



THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL IN SPAIN: EFFECTS, ANSWERS AND ADVICE

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1. The Second Vatican Council As An Event

The French philosopher [Alain Badiou defines an event](#) not merely as something important or significant that can occur in any of the different areas of social, political, artistic or scientific life. It is, rather, about a bankruptcy in the field of knowledge or politics, because with the event in question a new situation emerges. In the Catholic world, in general, and in Spain in particular, we can consider the Second Vatican Council as an authentic event. And, as such, as [Michel Onfray](#) has maintained, the Second Vatican Council was “the Christian [May '68](#).”

And, in this event, the new conciliar political theology, as it emerged from the dominant hermeneutic in the Vatican, turned out to be antithetical to the previously dominant one. It signified the triumph of ecumenism; the opening to the left, communism and Marxism included; the final acceptance of liberal democracy as a legitimate political framework for Catholics; the experience of worker-priests; the pacifist option and non-violence; the sweeping aggiornamento; ecumenism; cosmopolitanism; the radical modification of the liturgy; the new scenography of the Eucharistic process, and so and so forth. Commenting on these changes, Onfray, a militant atheist, pointed out that “the Church precipitated the forward movement that heralded its downfall.”

Likewise, at that time, fundamental principles of the Catholic creed were being questioned, such as, the principle of authority, the dogma of the Eucharist, celibacy, divorce, preconjugal sexual relations, orthodoxy itself; and, on a speculative level, the demystification of biblical texts, the appearance of theology without God, the “textual” exegesis of biblical texts, and so on.

However, it does not seem that the agnostic and left-wing intellectuals were very impressed by the new Vaticanist theology. In a profile of the famous Maurrasian traditional Catholic historian, [Philippe Ariès](#), his friend Michel Foucault made reference to “the antics of the Second Vatican Council.”

In few societies like the Spanish one, the repercussions of the new Council were more decisive, especially in conservative and traditionalist sectors, but also for the progressivists and the left opposed to the political regime born of the Civil War. Because traditional Catholicism had been in a country that did not experience the Lutheran Reformation or the separation between Church and State, it was much more than a religion; it was a system of beliefs and morals that had marked the whole of society—its ideas, its mentalities, its politics, its habits of life, etc. For all these reasons, the crisis of traditional

Catholicism was a truly national and, above all, a social and political crisis—a fact that also coincided with a decisive change in the economic and social structures of the country.

Under the aegis of the so-called “technocrats,” Spanish society underwent qualitative changes in its social and economic structures. As in the case of the productive structure, there was an incessant and contradictory process of “creative destruction” in the areas of morals, social values and mentalities. The doors were opened to cultural secularization. Tradition was losing its plausibility in the process, in which industrial society was consolidated and stripped of its paradigmatic character for today. As the theologian [Olegario González de Cardedal](#) pointed out: “Thus began a process of immanentization of reality with the resultant closure to the transcendent order and eschatological promises.”

“A poor Church, a poor Spain!” Exclaimed the priest, [Aniceto de Castro Albarrán](#), a former contributor to [Acción Española](#), in one of his writings. For the political regime born of the Civil War, the situation was enormously problematic. Its institutions and its civic culture clearly depended on the social doctrine of the Church, a doctrine that came from the era of Pius XI and even from Pius IX, a supporter of the confessional State, of the condemnation of liberalism that starting with the Syllabus and of social and political corporatism. In 1953, the Spanish State had signed a Concordat with the Vatican, which granted multiple privileges to the Catholic Church in educational, moral, social and political matters.

However, the regime tried to convert itself, under the new political and social contexts, into what the liberal philosopher John Rawls has called a “decent hierarchical political system,” which progressively accepted the principles of religious freedom, economics, equality before the law, etc. As the historian [Juan Pablo Fusi](#) has pointed out, from the 1960s Spanish society began to enjoy numerous “spaces of freedom,” especially at the level of intellectual debate and the possibility of founding new publishing houses, newspapers and media. In fact, the religious freedom projects promoted by Minister [Fernando María Castiella](#) were formulated before the convocation of the Council. In the Organic Law of the State, Spain continued to be confessionally Catholic. The new Spanish legislation was presented to the Pontiff, but its fundamental demands, such as the renunciation of the participation of the government in the appointment of bishops, the privilege of the Fuero, the presence of bishops and priests in official bodies and political institutions, were ignored by Franco.

In any case, for the most conscientious intellectuals and politicians of the regime, the new strategy of the Vatican and of the new pontiff, Giovanni Battista Montini, [Paul VI](#), was clear – for he was a man trained in the doctrines of Jacques Maritain, devoted to the thesis of the “new Christianity,” son of a

deputy of the People's Party of [Luigi Sturzo](#), secretary of the FUCI ([Federazione Universitari Cattolici Italiana](#)), supporter of the Christian Democracy, and one of whose teachers had been [Father Giulio Bevilacqua](#), a prominent antifascist priest. Furthermore, the beginning of his pontificate had coincided with the shift to the left of the Christian Democrats, a prelude to the historic compromise. When he was Archbishop of Milan, Montini sent a letter to Franco, on behalf of [Jorge Conill](#), an anarchist sentenced to death for his terrorist activities.

According to some testimonies, Montini had been in favor, after the end of World War II, of the restoration of the Monarchy and the elimination of Franco. Very controversial was the content of the pontifical address of June 24, 1969, in which Montini compared the situation in Spain with that of Vietnam, the Middle East and Nigeria; which caused a harsh reply from Emilio Romero, in the columns of the official Pueblo newspaper. The philosopher [Leopoldo-Eulogio Palacios](#), formerly of [Acción Española](#) and author of *El mito de la Nueva Cristiandad* (*The Myth of the New Christianity*), a famous criticism of the doctrines of [Jacques Maritain](#), argued that Paul VI was the one who had put into practice the project defended by the French philosopher in his writings. Upon being elected Pontiff, Franco welcomed him like "a bucket of cold water." However, Franco added with his usual political realism: "He is no longer Cardinal Montini. Now he is Pope Paul VI."

There could, therefore, not be the slightest doubt that Montini and his acolytes had as their project the end of the Spanish regime, in favor of a Spanish Catholic Church incardinated in the context of European liberal democracies. Actually, there was nothing strange about that attitude. The Vatican is a state with its own political interests, which it tries to impose on the nations of Catholic roots. And, in that sense, the Vatican hierarchy had long considered an authoritarian and confessional system, such as the Spanish one, to be dysfunctional. As [Carl Schmitt](#) pointed out, the political activity of the Catholic Church is characterized by "astonishing elasticity;" it is "a *complexio oppositorum*." "There does not seem to be any contradiction that she is not able to encompass." A clear example of this was its strategy throughout the twenties and thirties of the last century.

On the one hand, the condemnation of [L'Action française](#), in 1926, accusing it of exacerbated nationalism, to reach a pact with the Third Republic; on the other, the Lateran Pacts with Mussolini's fascist Italy. And, as [Antonio Gramsci](#) pointed out, "the Vatican is more realistic than [Maurras](#) and better conceives the formula of *politique d'abord*." It was not, of course, a disruptive strategy at the social level; quite the opposite. To employ again a Gramscian conceptualization, it was a project of "passive revolution," and the guarantor of a balance between the new social, political and religious forces. Or,

what comes to the same thing – a guarantee, in a new political context, of the privileges of the Catholic Church, in social and educational matters, achieved throughout the Franco regime: Change what was considered an accessory, for what the ecclesiastical apparatus considered essential.

Although the Vatican's project was objectively reformist, it received, as we will see, the help, sometimes direct and at other times indirect, from the emerging sectors of progressive and even revolutionary Spanish Catholicism and against the representatives of conservatism and traditionalism—and ultimately against the regime of General Franco.

Faced with these offensives, there was no unitary or common strategy, tactic or response on the part of the political and intellectual forces affected by the regime, or simply conservatives. And thus it is that considering the Franco regime as a homogeneous whole is wrong. Undoubtedly, there was a reaction that we could call traditionalist, which was the loudest; but it was not, nor could it be, the most effective. Likewise, there was an alternative, from the positions of a new positivist conservatism, consisting of assuming the secularizing process with all its consequences. And another, apart from the Vatican project overseen in Spain by [Vicente Enrique y Tarancón](#), that was assumed from Catholic-conservative positions, namely, the principle of religious freedom.

2. The Progressive Offensive

Years later, the philosopher and theologian [Adolfo Muñoz Alonso](#) lamented, anticipating not the decline of the [Falange](#) as an effective political force, but that of the regime born of the Civil War: "...the political mistake of the confessional organizations that have shunned the clarity and the distinction of ideas and aspirations in the field of the specific apostolate 'and' the politicization of the Second Vatican Council combining heterogeneous factors."

The progressive hermeneutics of the new papal encyclicals and of the theological-political content of the Second Vatican Council was, at least in certain political and intellectual spheres, decisive. Very significant, in this regard, was the interpretation of the content of the encyclical [Pacem in Terris](#), by John XXIII, which was made by certain liberal, Christian Democrat and socialist sectors. The Taurus publishing house brought out, in 1963, a book entitled, *Comentarios a la Pacem in Terris* (*Comments to the Pacem in Terris*), in which Mariano Aguilar Navarro, José María Díez Alegría, Manuel Giménez Fernández, Eduardo García de Enterría, Lorenzo Martín Retortillo and others collaborated.

Giménez Fernández highlighted the eagerness of Juan XXIII for renewal. García de Enterría pointed out that the Catholic Church had abandoned "indifference to the forms of government" to explicitly embrace "the democratic principle" and with the definitive "abandonment of what the ancient doctrine called monarchy," and of "political paternalism." For his part, Martín Retortillo pointed out "the happy coincidence that exists in many of its points" between the pontifical doctrine and that of the French politician Pierre Mendès France in his book, [A Modern French Republic](#), which was translated into Spanish by the Aguilar publishing house; and he concluded that in the encyclical the fundamental rights were not limited to the negative ones of a liberal nature, but also to the positive ones, such as, that of social security.

The doctrinal and intellectual offensive of the self-proclaimed progressive or conciliar Catholicism was decisive, especially in the university and intellectual fields and among the youth. Its main champions were theologians, such as, [José María Díez Alegría](#) and [José María González Ruíz](#), and intellectuals, such as, [José Luis López Aranguren](#). Its ideas were disseminated by prestigious publishers, such as, Taurus, Edicusa, Alianza, Peninsula and Guadarrama; and it was highlighted in magazines, such as, [Cuadernos para el Diálogo](#) (which was edited by Franco's former minister [Joaquín Ruíz Giménez](#)), [Triunfo](#) and [El Ciervo](#). There were some popularizers of Catholic progressivism, or of the so-called [Liberation Theology](#), such as, [Enrique Miret Magdalena](#). Significant was the publication by the Taurus publishing house of the complete works of the heterodox [Pierre Teilhard de Chardin](#), who had been accused of being a modernist by many Catholic theologians and by official science, but whose ideas were well received by progressive Catholic sectors.

Among Taurus's first books was the work of José María Díez Alegría, who reinterpreted natural law, in which he showed himself to be a revisionist of [Catholic natural law](#). In this respect, he understood that the norms of natural law were susceptible not only to exceptional variation, but to some historical variability, and thus the norms were limited by circumstantial determinations, and, in any case, subject to the double effect moral principle. Furthermore, natural law evolved historically in the ever more perfect knowledge of this principle and in its progressive application to social life.

The introducer in Spain of certain aspects of what would later be called Liberation Theology was [Canon José María González Ruíz](#), by way of his book, *El cristianismo no es un humanismo (Is Not Christianity A Humanism?)*, in whose pages he defended a "theology of the world." It was an attempt to reconcile Christianity with worldly, social reality. His objective was dialogue with Marxism, especially for its criticism of religion as a system of alienation or "estrangement." Faced with this interpretation, González

Ruiz argued that Christianity in general, and Catholicism in particular, were "essentially materialistic;" that the Christian ethic was "primarily projected toward man rather than toward God;" and that the Catholic Church had to "make concrete and committed decisions in the face of individual and collective human situations." In that sense, he mentioned "our Marxist brothers." He interpreted the Second Vatican Council as a "monumental self-review." And he advocated the encounter with Marxism on a "common ground."

However, the most charismatic representative of Catholic progressivism was José Luis López Aranguren, who in his book, *El marxismo como moral* (*Marxism as Moral*) advocated, like González Ruiz, a dialogue between Christians and Marxists. For López Aranguren, Marxism was not a scientific doctrine, but "moral voluntarism," which coincided with Christianity in its criticisms of capitalism, propitiating a "reaction to previous religious individualism."

At the same time, López Aranguren was very critical of the reality of official Catholicism. In his understanding, a point of "total secularization" had been reached; that is, the destruction of the distinction between the sacred and the profane. A phenomenon that had had a powerful impact on the reality of the Catholic Church. Such a crisis had manifested itself in the pontificate of John XXIII and in the Second Vatican Council, and had an impact on theology itself, on the discussions around dogmas, on the very notion of orthodoxy, on biblical hermeneutics and of revelation, and so on. The social and political phenomenon par excellence was the "contest." The paradox of a "theology without God" had even been reached. López Aranguren rejected the existence of religious orders and considered secular institutes "spiritually poor." His pessimism about the future of Catholicism was very remarkable, because the Second Vatican Council had unleashed "forces that were very difficult to contain," so that "humanly speaking, I cannot expect much from Catholicism."

Along with these charismatic leaders of progressive or oppositional Catholicism, there were a series of epigones among which were the young theologians Enrique Miret Magdalena, [Casiano Floristán](#), [Enrique Iniesta](#), [Antonio Aradillas](#), [José María Llanos](#), [Tomás Malagón](#), and [José Luis Martín Vigil](#) (author of a significant novel entitled, *Los curas comunistas* (*The Communist Priests*)). Synthesizing the approaches of these priests, Miret Magdalena highlighted his animosity towards the idea of religious unity, which, in his view, was of "pagan and non-Christian origin;" the commitment to the working class; the defense of the fundamental values of Christianity, that is, just peace, social love, real freedom and respect for personal conscience. "And whoever does not accept these values, no matter how much he says he believes in all dogmas, he is not a Christian and, therefore, he cannot be a Catholic."

In the same way, we must highlight the influence of the [Instituto Fe y Secularidad](#), organized by Jesuits, such as, [Alfonso Álvarez Bolado](#) and [José Gómez Caffarena](#), whose objective was to raise the dialogue between Christians and Marxists.

The phenomenon of worker priests was generalized in Spain in the 1960s. A pioneer was Father José María Llanos, who in 1955 settled in the neighborhood of [El Pozo del Tío Raimundo](#), and later was a member of the [PCE](#). Perhaps this phenomenon's most charismatic representative was [Francisco García Salve](#), a militant Jesuit of the [Workers' Commissions](#) and the PCE.

In 1973 the group, [Cristianos por el Socialismo](#) (Christians for Socialism) appeared in Spain, founded by [Juan N. García Nieto](#), [Alfonso Carlos Comín](#), [Pedro Ribera](#), Juan Pujades, Father José María Llanos and the historian, [María del Carmen García Nieto](#). The most charismatic militant of this group was, without a doubt, [José Carlos Comín](#), of Carlist descent, who managed to give a supposedly messianic image, with an eloquent and prophetic oratory, not exempt at times from a certain exhibitionism. His own face, that of a contemporary Jesus Christ, sought to give a new image of committed and revolutionary Christianity.

At the same time, new Christian-inspired unions appeared, such as, the [Unión Sindical Obrera](#), which emerged from the Catholic Workers' Youth. Likewise, emerged the first Workers' Commissions, whose members came, generally, from Catholic sectors; and many Catholics were part of the Maoist Revolutionary Workers' Organization. And the deeds of the revolutionary priest, [Camilo Torres](#), those of [Che Guevara](#), the new Christ resurrected, or the Chilean experiment in socialism, promoted by [Salvador Allende](#), with the support of some left-wing Catholics, were glorified as examples. In this context, the homilies that were fined were abundant, the difficulties of the self-proclaimed grassroots Catholic movements were many, and the priestly fitting out of jails in [Zamora](#) significant.

Naturally, this process had to generate its own dialectic; and generate it did. Conservative and traditional groups had to seek an answer to the new context; but, as we have already pointed out, it was not a common answer, but a diverse one.

3. The Traditional Reaction

Previous to the Council, the traditional Spanish Catholic sectors had focused their attention on the

criticism of figures, such as, [Miguel de Unamuno](#) and, above all, [José Ortega y Gasset](#), prototypes of heterodoxy. Good proof of this was the content of magazines such as [Arbor](#), in the 1940s, and then in the mid-1950s [Punta Europa](#), financially supported by the [Oriol](#) family and edited by the traditionalist writer, [Vicente Marrero Suárez](#).

Then, in the conciliar context, [Verbo](#) magazine came to existence, which gradually became the intellectual organ of Spanish traditionalist Catholicism. The new magazine was considered heir to *Acción Española*, although its model was [La Cité Catholique](#), edited by the former Maurrasian, [Jean Ousset](#). Among its founders were [Eugenio Vegas Latapié](#), [Juan Vallet de Goytisolo](#) and [Estanislao Cantero](#). Its most common contributors were Rafael Gamba, Álvaro D'Ors, Vicente Marrero, Francisco Javier Fernández de la Cigüña, Francisco Elías de Tejada, Blas Piñar López, Gabriel de Armas, Francisco Canals Vidal, Bernardo Monsegú, Julián Gil de Sagredo, Eustaquio Guerrero, Gabriel Alferez Callejón, José Guerra Campos, Jerónimo Cerdá Bañuls, and so forth; as well as French traditionalists, such as, Jean Madiran, Marcel Clement, Marcel de Corte, Michel Creuzet, Jean Ousset, or the Brazilian Plinio Correa de Oliveira.

Significantly, numerous writings of the Archbishop of Dakar, [Marcel Lefebvre](#), known for his criticism of the doctrinal development of the Second Vatican Council, were published in the magazine. However, it never intended to break from the Vatican, so *Verbo* also published writings of the doubting Montini, in which the continuity between the doctrine of Vatican II and Catholic tradition was defended. Although, in one of its first issues, the Syllabus of Pius IX also appeared.

Verbo was always marked by nostalgia for past times. It was and still is a traditionalist, Thomistic magazine. Its political model was the traditional, Catholic and corporate monarchy of *Acción Española*. Eugenio Vegas Latapié rejected, following Charles Maurras, the concept of "organic democracy." And Vallet de Goytisolo published numerous writings subjecting to criticism the doctrinal foundations of the technocracy, which he accused of being an ideology heir to the Enlightenment, secularizing, mechanistic and atheistic. In his works, Vallet de Goytisolo rejected mass society, which he reproached for its lack of its own hierarchical structure, which implied "the disappearance of intermediate bodies, the extension of functions, the progress of the technology of propaganda," "religious uprooting," "the destruction of traditions," "dialectical materialism," and the "elimination of the transcendent." As an alternative, Vallet de Goytisolo advocated a return to classical natural law and traditional society; what he called "the natural legal order" and the "pluralism of natural or intermediate societies within which the State must limit itself to complying with the principle of subsidiarity."

In 1965, Editorial Católica Española (the Spanish Catholic Publishing House) created the [Vedruna Prize](#), endowed with 100,000 pesetas, "to promote the study of Catholic Unity as the political-social foundation of Spain, regardless of the theological order that exceeded that purpose." The award jury was made up of Juan Iglesias Santos, Blas Piñar López, Raimundo de Miguel, Jesús María Liaño Pacheco and Jaime de Carlos and Gómez Rodulfo. The prize was awarded to the traditionalist philosopher, [Rafael Gamba](#), author of the famous, [Historia sencilla de la Filosofía](#) (*Simple History of Philosophy*), for his book, [La unidad religiosa y el derrotismo católico](#) (*Religious unity and Catholic Defeatism*), published by Editorial Católica Española, with a foreword by Juan Vallet de Goytisolo. In the work, Gamba limited himself to defending the topics of traditionalism, with abundant quotations from Joseph de Maistre, Donoso Cortés and Menéndez Pelayo, whose foundation was the defense of Spanish Catholic unity as a platform for political, social and moral cohesion. For Gamba, a Catholic could not accept the separation of political power from the moral and religious order. The "regime of neutral coexistence" was an inheritor of the Lutheran Reformation and of "rationalism" and "statism," which "are areligious and agnostic plants in the soil." Secularism was synonymous with "apostasy."

Some theologians collaborating with the *Punta Europa* magazine expressed themselves in identical terms when criticizing the exegesis of liberal or left-wing intellectuals and theologians. In an editorial, the magazine endeavored to demonstrate that the concept of freedom defended in *Pacem in Terris* was the same as that coined by Leo XIII in [Libertas](#). Luis Vitoria denounced the confusion of some theologians, in particular, Enrique Miret Magdalena, with respect to pontifical innovations, because "only fidelity to the traditional makes true progress possible."

However, the main issues were those of religious freedom and the confessional state. From his natural law perspective, Father Vitorino Rodríguez argued that under the concept of religious freedom very different meanings could be understood. In this regard, he denied that "false religions were assisted by a natural right to public profession and proselytism, because a religious attitude due to error...is incompatible with the hallmarks of natural law: universal, inviolable, printed in the nature of every man."

At best, what a Catholic state could do was "tolerate," for reasons of political prudence, the public presence of other religions. Along the same lines, the Jesuit Eustaquio Guerrero affirmed that there was no reason why, after the Council, Spanish society should abandon the confessional state and the principle of Catholic unity; there was only "the prejudice and passion of progress that seeks to reconcile the Church with the world through the burial of Constantinian Catholicism and the delivery, in the press, of Spain to the liberal and Protestant world."

The Spanish Church was experiencing profound disagreements within itself. Between 1966 and 1968, the [crisis of Acción Católica](#) (Catholic Action) took place, which practically led to its disappearance. Meanwhile, on March 1, 1966, with the presence of the [nuncio Riberi](#) and the attendance of seventy bishops, the Spanish Episcopal Conference was established. Its first president was Cardinal Quiroga Palacios, with Morcillo as more or less its vice-president, and José Guerra Campos, its general secretary. All of them were faithful to Franco and traditional orthodoxy. However, the strategy of the Vatican soon became noticeable. From 1969 to 1971, the presidency fell to [Casimiro Morcillo](#). But on his death, Vicente Enrique y Tarancón, Montini's man in Spain, took office. During the Civil War, the Levantine priest had been a fervent champion of the "[Crusade](#)." Later, he was appointed bishop of Solsona. Franco himself, as Tarancón recognized in his *Confesiones* (Confessions), wanted him to occupy the headquarters at Oviedo, Toledo and Madrid.

Then Tarancón was appointed secretary of the Conference of Metropolitans, predecessor of the Spanish Episcopal Conference, and rapporteur of the Synod of Bishops in Rome. He participated in the Second Vatican Council, where he met Montini. His pastoral work continued in Oviedo, where he was coadjutor archbishop. He acceded to the archbishopric of Burgos and later that of Toledo as Primate of Spain. Paul VI gave him the cardinal's hat in 1969. Until then, he had not shown any progressive fickleness. At all times, he was a typical man of the ecclesiastical apparatus. In the context of the time, he managed to embody, at a strategic level, a relative "center" between progressives and traditionalists, to carry out Paul VI's project of "passive revolution." In public, he portrayed himself as a pragmatic and worldly man. His opinion of General Franco was always positive; he described him as "a nice man, very talkative... He spoke of Spain with passion and of the Church as if he were party to all her secrets." He reproached Franco, however, for "not having understood the Council."

Tarancón's antagonistic opposite was the ascetic, José Guerra Campos, who soon became known, in traditional circles as, "The Bishop of Spain." Tarancón was aware of this antagonism when, in an interview, he described Guerra Campos as "a deep man, a great researcher, somewhat extreme." Guerra Campos showed himself above all to be an intellectual, a theologian and a philosopher. He was not a pragmatist like Tarancón. Unlike other members of the clergy, he became familiar with Marxist philosophy, Kantism, and the evolutionism of Teilhard de Chardin. In a conference at the University of Santiago de Compostela, he lectured on Marx. This was positively valued by the Italian communist newspaper, [L'Unità](#). The Galician priest participated in the famous [Gredos Talks](#). And he was a consultant to the Spanish Episcopate at the Council. Shortly after, he was appointed titular bishop of Mustia and auxiliary of Madrid-Alcalá in June 1964 and 1965. He participated in the sessions of the Council of 1964 and 1965, with a special intervention on Marxist atheism.

Guerra Campos always denied that Vatican II represented a break with traditional Catholic doctrine. His criticism focused on what he called the "noisy manipulation of the Council," in clerical circles, with a "disregard for the basic texts," and "with the interpretation of others in the light of some future, imaginary Vatican Councils II." The very term *aggiornamento* did not mean revision according to the dominant spirit of the time, but within tradition, a "wise interpretation of the spirit of the Council that we have celebrated, and the final application of its norms." For this reason, he rejected the obsession to revise or reject all the content of the tradition, concluding that the novelty was positive per se; and that the Church of other times was obtuse "when the Second Vatican Council has not substituted or suppressed a single truth of faith and a single moral principle of the previous catechisms." Far from any relativism, the Council had defined Catholicism as the only true religion, because "God wanted to manifest himself fully in Christ, who reconciles all things to himself." The Church was the bearer of "a revelation that constitutes at the same time, the call and the answer of God for those who seek... Christ is the totality of religious life, he is the only way of salvation."

In contrast, Guerra Campos accused certain theologians of "imposing the dictatorship on matters of opinion, where the appreciations of the believers are free, while on the other hand all daring against dogmas is tolerated." When criticizing the dissenters, Guerra Campos took advantage of Montini's famous speech, delivered on June 29, 1972, in which it was stated that "the smoke of Satan has entered the Church," to denounce the innovations that he considered dangerous such as "the Church's retreat to the passions of the world... emptying the faith of its revealed contents... to practically confuse it with a current of opinion and desires of this time... reducing the mission of the Church to a temporary action, a revolutionary political action." One of the mainstays of his speech was the defense of the Catholic confessional state: "The true religion (we call true religion not a human religion, but the one that springs from the manifestation of Christ, the revelation of God in History), has the maximum right, the exclusive right to be recognized as such and to be, as such, favored: not with coercion, but with positive help so that this message, which is a gift of God, really reaches to all men."

For Guerra Campos, Christianity was the appropriate response to the two humanisms that were vying for hegemony in the modern world: exalted humanism, whose greatest exponent was Marxism; and the humanism of depression, represented above all by atheistic existentialism. Both led to "slavery." Even less effective was "scientism," which, according to the expositions of the biologist Jacques Monod, led to "the radical denial of freedom." Guerra Campos was to be the doctrinal inspiration for some of the traditionalist groups that came to light as a response to the innovations of the moment.

Not by chance, on May 2, 1966, [Fuerza Nueva](#) appeared as a publishing company and, above all, as a political pressure group. Its leaning was clearly traditional Catholic. Its great promoter, [Blas Piñar López](#), did not come from the Falange, nor from Carlism; nor was he a supporter of technocracy. Son of a military defender of the [Alcázar of Toledo](#), Piñar came from Catholic Action. His ideology drew from the sources of Sardá and Salvany, Ramiro de Maeztu, Manuel García Morente convert, Juan Vázquez de Mella, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, and the Catholic propagandist, Manuel Siurot. The old Falangist writer, Ernest Giménez Caballero defined him as a champion of "a new Traditionalism, heir to what a Mella, an Aparisi and Guijarro defended." Appointed director of the Institute of Hispanic Culture in 1957, he held the position until January 1962, when he was suddenly dismissed because of a newspaper article, entitled, "Hypocrites," and published in *ABC*, in which he bitterly criticized the international policy of the United States, on the eve of negotiations concerning the permanence of North American bases in Spanish territory. However, Franco personally appointed him attorney in Cortes, one of the so-called Cuarenta de Ayete (Forty of Ayete—procuradors).

The first issue of [Fuerza Nueva](#) magazine appeared in December 1966, in which it set out its "reason for being," and brought about by the progressive denaturalization of the regime born of the Civil War: "We understand that the ideological baggage of our Regime cannot be liquidated in a cheap auction, and that its deep roots, which have their life in the Spanish tradition and in the national revolution, demand that the ruling minorities act to further their evolution, their development, their perfection, their purity and their refined loyalty to the principles that were forged as their doctrinal foundation, but never to their mythologization, to their misleading and sometimes contradictory applications, and, ultimately, to their repeal or abandonment."

And, thus, Piñar and his acolytes represented, at that time, a political project that no longer coincided, in its essential features, with the renewal pursued by the new ruling elites of the regime and their insertion into the international economic and political framework. Like the rest of the traditionalist sectors, *Fuerza Nueva* always suffered from what [Svetlana Boym calls](#), "restorative nostalgia," not a "reflexive" one. Piñar's project was still that of the "Crusade"—traditional, corporate and confessional monarchy. *Verbo* traditionalists, Carlists, theologians, Thomist philosophers, military men and Falangists collaborated on the pages of the new magazine. Among its militants appeared the odd neo-fascist, as was the case of Ernesto Milá, soon expelled for his religious heterodoxy. According to Milá, in *Fuerza Nueva* an "almost Taliban fundamentalism" dominated, where "the religious phenomenon cornered every other element in Piñar's personal equation." *Fuerza Nueva* "aspired above all to carry out a pastoral task and to spread the Catholic religion much more than any political thought, even though for them Catholicism was, in itself, a political definition."

The religious perspective of Piñar and other members of the regime could be seen in the parliamentary discussions on the project of religious freedom advocated by Minister Fernando María Castiella at the beginning of 1967, and which would be approved in June of that same year. According to the conservative journalist, [Torcuato Luca de Tena](#), who at that time worked as a parliamentary chronicler, there were, on the issue of religious freedom, two parties: the fundamentalist and the progressive.

Of course, in the Spanish context, the so-called "progressives" were, in reality, "fundamentalists, but less." The "fundamentalists" included, Coronel de Palma, Piñar, Sanz Orrio, Fagoaga, Oriol, Valero Bermejo, Gómez Aranda, and others. And the "progressives" were Lamo de Espinosa, Villegas Girón, Chozas Bermúdez, Mateu de Ros, Fernández Miranda, Martínez Esteruelas, and Herrero Tejedor. "The fundamentalists cited Pius XII, John XXIII and Paul VI in numerical and chronological order. The progressives, in reverse chronological order, cited Paul VI more than John XXIII, and the latter more than Pius XII. The fundamentalists were tenacious and audacious, but they were more of the former than of the latter. Progressives were tough and bold, but they were more of the latter than the former. The fundamentalists read works of Saint Augustine and consulted Aranzadi. The progressives read texts of Saint Thomas Aquinas and leafed through the Medina and Marañón. (Someone dared to quote Maritain, but I swear that only happened once)." The attorneys Bárcenas, Manglano, Piñar, Coronel de Palma, Valero Bermejo and Tena Artigas "fought with admirable tenacity to show the minds of those present the risks of a rupture in our Religious Unit." While other attorneys, such as Alfredo López, affirmed that "it is not only about defending the possible risks of religious freedom, but about defending religious freedom itself."

In his speeches, Piñar defended the confessional status of the state as a good; something that could not be identified with Catholic unity. The civil right to religious freedom should not promote religious pluralism, because religious pluralism was contrary to Catholic unity, initiating "apostasy;" it was "bad."

Among the attorneys opposed to the new legislation were Agustín Asís Garrote, Baron de Cárcer, José María Codón, Luis Coronel de Palma, Miguel Fagoaga, Luis Gómez de Aranda, Fermín Izurdiaga, Jesús López Medel, Lucas María de Oriol, Fermín Sanz Orrio and Piñar himself.

Almost at the same time, the Spanish Priestly Brotherhood (Hermandad Sacerdotal de San Antonio María Claret and San Juan de Ávila) emerged, which was formed on November 19, 1968. It had received the approval of Casimiro Morcillo. And its Governing Board was formed by the Franciscan, Miguel Oltra, as president; Francisco Santa Cruz was vice-president; Venancio Marcos, secretary; and Pablo María de

la Sierra was treasurer. Its main figure was Miguel Oltra.

The Brotherhood appeared in public on July 9, 1969, in Segovia, before the tomb of San Juan de la Cruz. Two months earlier, on May 12, the San Antonio María Claret Priests and Religious Association, which brought together hundreds of Catalan priests and religious, had met in Vic, and before the tomb of the [famous confessor](#) of Isabella II, they deposited their Declaration of Priestly Principles and Criteria. The Segovian act was attended by some five hundred priests, as well as the Cardinal Archbishop of Tarragona and some bishops.

In its Declaration of Principles, the Brotherhood declared its "firm adherence to the Chair of Peter." Its doctrinal sources were Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium. It criticized progressivism, which was accused of marginalizing "the supernatural order or at least disfiguring it by wanting to replace it with a declericalized sociomorphism, which does not know what to do with the priestly mission in modern society." The dignity of the priesthood lay in "the priestly function of Christ... intermediate between God and men," the consequence of which was the resounding affirmation of celibacy. It denounced that in the seminars the great masters of theology had been replaced by "amateurs" and "minstrels," at the "service of political subversion." No less serious seemed to them "moral errors" and "general corruption of customs." And this it was that there was "a great crisis of authority and obedience." It criticized the insistence on responsibility and maturity: "Prudence has reason to be when it is put at the service of Faith, Hope and Charity." It advocated "social justice," but not at the cost of faith in the supernatural: "The supernatural and Revelation mark infinite solutions to temporality... Our pastoral care has to be exercised in connection with the divine. Any other temporalistic attitude degrades and desecrates the sacred mission that the Lord has entrusted to us." In this sense, the condemnation of communism, liberalism and the so-called "Prophetic Groups" was radical: "It is our duty to denounce them and point the finger at them." Against ecumenism, patriotism: "We consider Patriotism as a virtue included in the fourth commandment of the Law of God. Our apostolate is not exercised in the abstract but in concrete souls, in those close to us, and these are the Spanish. Our Patriotism becomes Catholic ecumenism if we channel our people to Christ." The Brotherhood had as an organ of diffusion the magazine, *Dios lo quiere* (God Wills It).

The traditional front experienced a relative reinforcement with the emergence of another doctrinal organ, the Iglesia-Mundo magazine, whose first issue appeared on April 16, 1971, with the support of Archbishop Morcillo and the bulk of the conservative and traditional sector of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. It also enjoyed some support from the regime, particularly from Admiral Carrero Blanco. One

of its inspirers was Guerra Campos. Its director was Jaime Caldevilla García-Villar, a Carlist fighter in the Civil War, a graduate in philosophy and the law, and a journalist. Its main contributors were linked to the Spanish Priestly Brotherhood, *Verbo* and *Fuerza Nueva*, namely, Victorino Rodríguez, Bernardo Monsegú, Luis Madrid Corcuera, José Ricart Torrens, Luis Vera, Gonzalo Vidal, Vicente Marrero, Vallet de Goytisolo or Adolfo Muñoz Alonso.

Less important was the magazine, *Qué pasa?* (*What's Happening?*), edited by the extravagant convert [Joaquín Pérez Madrigal](#), a true champion of fundamentalism; and [El Alcázar](#), which has become the organ of the Spanish Confederation of Ex-Combatants.

4. Political And Symbolic Conflicts

At the beginning of the 1960s, conflicts between the regime and a part of the clergy were frequent, particularly in Catalonia and the Basque Country, where sectors of the Church continued to support nationalist demands. In this process, the Montserrat Monastery played an important role in Catalonia, where the famous magazine, [Serra D'Or](#) was published, which gradually became an organ of Catalanism and rebellious Catholicism. In the Basque Country, a sector of the clergy supported not the clandestine [PNV](#), but the terrorist organization [ETA](#).

However, the most decisive conflict arose years later, when the so-called Joint Assembly of Bishops and Priests was convened between September 13 and 18, 1971. Based on a series of surveys among priests, its objectives were reduced, in theory, to deal with the problems that affected the Spanish Church; to seek solutions and facilitate ways of dialogue between priests and bishops; and deepen the meaning of the priestly ministry. The surveys apparently reflected a deep malaise in the clergy, who appeared disoriented on issues such as morality, politics, priestly ministry, disillusionment with the results of the Council, problems of faith, punishment, criticism and rejection of the alliance with political power, and so on. In practice, its *leitmotif* was clearly political, that is, to go a step further in the disassociation of the Catholic Church from the Franco regime. According to [Martín Descalzo](#), this was one of "the greatest hours" of Cardinal Tarancón's life. Descalzo described the event as an Assembly "without extremists," that is, without integrationists or progressives.

The traditionalist sectors criticized, from the first moment, the convocation. The canonist Salvador Muñoz Iglesias considered it "unnecessary [and] counterproductive... based on the results of a survey whose approach seems tendentious and whose data does not have the value that it is intended to give

them." Some bishops such as Guerra Campos, García Sierra, Cantero, Delgado Gómez and members of Opus Dei were equally adverse. Especially harsh were the criticisms of the Priestly Brotherhood: "With regard to the celebration of the Assembly, an adequate spiritual preparation is lacking." The Brotherhood also denounced "the intimate feeling that the last lines of the Assembly were drawn beforehand and not precisely by the Episcopal Conference.

Whatever was said, nothing was going to alter the prefabricated result." It was a "clerical movement of doubts, questions and problems." In the same way, the Brotherhood condemned "its exaggerated and tendentious "democratism," which does not harmonize with the hierarchical character of the Church; and its obsession with 'extremism,' which is not convincingly clarified or defined, to know what is and is not an evangelical requirement. Thus, they place themselves in fashionable ambivalences, leaning almost blatantly towards those who sound the loudest and get the most noise in the divided river of the Spanish clergyman."

As a reply, the Priestly Brotherhood convened an alternative Assembly, which was held at the Residence for Religious of the Sagrada Familia de la Moraleja, with the participation of theologians such as Román Orbe, Francisco Paula Solá, Antonio Peinador Navarra, Jesús González Quevedo and Antonio Meseguer Montoya. Some sixty-two priests participated in the Assembly. In its conclusions, the documents on which the convocation of the Joint Assembly was based were rejected; its postponement and its "reorientation to safer theological and ecclesiastical bases" were demanded. It accused the conveners with defending their "own monologue" and of not playing "fair" in the designation of certain dioceses. Ecclesiastical celibacy and its traditional social function were defended; the philosophical, scriptural and theological training to be given in the seminaries was defined; the defense of the Church as a hierarchical society, evangelization, and so forth was asserted.

The conclusions reached by the Joint Assembly emphasized that the State stop intervening in the appointment of bishops, to have freedom of the press, religion, the right to conscientious objection, fundamental rights, and so on. However, the most controversial proposition was the one calling for forgiveness for the attitude of the Spanish Catholic Church during the Civil War: "We humbly acknowledge and ask forgiveness because we did not always know how to be ministers of reconciliation among the people divided by a war between brothers." A statement as opportunistic as it is ahistorical, which made the strategy of the new hierarchies of the Church very clear. After the debates, the vote was as follows: 123 votes in favor; 113 against; and 10 null; which meant that it was not approved because it required two thirds majority. "I was in complete agreement with the substance of

the proposal," said Tarancón, "but I think it was not wise to refer so clearly to the war. That gave many weapons to begin their attack and in fact many changed their position and went from satisfaction to criticism. That politicized the assembly more than anything."

In response, Miguel Oltra sent a letter to Tarancón, protesting the content of the proposal: "We are willing to suffer all the persecutions rather than deny our fidelity to the true Church of Christ, and to the ideals for which thirteen of our bishops were murdered and seven thousand priests." Guerra Campos accused the Assembly of fomenting division in the clergy. And, regarding the issue of the Civil War, he accused the assembly of being "political and unjust... The accusation, which could be partially true in individual cases, is not fair when viewed globally. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church in the years preceding the war fostered, despite the persecutory climate of legislation and the streets, a spirit of compliance and collaboration with the constituted powers of the Republic ... The movement the defense that took place in Spain, both to contain the dissolution of society and to save a series of spiritual values, sprang spontaneously from thousands and thousands of lay Catholics, who acted under their own responsibility. It is a fact that the hierarchy and the clergy in general did not induce armed action."

[*Iglesia-Mundo*](#) highlighted the number of priests killed during the Civil War, along with images of the destruction of churches and religious objects. Archbishop [Marcelino Olaechea](#) objected that it was intended to bury the Church of the "Crusade" in "the night of oblivion."

The historian Ricardo de la Cierva, Franco's official biographer, commenting on the content of the Assembly, pointed out that the Church's strategy sought, in the face of the conciliar phenomenon and given its reactionary historical trajectory, to recover lost time. As a Catholic historian, to Cierva it seemed "painful, incomprehensible and absurd," and "a flat, absurd and inconsistent inversion, putting off such recovery sometime in the future." In that sense, it seemed as if a kind of "anarcho-Christianity" was emerging. In that sense, it seemed as if a kind of "anarcho-Christianity" was emerging.

Faced with such onslaughts, the president of the government, [Luis Carrero Blanco](#), himself a traditional Catholic, had nothing to do with criticizing what he considered a betrayal on the part of the Church. Not without reason, the admiral recalled the material aid given to the Catholic Church since the end of the Civil War by the state, which had spent "some 300,000 million pesetas in the construction of churches, seminaries, charity and teaching centers, maintenance of the faith, and so on." Soon there was reference in the press to "Carrero the Big Fuss."

In this context, the appearance of the [Tácito group](#), which emerged in 1973, had special relevance, most of whose members came from [Asociación Católica de Propagandistas](#) (the Catholic Association of Propagandists), which, in those years, had downplayed the "National" part of its name, for it said it was "fleeing from national-Catholicism." Its organ of expression was the newspaper [YA](#), and its members included, José Luis Alvarez, Luis Apostua, Fernando Arias Salgado, Landelino Lavilla, Marcelino Oreja, Juan Manuel Otero Novas, Alfonso Osorio, and others. Its political project was defined as "legal reformism." The Tacitans advocated a gradual evolution towards liberal democracy from the current legislation, through the incorporation of human rights, into the Spanish legal system, the repeal of laws incompatible with such rights, a legislative chamber elected by universal suffrage, jurisdictional unity, and the recognition of regional diversity. And all this backed by "a new pact between a faithful Prince and a free country."

The traditionalist forces were losing the game. The Confraternity of Priests, [Hermandad de Sacerdotes](#), had convened an International Priest Day in Zaragoza. However, the bishop of the city of the Ebro, [Cantero Cuadrado](#), from the conservative sector, released a statement in which it was noted that the Episcopal Conference did not authorize the convocation. Significantly, Cantero Cuadrado pointed out that the Brotherhood had been warned that its Conferences would only be allowed if "the development of the themes were strictly spiritual and priestly," and avoiding "any controversy and any confrontation of a personal nature." For this reason, it was pointed out that the Conference was not authorized or endorsed."

Father [Miguel Oltra](#) protested against the attitude of the hierarchy that contrasted with its permissiveness towards the left, having allowed a meeting, held in El Escorial, of the association [Fe Cristiana y Cambio Social en Hispanoamérica](#) (Christian Faith and Social Change in Latin America), which brought together supporters of the Liberation Theology and Christian-Marxist dialogue. Finally, the Conference was held, but without the support of the Episcopal Conference or the Vatican. Guerra Campos did not attend, although he sent a telegram of support. The Conference began on September 26 at the [Basilica del Pilar](#). In the homily, Oltra criticized the politics of hierarchy, Liberation Theology, and more specifically the heterodox theologian, [Hans Küng](#).

The Episcopal Conference was controlled by Tarancón. And, to a large extent, Guerra Campos was marginalized. On April 13, 1973, his appointment as the new archbishop of Cuenca was made public. The ceremony of entry into the diocese had a small number of attendees from among the hierarchies, highlighting the presence of [Marcelo González Martín](#); which reflected the estrangement from the

Episcopal Conference of the new bishop of Cuenca. In a note entitled, "Normas del obispado y acuerdos de la Conferencia Episcopal" ("Norms of the Bishopric and Agreements of the Episcopal Conference"), published in the Bulletin of the diocese, the powers of the Episcopal Conference regarding the actions of bishops were stated. This provoked new criticism from the followers of Tarancón, such as the magazine *Vida Nueva*.

The assassination of Admiral Carrero Blanco by the terrorist organization ETA on December 20, 1973 once again highlighted the discrepancies between the different sectors of the Church. His burial was the occasion for a noisy, but not excessively large, demonstration organized by members of the Confraternity of Priests, like Venancio Marcos, and *Fuerza Nueva*, with Blas Piñar at the forefront, where the Civil Guard, the Army were cheered and shouts of "Tarancón to the wall" given. The Levantine cardinal was in charge of officiating the funeral in a very tense atmosphere. One of the ministers, Julio Rodríguez, refused to shake the cardinal's hand during the ceremony, which was later reproached by Franco himself.

Under the mandate of the new president of the government, Carlos Arias Navarro, the political and symbolic conflict did not cease; quite the opposite. It was not only the house arrest of the bishop of Bilbao, Antonio Añoveros and his projected expulsion from Spanish territory, for a homily in defense of Basque; which further worsened relations between the regime and the Catholic Church. Franco, apparently advised by Marcelo González, had his prime minister rectify matters; he did not want a direct conflict with the Vatican, which he knew he would lose. Added to this were the cultural and symbolic conflicts caused by the new "openness" policy promoted by the new minister, Pío Cabanillas.

The premieres of *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Godspell* once again scandalized the traditionalists. They did not take long to demand the prohibition of the two works and the intervention of the Episcopal Conference. In effect, from its perspective, a Jesus Christ was shown, "not as a son of God, but as a fearful social leader." And the same happened with *Godspell*, in which Jesus appeared as "a hysterical and screaming rock opera singer. Surrounded by half-naked whores, mediocre apostles and a libidinous Magdalene who caresses Jesus continuously, highlighting her carnal appetites." For the editors of *Iglesia-Mundo*, it was a sample of "blasphemous colonialism." Julián Gil de Sagredo described *Godspell* as a "sacrilegious and blasphemous play." The playwright *Pablo Villamar*, a member of *Fuerza Nueva*, presented as an alternative a play entitled, *Jesucristo Libertador* (*Jesus Christ, Liberator*).

For its part, the Confraternity of Priests convened a conference at the end of September 1974 in

Cuenca, under the aegis of Guerra Campos. In the course of the Conference, the sympathetic press highlighted the figure of the priest and theologian, Luis Vera, canon of the Cathedral of Malaga. Vera accused the progressive theologians of being "the paratroopers the devil," whose claim was "to give birth to new churches from five-star hotels." At the end of the event, Vera, a short man, was hoisted up by some of his fellow priests, as [highlighted in a photo by Pueblo newspaper](#).

For Vera, the new theologians were neither Spanish nor theologians, because "they do not use the weapons of Tradition and the Magisterium of the Church;" and they were limited to "copying foreigners." He denounced "Philosophy" and then "Liberal Theology" as "Trojan horses" to subvert the Church from within. "Next to her, the subversion led by existentialism and Marxism." He criticized [González Ruíz](#) and [Díez Alegría](#), both of whom he accused of trying to sell us "a faith without faith, which wants to substitute God for man, charity for philanthropy and faith itself for revolution, violent if necessary." Vera was especially hard on González Ruíz, who wanted to convince the Marxists that God was not a hindrance and ended up fabricating a God who, of course, "does not hinder anyone."

Vera asked the Episcopal Conference to maintain religion classes at the University, institutes and schools; find solutions to the issue of Clergy Social Security. He also demanded clarification on the Justice and Peace Commission, chaired by Joaquín Ruíz Jiménez. He deemed it necessary to demand the anti-modernist oath from all who held office in the Church. He asked for the accounts of [Cáritas Española](#), and reports on Christians for Socialism; and the control over emigrant chaplains, among whom "the anti-Spanish and the Marxists" abounded. The government demanded the defense of "the confessional State;" and that Jehovah's Witnesses were not to be included in the Law of Religious Freedom as a Christian Church; and the monitoring of public morals.

The content of Vera's lecture was well received by *Fuerza Nueva*. The canon of Malaga had "materially nailed the Jesuit Díez Alegría and his companion from Malaga, González Ruíz." And *Que pasa* presented the Confraternity of Priests as "a dam against modern heresies."

5. The Secular Conservative Alternative

At that time, and in response to the situation, a secular right-wing project emerged, the work of one of the regime's thinkers, [Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora](#), who in 1965 had published his controversial book, [El crepúsculo se las ideologías](#) (*The Twilight of Ideologies*), in whose pages not a few saw a legitimization of the technocratic elite that had run the state since the late 1950s. On his part, Fernández de la Mora

never abandoned his youthful Catholicism. He was not an anti-religious thinker, although he clashed on more than one occasion with traditionalists and fundamentalists for his positive assessment of Ortega y Gasset and [Xavier Zubiri](#). However, he clearly perceived, although not without displeasure at first, the changes undergone by Catholicism since Vatican II, judged them irreversible and drew his own conclusions. In the new context, the confessional nature of the State was indefensible. And he opposed any form of political theology or recourse to religious enthusiasm.

Mora's alternative was a new secular conservatism. In *El crepúsculo se las ideologías* and other writings, Fernández de la Mora accepted modern consciousness, which was as much as saying the functional rationality of calculation and efficiency; the rationality accepted by the Weberian "disenchantment of the world," and with it the fragmentation of worldviews, the loss of a unity of religious world-vision, and, above all, the experience of relativism. Consequently, his philosophy of history, taken directly from Augusto Comte, was decidedly progressive, "the laboratory of pathos to logos." Progress was synonymous with the rationalization of the various social, political and cultural spheres. In the field of religions, at least in Europe and developed societies, there was the "internalization of beliefs," that is, secularization. In that sense, alternatives, such as, Christian democracy were already anachronistic. In the new, scientific-industrial context, religion was increasingly displaced to the private sphere. Furthermore, revealed religiosity could not monopolize the content of ethics, since there was a rational and natural ethic, valid for all: "Revelation is the object of faith; the moral order is the object of rational acceptance." Religion was not "primarily and fundamentally something communal; it is essentially a relationship with God, from which community consequences are derived;" it was "individuals and not nations that were the subjects of acts of faith." Consequently, he was averse to the confessional state, which he considered a "historical anecdote." "Pure religion is a solitude with God." For this reason, he not only criticized the traditionalists, but the leftist theologians, like González Ruíz, who wanted a new politicization of the faith.

Naturally, such views did not appeal to the traditionalists. The one in charge of criticizing him was the American, [Frederick D. Wilhelmsen](#), Professor of Philosophy at the University of Dallas and Extraordinary Professor at the University of Navarra. In his criticism, he accused Fernández de la Mora of having embraced "a clearly positivist policy," whose main enemy was not liberalism or socialism, but "Catholic traditionalism in all its forms." In his response, Fernández de la Mora called Wilhelmsen's article "totally chaotic," which could only be taken "relatively seriously." In his plea, he reiterated his secularizing views: "What I think is that religiosity consists, fundamentally, in a relationship between man and God, not in a social pact or rhetoric."

6. Catholic Neoconservatism And Religious Freedom

In January 1963, the first issue of the *Atlántida* magazine came out, a response to which fell to the historian, [Florentino Pérez Embid](#). The magazine was edited by [Rialp](#), a company closely linked to [Opus Dei](#). At that time, the Andalusian historian distinguished three currents in the Spanish intelligentsia: traditionalism, Christian progressivism and universalist Catholicism. The description of the first seemed like a tirade against Punta Europa. It was a process faithful to Catholic orthodoxy, but it did not devote due attention to the development of "the answers that today are demanded by the new problems posed by thought and by life." The second was manifested among Catholics adhering to what Pérez Embid called the "bourgeois left," that is, [La Institución Libre de Enseñanza](#) (The Free Institution of Education), the "98" and Ortega y Gasset. Finally, "universal Catholicism," the trend with which Embid himself identified, was characterized by "the breadth of horizons and a more energetic deepening in the permanent and living Catholic orthodoxy." In this position were combined the renewal of the typical doctrines of traditional thought in philosophy and history, and "a careful attention to the orientations of contemporary science and thought, and a positive and open attitude towards the current transformation of social structures and of the forms of life."

Atlántida positively received the declaration of religious freedom and the content of the Second Vatican Council. For [Millán-Puelles](#), the principle of religious freedom was "a fundamentally positive sign," "a good in itself." And thus religious freedom was based on the dignity of the human person, "a person with whom God wants a free dialogue." For his part, [Recasens Siches](#)—disciple of Ortega y Gasset and exiled after the Civil War—considered religious freedom as an essential right of the human person. It was, deep down, the only one of all freedoms that possessed an "absolute character." In this sense, he considered that in Christian doctrine and the historical development of Christianity there had been a "hurtful contradiction" between religious intolerance, on the one hand, and the doctrine held by the majority of Christian philosophers, on the other. Fortunately, the theological and doctrinal foundations of intolerance had been "suppressed and buried by the Second Vatican Council."

From the perspective of the Second Vatican Council, [Gustave Thils](#) analyzed pre-conciliar theories on religious freedom, concluding that the Catholic doctrine was historically very complex and that its apparent uniformity turned out to be more apparent than real. And it is that this doctrine had to be studied in different historical and social contexts and could not be interpreted or defended *sub specie aeternitatis*. Hence, it was necessary for the new generations "to invent in a certain way—under the influence of the holy spirit—the new type of relationship and the renewed form of encounter that is

concretely imposed."

7. Privilege, Secularization And Decadence

With the death of Francisco Franco, said the chronicler of the Ricardo de la Cierva regime, "an entire era" ended. Undoubtedly, the process of political change culminated in a kind of "agreed rupture." However, on the social realm there was a perceptible continuity in many respects. And the Catholic Church was one of the institutions that managed to control, as far as possible, and for its own benefit, the transition. The "passive revolution" advocated by Montini and Tarancón can be said to have triumphed in its general aims. Significantly, while Marcelo González, and not Guerra Campos, officiated the funerals for the soul of Francisco Franco in the [Plaza de Oriente](#), Tarancón, in the Church of [Jerónimos Monastery](#), in a ceremony with a deep medieval aftertaste, lectured, paternally, Juan Carlos I on the characteristics and content that the new political situation should have.

Without the support of an increasingly exhausted regime, the traditionalist sectors were progressively ostracized. Miguel Oltra was "exiled" to Cullera and away from Madrid. Guerra Campos was confined to his headquarters in Cuenca. The Confraternity of Priests continued to exist, but was increasingly marginalized and isolated by the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Fuerza Nueva finally became a political party. After multiple failures, Piñar won a seat in Madrid in the 1979 elections. In March 1978 he presented, at the headquarters of his party, the schismatic bishop Marcel Lefebvre, who had published his book, [Yo acuso al Concilio](#) (*I Accuse the Council*), in Spain; which alienated him from the support of Catholics. These sectors, with great intellectual and political courage, but without any efficacy, opposed the Political Reform Law, the Constitution and secularizing laws, such as, divorce, and later abortion.

Meanwhile, Tarancón and his acolytes continued to apply the Maurrasian maxim of "*politique d'abord*." As [José Luis López Aranguren](#) pointed out, despite appearances, the Levantine cardinal promoted a "center policy." Basically, his party was Unión del Centro Democrático (the Union of the Democratic Center, the "[Zentrum Católico](#)," where former Francoists, numerous Acenepistas [members of the National Catholic Association of Propagandists (ACNP); they are also called "propagandists" or "Christian Democrats"], and Tácito militants. Which marginalized not only fundamentalists, traditionalists or the extreme left, but genuine Christian Democrats, such as, Joaquín Ruíz Jiménez and [José María Gil Robles](#).

In the 1978 Constitution, an important mention was made of the Catholic Church and none other (article

16.3). Without being explicitly confessional, it created the conditions for the State to be constitutionally obliged to "cooperate" with the Catholic Church. In addition, freedom of education and the right of children to receive religious and moral training that was in accordance with the convictions and preferences of their parents was guaranteed (27.3). The state was not actually secular, but non-denominational. Later, with the [UCD](#) government, came the 1979 agreements, in which religious assistance to the Armed Forces, the military service of clergy and religious, religious education, the financing of the clergy and the Church by the part of the state, and so on. These agreements demonstrated the dependence of the Church on financial aid from the state.

However, what seemed unstoppable was the process of secularization of Spanish society that began in the 1960s. As López Aranguren and Fernández de la Mora, each in their own way, anticipated, and later corroborated by not a few sociologists, religious and moral faith was privatized. However, the necessary secularization of institutions degenerated into what the philosopher Augusto del Noce has called "natural irreligion," that is, a spiritual attitude characterized by "an absolute relativism, so that all ideas are seen in relation to the psychological and social situation of those who affirm them, and, therefore, valuable only from the utilitarian point of view of the stimulus for life."

Furthermore, new winds were blowing in the Vatican. Paul VI died on August 6, 1978. And after the ephemeral period of Albino Luciani, John Paul I, an authentic restorative process was launched by the hand of the Polish Karol Wojtyła, [John Paul II](#), a pontiff who had suffered the rigors of communism and so he did not understand, nor did he have to understand, dialogue with the Marxists, nor the ethical, moral and political permissiveness of the previous period. In the new context, Tarancón and his acolytes were upset. According to some sources, the new pontiff, upon receiving the Spanish cardinal who, at the age of seventy-five, presented his previous resignation, accused him of being responsible for the decline of Catholicism in Spain, "while we strive to subdue communism each time weaker."

However, the advent of Wojtyła did not really mean a reinforcement of Spanish traditionalism. His restoration project had a different character and other intentions. Nevertheless, he promoted the beatification processes of the Catholics killed during the Civil War, something that Paul VI had always rejected. Significantly, when Wojtyła arrived in Spain on his first successful trip, the PSOE had won the 1982 elections by an overwhelming majority, and Miguel Oltra died in Madrid. Shortly after, on the emblematic date of November 20, Fuerza Nueva dissolved itself, after its electoral failure. Isolated and forgotten within the Catholic Church itself, José Guerra Campos, after his dismissal as bishop of Cuenca, settled in Madrid to care for a sick relative. Finally, he died in Barcelona, in an apartment at the

María Inmaculada School, belonging to the Spanish Confraternity of Priests, on July 15, 1997.

John Paul II relied on a new generation of conservative bishops, among whom [Ángel Suquía](#) and [Antonio María Rouco Varela](#) stood out, rectifiers, as far as possible, of the previous situation. However, the secularizing process advanced irreversibly. The seminaries were empty; the number of practicing Catholics plummeted; and political life was established outside the Church. Good proof of this were the abortion and homosexual marriage laws of the government of [José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero](#), approved practically without public debate. In fact, it was something that, in the social imagination, had been taken for granted for a long time. So much so that when the Popular Party governed, under the leadership of [Mariano Rajoy](#), none of those laws was repealed. And it is that in the ideology of the Spanish right, Catholicism or "Christian humanism" no longer appears as the dominant reference, but liberalism.

8. Spain: Land Of Mission

There is no doubt, then, that the situation of Catholicism in Spain is in a profound decline, although it continues to enjoy undoubted socio-economic privileges. [Fernando Sebastián](#), Archbishop Emeritus of Pamplona and Tudela, considers that "in these years of democratic life, the Christian life of the Spanish has weakened... Since the 1970s, Spanish sacramental practice has dropped to less than half. During the last thirty or forty years we have been suffering from a severe vocational crisis that has drastically reduced the number of priests and religious in our churches and institutions, and the dominant trends are inclined towards secularism and moral permissiveness." He wonders, at the same time, if all this was a consequence of the Second Vatican Council: "We do not know what would have happened with the continuity of the previous situation and without the celebration of the Council. Could Spain have continued for a long time as an island of Tridentine Catholicism in a liberal and secularized Europe? In any case, it is evident that the Catholic Church, "has been reduced to a minority of practicing members, has lost significance and social influence, lives in a rather marginal situation and is sometimes undervalued by opinion and by the public powers."

Faced with this situation, there has been a tendency to focus on defending the Catholic corporate and institutional interests. However, the struggle between conservatives and progressives within Spanish Catholicism continues. And the conciliar spirit has revived, after the resignation of Josef Ratzinger. Good proof of this has been the [controversy of the exhumation](#) of Francisco Franco's mortal remains from his tomb in the [Basilica of the Valley of the Fallen](#).

In May 2011, a so-called Committee of Experts for the Future of the Valley of the Fallen was created, chaired by the socialist, [Ramón Jáuregui](#), commissioned by the [PSOE](#) for dialogue with progressive Catholic sectors. Among its members, left-wing Catholics, such as, [Manuel Reyes Mate](#), Catalan nationalist priests like the historian [Hilari Raguer](#), and [Carlos García de Andoain](#), federal coordinator of Christian Socialists. Cardinal Rouco Varela rejected the presence of ecclesiastics on the Commission. On the other hand, the conclusions were as expected: The Valley of the Fallen was the most significant monument of "national-Catholicism." It had to relocate and resignify itself; and Franco's corpse had to be taken out of its grave in the Basilica.

The conclusions had no political consequences, as the PSOE lost the 2011 elections. The government of Mariano Rajoy did nothing about it. However, in February 2013 Josef Ratzinger resigned as Pontiff, and Peter's chair was occupied by the Argentine Jesuit Jorge Mario Bergoglio. Reyes Mate and other leftist theologians expressed their hope regarding the political significance of the new pontificate. It was "the beginning of a new time." It has not been the only one. A philosopher like [Gianni Vattimo](#) has stated that, with Bergoglio, the Catholic Church today represents the "emancipatory sense of religion," "the struggle against imperialism and capitalist exploitation," "a Communist International, today, can only be religious and Christian."

The arrival to the government of the socialist Pedro Sánchez raised the question again. And, finally, after a series of conversations and pacts between the Spanish government and the Holy See, the mortal remains of Francisco Franco were taken out, on October 24, 2019, from his tomb in the Basilica of the Valley of the Fallen to the cemetery of Mingorrumbio, in El Pardo. Quite a symbolic event. Perhaps this is one of the last episodes of the consequences of the Second Vatican Council in the recent history of Spain.

Like Pontius Pilate, the Catholic Church tried to wash its hands. Of course, he did not succeed. In a display of typically clerical cynicism, Monsignor Luis Argüello, spokesman for the Episcopal Conference, affirmed that "It was one thing not to oppose him and another to say that the Church supports him." Later, he said it was "time to look forward" and "seal the reconciliation." Once the exhumation was done, he limited himself to reiterating the Church's non-involvement in that political decision, although he criticized the content of the homily dedicated to Franco during the ceremony, which he described as hagiographic. This good man surely thinks he is subtle. But he is no more than a Pharisee. Or, what is worse, he underestimates us. He takes us for fools.

Bergoglio's pontificate is assuming a true intellectual, political and moral regression, that is, a return to the eccentricities of the Second Vatican Council. Good proof of this is the content of the latest encyclical of the current pontiff, *Fratelli tutti*, whose content is a poorly digested amalgam of progressivism, ecology, political correctness and ecumenism: all seasoned by typical Vatican eclecticism – again, *complexio oppositorum*. In short, a mediocre, heavy, lumpy text that, except for the brief references to divinity, could have been signed by any member of a Masonic lodge. And it is, to a large extent, that the thought of the current pontiff is inserted in what the theologian [Russell Ronald Reno](#) has called “the ideological consensus of the postwar period,” that is to say, “the empire of the weak gods.”

On the other hand, the COVID-19 epidemic has highlighted even more, as the philosopher Giorgio Agamben pointed out, the crisis of Catholicism, by highlighting that European societies no longer believe in anything other than “naked life;” and, furthermore, the absolute hegemony of “the religion of science.” “First of all, the Church, which, becoming the servant of science, already converted into the true religion of our time, has radically abjured its most essential principles. The Church, under a Pope named Francis, has forgotten that Francis embraced lepers. She has forgotten that one of the works of mercy is visiting the sick. She has forgotten that the martyrs teach that one must be willing to sacrifice life before faith, and that renouncing one's neighbor means renouncing faith.”

With regard to Spain, Bergoglio's performance has been devastating. He has not bothered to visit our country, not even on the anniversary of Saint Teresa of Jesus. He ruthlessly criticized the discovery and evangelization of America. For years, the Catholic Church has become, especially in Catalonia and the Basque Country, a disruptive force at the service of peripheral nationalisms. Catholic is not synonymous with Spanish, and perhaps it never was, as Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora pointed out, in a specific criticism of [Menéndez Pelayo's](#) thesis. Not long ago, Bergoglio welcomed Pedro Sánchez, a staunch atheist, grave robber, and a radical supporter of euthanasia and abortion. Of course, underneath this reception, there is the entire economic mess of the Spanish Catholic Church: concerted teaching, the IBI, the Cathedral of Córdoba, and so on and so forth. However, negotiating with a pathological liar can be a serious mistake. We will see that with the new education law drawn up by [Isabel Celáa](#). I guess the Church hierarchy will get what it deserves.

Meanwhile, Spanish society, as we have already discussed, is a missional land. And faced with this dramatic situation, the Catholic Church is not capable of offering us more than the blandness of [COPE](#) or the mediocrity of [TV13](#), whose main message is western films. Never has Spanish Catholicism been

so decadent and socially insignificant. A puppet of a state that maintains it, in exchange for complicity and silence. But only a free Church will be able to exercise her mission in society.

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The [featured image](#) shows, "Spain pays homage to Religion and to the Church," by Corrado Giaquinto, painted ca. 1759.

