of other religions being permitted. The extreme Right—the Carlists—protested against the concessions granted: but they were approved by the Holy See and the Spanish Hierarchy and clergy. The Protestants themselves hailed the arrangement as a victory, enabling them to claim a legal basis, even though restricted, for their evangelical work. Indeed, the Bulletin of the Spanish Evangelical Church proclaimed that the "Hand of God" was to be discerned in this alteration of their circumstances.

Controversy arose over the interpretation of the term "private worship"; which was defined, in November 1945, as "that which is held inside a place of worship, a meeting or a cemetery": demonstrations or advertisements on the public highway being prohibited. The new rulers showed a good deal of indulgence in issuing permits for places of dissident worship... and some times waived insistence upon permits at all, allowing Church bodies to act on their own authority, as is admitted in the Evangelical Church bulletin. Old churches and chapels were reopened, and new ones established to meet the needs of communities. Not only this, but propaganda centres were actually set up in Catholic places which contained not a single Protestant. Of one of these the review "Life of Faith" announced joyfully in August, 1947, that it had drawn a congregation of some fifty persons between its opening in November, 1946, and that

time, of whom twenty had declared themselves converts. "The same is going on all over Spain. The authorities appear favourably disposed."

This activity, of course, was illegal under the terms of the Charter: and it has often been conducted in an aggressive and provocative manner. That of the Adventists—financed from America—was mentioned by one minister as especially offensive. Among many events, one recorded by Mr. B. Hallstrom, a Swedish journalist, was especially exasperating to Catholics. Under cover of one of the "Bible Days" organized by the Spanish Hierarchy to encourage the reading of Scripture, a number of young Protestants sold Protestant versions of the Bible, as well as distributing anti-Catholic tracts, disguised so as to appear to be Catholic pamphlets. In order to understand the indignation aroused by actions of this kind, it must be realized that Protestant propaganda commonly selects for attack features of Catholicism which are especially dear to Spaniards, in particular the cultus of Our Lady, who has shrines and sacred images dotted all over the country, and is regarded as a sort of "national heroine." When a deep sentiment of devotion—like this is deliberately outraged—when the veneration of the Saints and of their holy images is crudely denounced as "idolatry" by those who are as ignorant of Catholic things as they are insulting—when the Church of Spain is described as apostate, and they find themselves treated by alien propagandists as a heathen people to whom "the Gospel" is unknown, is it astonishing that the anger of a passionate and proud Christian nation is occasionally aroused to fever heat, so that "incidents" take place? And to this we must add the association between the Protestants and the anti-Catholic fanatics of the Republic who slaughtered thousands of clergy and religious, and untold numbers of the faithful, and carried fire and ruin through her holy places. Finally, there is a not unnatural readiness to believe that this association still continues—that Protestant gatherings are made use of by revolutionary "underground" elements for their own sinister purposes. Hence demands such as that of Cardinal Segura of Seville—a stalwart traditionally devoted to the Monarchy, but holding aloof from politics—that there shall be no more authorization for the opening of "centres of a false religion" which are also centres of insult and hostility towards the Catholic Faith and the nation.

SOME ANTI-PROTESTANT "INCIDENTS"

The most serious "incidents" of anti-Protestant attack took place in 1947. At Granollers, a religious service of the Baptists was raided by the Carlists, who smashed the furniture and seized and burnt some anti-Catholic propaganda which was being distributed, including a pamphlet "Pepa Y La Virgen" which was regarded as grossly insulting to the Mother of God. In this town the Catholic churches had been burnt in the Civil War: the premises in which the chapel were set up had been sublet without the permission of their owners, the widow and son of a Carlist who had been murdered by the Republicans. The police immediately restored order, however; the damage was paid for, and Protestant services have since continued without further trouble in the Granollers chapel. At Barcelona, a party of thirty uniformed "Requetes" (Carlist) attacked a Methodist chapel, smashed the furniture and overturned a harmonium and piano. The chapel was not occupied at the time. Those responsible for the act were reprimanded by the Church authorities, and also prosecuted and made to pay for the damage. Finally, in Madrid, there was an attack on the recently opened British-owned chapel in the Calle De Trafalgar, which is the largest Protestant church in Spain. The minister was an ardent anti-Catholic propagandist, and was generally held responsible for a pamphlet highly offensive in regard to Our Lady. On the evening of October 31, a party of young Catholics forced their way in, in order to sing the "Salve Regina" by way of protest. Meeting with a justified resistance, they smashed some furniture and windows, and "made hay" generally. Once more the police intervened, those responsible were arrested and punished and the damage made good.

While admitting that the authorities acted correctly in these cases, some foreigners have laid blame for them on the Spanish bishops. This is wholly unjust. The extent of the Episcopal action has been to protest against the extension of facilities for Protestant worship which are already more than adequate, and to complain of the type of propaganda indulged in by some of the sects, in particular the Adventists. If they had given the smallest incitement to violence, the result would not have been restricted to small incidents of the kind we have described! Paul P. Kennelly, of the New York Times, has admitted that there is no evidence whatever that these sporadic acts of vandalism had been instigated

by the authorities in Church or State, or that they were in any way related to a “pattern” of violence. (December 25, 1948.)

In passing, it may be worth while “nailing to the counter” a common lie current about the Bible in Spain. Actually, Spain has had translated scriptures since the fifteenth century, and today many excellent Catholic vernacular versions are obtainable at a cheap rate in bookshops, and are sold in very large quantities. They contain the full text of Old and New Testament without omissions or suppressions of any kind. Those who disseminate Protestant versions, therefore, are not supplying a public want of the Christian population in any sense: nor have these versions any merit.

ECONOMIC BASIS OF PROTESTANTISM

One of the most offensive features about the local Protestant bodies in the sight of Spaniards is the lavish economic support which they receive from alien organizations violently hostile to Spain: and this has been especially galling at a time when the country has been exposed to discrimination of a most painful kind against it in the matter of trade and financial assistance. It is this large-scale assistance from abroad which has made possible the great outlay on places of worship, paid ministers, propaganda, real estate investments and so on, of Church groups whose Spanish membership consists of tiny handfuls of people, usually poor. Since the Civil War, the amount of property owned by the bodies supporting Spanish Protestantism has largely increased. Places of worship are commonly foreign-owned, and the “economic interests” of the companies in which proprietorship is vested have sometimes been the subject of intervention by diplomatic missions accredited to Madrid. This situation led to a curious complication a few years ago, over the position of a “German Real Property Company” whose possessions were to be sold under a new Spanish security law, and the proceeds handed to the owners, German residents in Spain. The matter involved the terms of an agreement made in 1948 between Spain and three Western Powers, Britain, France and U.S.A. for the solution of the problem of German investments in Spain. It came out that the Company in question was only part of the economic machine of Protestantism in Spain: and when effect was given to the Act, passed as the result of an international agreement, there was an outcry about the claims of Protestants and the conduct of the Spanish authorities, which reached as far as the British Parliament—somewhat to the embarrassment of the then Foreign Secretary, Mr. Ernest Bevin.

PROTESTANTS AND EDUCATION:

The Law of Primary Education in Spain affords one of the grounds for Protestant allegations of religious oppression. It lays, down the principle that a Spanish Catholic “religious and patriotic formation” is to be provided through the educational system for all Spanish children. True, it allows these children to be accepted as students in the foreign schools established for foreign children, which are authorized on a basis of reciprocity with the nation to which they belong. The rule is, however, that such schools must have certain cultural subjects—religion, civics, geography and history of Spain, as well as the Spanish language—taught to these Spanish children by Spaniards, under the conditions laid down for the public schools of the State. So far as the foreign children are concerned, no regulation is laid down at all.

In Spanish State schools and private schools alike, the Catholic doctrine is part of the curriculum. This is in accordance with the desire of the overwhelming number of those who pay for them, who are themselves Catholics, and hold that Catholic teaching is fundamental to the inculcation of sound citizenship and Spanish culture. It would, indeed, be ridiculous if the general Christian culture demanded by the consciences of the vast majority were left incomplete in order to “spare the consciences” of 0.072 per cent! Actually, the secular school in Spain has never been “neutral” in spirit: it has always been a weapon of de-Christianization in the hands of enemies of the Faith. For the rest, the teacher in a “non-sectarian” school in Spain could hardly explain to his pupils the history or civilization of their country, or the great monuments of her past, or even the life of the present age; and he could not inculcate any kind of ethical principles without relation to those of the Church from which the nation has taken its traditional code of social duty, justice and charity.

Actually, the authorization given to non-Catholic foreign schools is interpreted so laxly that in Madrid and Barcelona Protestant schools of a definitely propagandist character are maintained by foreign funds, and no obstacle is

placed to their operation by the authorities or to the reception of Protestant religious instruction by their Spanish pupils. (See H. S. Leiper: "Christianity Today": a survey of the state of the Churches.) In places where no such schools exist, Protestant children naturally have to go to the ordinary Catholic public ones, since it is clearly impossible for either the Government or foreign patrons to establish special Protestant schools for every group of two or three children! As regards secondary, technical and higher educational institutions, no declaration of faith is demanded either by Institutes (gimnasios) or higher schools or Universities: and no direct religious instruction is given apart from the faculties of theology. Here, therefore, there can be no question of "hostile discrimination" against Protestants. A seminary for the training of Protestant ministers has been established in Madrid without objection.

It may be added that the State authority's demand that Spanish children should possess a knowledge of the Catholic religion and culture of their nation in no sense means that it is legally required of them to adhere to Catholic beliefs or practices against the wish of their parents.

A SCANDINAVIAN COMPARISON WITH SPAIN

It may be of interest to compare the Spanish educational regulations with those prevailing in certain lands of Protestant culture which are generally regarded as among the world's most enlightened and democratic. In Sweden, the Catholic population is in about the same proportion to the whole as the Protestant population in Spain, being 0.077 per cent: and, as in Spain, almost the whole nation adheres to the established Lutheran Church, at least in name. Here as in Spain, religion is obligatory in the elementary schools: in the sixth grade, the law requires the reading of "Luther's Short Catechism" as an historical document of Luther's interpretation of the principal tenets of Christianity. No teachers can be appointed who are not members of the State Church: Catholics and other minorities are not permitted to establish their own schools. For private schools, permission has to be obtained from the local school board, and this is granted on condition that the head of the school is a member of the Lutheran State Church. (These terms are far more rigorous than those in Spain are, as will be easily seen). In Norway, (Catholic population one per cent) the Primary Education law calls for a knowledge of Bible History, Church History and the Christian Catechism according to the Episcopal Lutheran Church, as the aim of instruction in the Christian religion. Yet these two countries have never suffered any international attack on account of the privileges given to their State Churches in the cultural sphere.

We may note in passing that in the Protectorate of Morocco, where the Spanish authorities have a large population of Jewish and Moslem subjects, these people have their own schools, some of which enjoy State support.

PROTESTANT MARRIAGES AND BURIALS

In regard to marriage, complaints have been made that non-Catholics are obliged to marry before a Catholic priest under the existing law. In fact, the situation is exactly the same as that which preceded the Republican era. Catholics are married before a Catholic priest: non-Catholics before a civil judge. The trouble arises from the fact that the State regards everyone with a Catholic baptismal registration as being "Catholic" for the purposes of the law, which has led to vexation in some cases, while "mixed" marriages are contracted under the principles laid down in the Church's Canon Law.

In the matter of the burial of non-Catholics, a number of absurdities have been given currency, such as that of a certain Mrs. Bieler, who wrote in the United Church Observer that Protestants were buried in any sort of abandoned place. The fact is that in every Spanish town, a zone in the cemetery is bound to be reserved for non-Catholics, according to the Canon Law of the Church itself. (Canon 1212.) There is a Civil Cemetery in every important Spanish city: and there are what are usually styled "British Cemeteries" in a number of ports and cities frequented by foreigners. True, in many small towns and villages the "civil" cemetery does not, in practice, exist: but when we consider how tiny the Protestant death rate is, and the fact that half of these deaths are those of foreigners, who nearly always dwell in large cities, the ground for serious criticism is not very substantial. It sometimes happens, however, that a body has to be conveyed to a neighbouring cemetery; there was one unhappy case in 1947 where a dead person—according to Protestant testimony—had to be buried in a field in a small village of the Albacete Province.

NO PROFESSIONAL ANTI-PROTESTANT DISCRIMINATION

In professional life, the only legal restriction on non-Catholics is that imposed by the Catholic character of the public primary schools, which means that their teachers must be adherents of the national religion. Apart from this, no one is barred by the fact of being Protestant from entering any profession or officially regulated post. What happens is that, on account of the social and intellectual level of most of the tiny band of truly Spanish Protestants, it is rare for any of them to enter for the public competitive examinations for official posts—or professions. The best-educated Protestants are commonly ministers' sons who become ministers—for example, the Cabrera family in Madrid. There are one or two examples, however, of Protestants in professional life, such as Dr. Aranjó, Professor of Mathematics at Saragossa University.

It has been complained that in orphanages, asylums, hospitals, etc., all inmates are compelled to attend Catholic services, as well as in the Army and the prisons. What is the truth about this? Spaniards, it is true, are much addicted to collective worship; and their institutions, like the State, are officially Catholic. The rule is, however, that Protestants are to be excused from collective worship if they make their status known. This does not mean that every officer, superior, guardian, nurse or hospital sister invariably observes instructions: there are official abuses due to injudicious and unintelligent zeal, in Spain as in other lands. Oppressive acts of this sort, however, are discountenanced both by Church and State authorities. Their attitude is expressed by the Bishop of Barcelona, a diocese with a larger number of foreigners and Protestants than any other. "One dies for the Faith: but the Faith persecutes no one, nor is it imposed by force" says Monsignor Casaus: and he exhorts Catholics to treat foreign and native Protestants with nothing but the most considerate charity.

THE SOLDIER WHO WOULDN'T SALUTE

The Spanish armed forces take part in public religious acts: it is accordingly, part of the soldier's normal duty to parade for these, and no exception is made for the 350 or so Protestants who may be serving in the three armed forces at any particular time. No soldier, or sailor, however, is ever made to attend any religious ceremony in his private capacity. A single case of "persecution" in the army has been made the basis of a campaign of insult and defamation against Spain. The facts are as follows. One Protestant soldier, in a military formation drawn up as a guard of honour at a Catholic procession, refused to obey his officer's orders to present arms when the Blessed Sacrament passed by. He was punished for this act of public indiscipline by a short term of imprisonment, under the military Code applicable to disobedience to an officer on armed service. It was, in my opinion, oppressive and tactless to enforce the Code rigorously in this case, and the course of wisdom and charity would be to avoid the recurrence of the situation by keeping Protestants away from such occasions. Once the incident had occurred, however, it would have been very dangerous, from the point of military discipline, to allow the soldier's open disobedience to pass unnoticed or unrebuked: and no army in the world would tolerate such conduct.

CONCLUSION

To a Protestant, it is inevitable that any restriction on his religious life and propaganda should appear harsh and unjust: and, if he is a man of fervent faith and apostolic zeal, he may well think it his duty to raise the "sign of contradiction" in the Name of God. On the other side, the authorities of a Catholic State will reply that the Faith of the people is a treasure of incomparable worth, which it is their duty to guard and maintain for the sake of the "common good."

The restrictions placed upon their worship and propaganda are mildly applied, as we have seen. They enjoy very substantial freedoms as regards the printing and distribution of literature—leaflets, tracts and books, including the Scriptures—among their own community. If their external action among Catholics were not checked in any way, it would arouse an indignation, which would be dangerous to themselves as well as to the public peace. If they were not, at times, victimized unjustly on account of the prejudice against them, it would be a miracle, in view of the nature of man in general, and of passionate Spanish man in particular. They often suffer, too, from Catholic bigotry and ignorance about Protestantism which matches that of their own propagandists in dispersing heat and smoke rather than the light of truth and the spirit of Christian love.

But it is the height of absurdity that this small body of dissidents, with all the liberties and protection it enjoys, along with more than ample provision for its requirement, should be the favourite theme of diatribes against “Spanish intolerance,” uttered, most commonly, by sectarians who have remained strangely silent in face of the savage anti-Christian persecutions in East Europe, when they have not gone so far as to justify the Red oppressors of the Faith there!

Our Lord had some bitter words to say about the Pharisees who “strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.” They are words which those who cry out about the “persecution” in Catholic Spain would do well to re-read, before searching their consciences to see to whom they apply!
