I. ESCORIAL, KING PHILIP II'S MONASTERY-PALACE, IS A MAGNIFICENT GRANITE
symbol of the traditional relationship between Church and State in Spain. The Escorial reflects
the Catholicism of the nation that was forged by the medieval struggle against Islam known as the Re-
conquest, as well as by the sacral - as opposed to secular - nature of Spanish society. An exuberant
seventeenth century fresco that reiterates the symbolism of the entire building is located above the
main stairway. Commissioned by the last Hapsburg ruler of Spain and painted by Lucca Giordano, the
fresco is called “La Gloria.” The painting is a triumphalistic baroque vision of heaven that expresses the
close relationship between Church and State in Spain. The figures of the Trinity, St. Lawrence (patron of
the Escorial), Emperor Charles V, and Philip II are prominent among the saints and angels in the clouds. St.
Lawrence intercedes for the people of Spain while Charles V, supported by his son Philip, offers his royal crowns
to the Trinity.

In old Spain, the State was officially Catholic; the concerns of the Church influenced public polity; the Church
was represented politically in the Cortes or Parliament; Church and State collaborated in providing for the spiritual,
intellectual, and material well-being of the people. Before the nineteenth century, religion permeated most aspects of
life. The Church was a major national institution, she ran a large part of the educational system, provided most social
welfare, and she was supported by her own vast endowments as well as by part of the tithe contributed by her flock.
The first significant cracks in this system occurred in the second half of the eighteenth century. Enlightened despo-
tism and regalism influenced the personally pious Charles III (1759-1788) to expel the Society of Jesus for the first
time in Spanish history in 1767. Wars at the time of the French Revolution strained the royal treasury, leading Charles
IV (1788-1808) to order the Church to sell some of her property and to loan the proceeds to the government. Al-
though Altar and Throne closed ranks briefly during the Peninsular War against Napoleon (1808-1814), Spain's two
greatest institutions were soon at loggerheads.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Spanish liberalism replaced the Ancien Regime through political
struggles, revolutions, and civil wars. The remnants of the Ancien Regime crumbled when the traditionalists lost the
First Carlist War in

1840. One of the important issues at stake was the role of the Church in what soon became the new capitalist
and centralized order.

Spain's liberal minority was to reduce the Church's role in politics, economics, education, and social welfare. By the time Queen Isabel II (1843-1868) was declared of age in 1843, the grand institutional Church of the Ancien
Regime had completely disappeared by the unilateral actions of successive liberal governments. One third of Spain's
episcopal sees were vacant, the State was in the process of redrawing diocesan boundaries, and cathedral chapters
were controlled by civil authorities. Almost all male religious orders had been banned, over 1,500 monasteries shut down, much of their property sold to the public without compensation for the clergy and the proceeds being used to service the national debt. The majority of the schools and charitable institutions run by the orders had been closed. The number of parishes had been limited by government fiat, and the secular clergy reduced numerically by orders of the State. Their property had been nationalized, and the overworked parish priests turned into government employees whose modest salaries were paid erratically. The tithe had been abolished. The authorities did little to curtail violent outbursts of urban anti-clericalism. Relations between Madrid and Rome had broken down several times.

During Isabel II's reign, the Spanish Church began a slow and modest recovery that continued until the 1930s, although interrupted by several short periods of setbacks. The Concordat between the Spanish government and the Papacy in 1851, which was a point of reference until well into the twentieth century, provided a legal framework for the Church to function within the new liberal order, and tried to define the novel, relatively unpretentious, role of the Church in a society undergoing rapid changes. The resilient Spanish Church learned to operate within the New Regime as one of many interest groups, and also adapted to some of the sociological changes in the capitalist and industrial society that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The Carlism emerged as a dynastic and ideological movement in the midst of the struggle in Spain between the proponents of the New Regime and the defenders of the Ancien Regime. The Carlists rejected Ferdinand VII's (1808-1833) decision to leave the Crown to his infant daughter Isabel when the king's brother Carlos was his heir according to the old Fundamental Laws or constitution. Likewise, while the government became identified with liberalism, the Carlist opposition continued the defense of Spain's traditions that had been upheld by the realistas during Ferdinand's turbulent reign.

For over one hundred years, the Spanish legitimist movement was characterized by its strong political views and consistent opposition to the policies of the Court in Madrid presided by Ferdinand's descendants. Carlism never gained power, but Spain's major tradition-
alist movement exerted a certain influence on Spanish society as a whole and on the government in particular, especially regarding religious matters. Carlist thought was also an ideological source for a number of other Spanish parties on the right in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Over the course of a hundred years, Carlism’s *modus operandi* and its political platform adapted to the ebb and flow of Spanish politics and to the changes in Spanish society. Originating in the 1830s as a defense of the *Ancien Régime*, Carlism quickly became a counterrevolutionary movement that advocated a return to traditional values embodied in forms updated to suit the times. As the Carlists fought wars, functioned as a political party (usually called the Traditionalist Communion), acted as an informal pressure group, or operated clandestinely in the hopes of overthrowing the government, the Carlist platform was symbolized by the motto “*Dios, patria, fieles, rey*.” These four principles, God, fatherland, regional autonomy, and king, were upheld by each of the five exiled Carlist claimants, known to their followers as Carlos V, Carlos VI, Carlos VII, Jaime III, and Alfonso Carlos I.

The first component of the Carlist maxim, “*God,*” implied an acceptance of the traditional sacral view of society inherited from the Middle Ages and still quite prevalent in Spain throughout the nineteenth century. Carlists advocated a renewed commitment by all branches of the government to Christian beliefs and ethics. The “*Dios*” of their motto, stemming from a strong Catholic tradition strengthened during the struggle against Islam, carried four main themes: confessionality of the State, religious unity of the nation, close collaboration between Church and State, and independence of the Church. Other issues changed with the circumstances. For example, in the First Carlist War, when Spain’s traditionalists fought to preserve the political representation of the estates of the *Ancien Régime*, Carlism defended the Church’s institutional presence in the Cortes.

**SACRAL VIEW OF SOCIETY**

In 1836, when the government of Ferdinand’s widow, the regent Maria Cristina (1833-1840), was rapidly dismantling the old institutional Church and the “two Spains” - revolutionary and traditionalist - confronted each other in the First Carlist War, the pretender issued a manifesto deploiring the excesses caused by the govern-

ment’s policies regarding the Church. Carlos V was concerned that “the churches [were being] profaned, vandalized, burned; priests degraded, publicly insulted, murdered with impunity; asylums of virtue turned into schools of dissoluteness; monks and virgins consecrated to God [were] begging, fleeing, and falling victims of barbarism. In short, religion agonizes, and the country calls for help.”

In the same manifesto, the first don Carlos captures traditional Spain’s religious instincts, proclaiming: “The God of hosts has led you to victory almost by the hand. Yes the God of hosts, the God of St. Ferdinand, the God of all Spaniards. A Catholic king cannot use any other language when he addresses an eminently religious people who laments that its religion has been deeply offended, and who tries to strike down religion’s infamous persecutors.”

In 1860, Carlos VI issued a manifesto to the Spaniards that contains the same sacral spirit. The second pretender called for “religion and morality above all, because they are the only solid foundation of true civilization.” Carlism’s royal spokesman for a few years in the 1860s, Maria Teresa, Princess of Beira, issued several remarkable ideological proclamations. She wrote at length about the importance of religion and the Church in Spanish history and in the Carlist political program. A sacral view of society permeates these documents. One short sentence is typical. She states that “the truths, certain and infallible, of the Catholic faith form the very solid foundation of our political, civil, and domestic life.”

Carlos VII echoed the Princess of Beira in the following criticism of the liberal regime that had spread throughout Europe after the French Revolution: “The Spanish Revolution is just one of the forces of the great army of the cosmopolitan revolution. The essential principle of the latter is a colossal denial of God’s sovereignty in world affairs; its aim is the complete subversion of the bases, engendered by Christianity, on which human society is established and affirmed.”

Jaime III reiterated the same world view as his predecessors in a different way in a manifesto to his loy-
alists in 1919. The fourth Carlist pretender announced that “above all other aspirations, I desire the reign of Jesus Christ over rulers and nations, in the individual and in society, because I am convinced that there is no salvation outside Him for either society or the individual.”

CONFESSIONAL STATE

Throughout the nineteenth century, the anticlerical policies of many liberal governments were conducted under constitutions that reconfirmed the confessionality of the Spanish State. When Carlism was legalized for the first time after the Revolution of 1868, the Carlists sent a minority of twenty-two representatives to the Constituent Cortes of 1869. Led by the great Basque orator Fr. Vicente Manterola, the legitimists foiled an attempt to separate Church and State in the constitution that was promulgated that same year. However, the Carlists and other organized Catholic groups were not able to block the much more controversial article granting religious freedom. The liberal challenge to Spain’s traditional “Catholic unity,” dating back to the conversion of the Visigoths at the famous Third Council of Toledo in the sixth century, convulsed Spain. Some twenty-five per cent of the population is reputed to have answered polls and signed petitions favoring the retention of religious unity. Defeat in the Cortes over this major issue was one of the reasons the Carlists declared war on the government a few years later.

In 1861, the Princess of Beira had articulated the Carlist position regarding confessionality of the State and religious unity in these forthright words: “The Fundamental Laws of the Spanish Monarchy require the King to swear he will profess and observe the Roman Catholic and Apostolic Religion, and will require that it be professed and observed throughout the Monarchy, to the exclusion of all other cults or any other doctrine.”

RELIGIOUS UNITY

In the 1869 parliamentary debates, Manterola had used many arguments to defend religious unity, including the following: “Religious freedom has never been established in any nation until it became necessary to admit, accept, acknowledge, and later sanction it. First religious unity existed as a fact, and then attempts were made to legalize the fait accompli.” He continued addressing his colleagues in the Cortes, saying: “But, gentlemen, here in Spain, to call in other cults, to open your doors to them, gentlemen, when none has knocked, to contribute to this intrinsically bad action ... with more than tolerance, with complicity, this is untenable to me.” Manterola explained that “If we were to preach that it is necessary to send to the flames or other ancient torments anyone who does not have the good fortune to profess our faith, if we were to preach this, yes, yes, yes you would have the right, in the name of Spanish civilization, to launch the greatest anathema against our people. But we have not preached any such thing.”

A few weeks after the defeat in the Cortes, the third claimant, Carlos VII, wrote in one of his first public letters that “knowing and never forgetting that the nineteenth century is not the sixteenth, Spain is determined to preserve at any cost her Catholic unity, symbol of our glories, spirit of our laws, blessed bond of union among all Spaniards.” In 1874, during the Third Carlist War, don Carlos was careful to explain that “Catholic unity does not mean religious espionage.”

Twenty years after freedom of religion had been promulgated, the Carlists reiterated their censure of the law by formally commemorating the thirteenth centenary of the establishment of Spain’s Catholic unity in 589. At the time, Carlos VII referred to religious unity saying “an essential principal of our program and goal of all of us, I and my people have made a solemn promise to restore it and defend it in Spain.” This commitment was reiterated by Carlos VII’s successors. His son Jaime called Spain’s Catholic unity “the soul of our history and health of our people.”

In 1932, during the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1936), the last Carlist claimant in the direct line, the elderly Alfonso Carlos, made the following very Hispanic statement shortly after the promulgation of the Constitution of 1931 which separated Church and State for the first time: “Catholic without qualification, as all the members of my family always were, in front of this banner and with the faith of an old crusader, always ready to sacrifice one’s own life, I proclaim all the rights of the Catholic Church, which correspond to her totally unquestionable spiritual sovereignty in the midst of a people like ours, the most Catholic of all nations on Earth. For the same reason, I reject with all the force of my soul the principle of religious freedom designated by the Constitution.”

A few years later, shortly before he died without
direct heirs, Alfonso Carlos made provisions for future Carlist leadership. The first guideline he gave his relatives was the acceptance of “the Catholic Apostolic Religion, with its unity and juridical consequences, through which it was traditionally loved and served in our kingdoms.”

CLOSE COLLABORATION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE

Close collaboration between Church and State was a natural result of Carlism’s acceptance of a traditional sacral society, belief in a confessional State, and commitment to religious unity. Inspired by the medieval Reconquest and, more specifically, by the wars against revolutionary France and by the Constitutional War in Spain in the 1820s, the three Carlist Wars and the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s were considered religious crusades as well as political struggles. References to altar and throne, God and king, usually went hand in hand. In a less martial vein, Carlist rallies always consisted of both a religious ceremony and a political meeting; speeches were always preceded by Mass.

The Papacy never took sides in Spain’s dynastic conflict, and the hard-pressed ecclesiastical hierarchy tended to back the governmental establishment in the name of peace, or to remain neutral in the hopes of sparing the Church further difficulties. Nonetheless, Carlism was unswerving in its support of the Church, and the Carlist princes always maintained their belief in the collaboration between Church and State. The first don Carlos articulated this principle by simply saying he would “protect and promote the holy religion of our parents.”

True to his word, under his auspices, the Church continued to function normally in the lands he ruled in northern Spain during the First Carlist War, and homeless and dispossessed monks and friars who fled the rest of Spain were welcomed in Carlist territory. The pretender also promised that if he won the war, his government would promote national religious conferences to deal with the many dislocations the Spanish Church had undergone since the Napoleonic invasion. His words are: “The famous national councils that governed the Spanish Church gloriously, under the direction of the Holy Father, will convene again.”

Carlism had such a strong Catholic image that the movement was informally called the Catholic Monarchist Party or Catholic Monarchist Communion. The second pretender, Carlos VI, felt compelled to explain to an increasingly secular world that close collaboration between Church and State does not imply a theocracy. He lamented, “Some people claim frivolously and others intentionally that my government would be a purely theocratic government, and that the clergy only aspires to gain power to govern the country for its own benefit.” He continued, saying “the Church does not ask for, nor need, anything more than freedom and justice.”

FREE CHURCH

The Church’s independence was the last major theme contained in the first component of Carlism’s famous motto. The Carlists rejected the many unilateral decisions about the Church’s internal affairs and about her relationship to Spanish society made by the liberal governments of the nineteenth and early twentieth century and by the Second Spanish Republic in the 1930s. Carlist leadership also rejected the regalism of the eighteenth century Enlightenment. In view of the confiscation of Church property in the last century, which curtailed the clergy’s freedom of operation, Carlism was particularly interested in the economic independence of the Church. For some of the same reasons, Spanish legitimists deplored the unification of Italy and disappearance of the Papal States in 1870. Significantly, as a young man, Alfonso Carlos, had been an officer in one of the two companies of Papal Zuaves that made the famous last stand at the Porta Pia in Rome defending Pius IX’s temporal power in 1870.

In the early decades of Carlist history, when the government in Madrid was busy confiscating Church property, and the buyers of ecclesiastical real estate were excommunicated by the Papacy, Carlism took for granted the property should be returned (as it had been after the first major attempt to dispossess the regular clergy during the reign of Ferdinand VII). However, when Rome accepted the fait accompli in 1851, the legitimists followed suit. Carlos VII was very clear during the Third Carlist War when he said succinctly: “I will not deviate one step
from the Church of Jesus Christ. For this reason, I will not trouble the buyers of her property.  

During the Third Carlist War, Carlos VII formally rejected one of the most notorious examples of regalism inherited by the Spanish government from an earlier age, the “exequatur” or, in Spanish, “pase regio.” In an 1875 decree, the third pretender explains: “The Church’s freedom in Spain has been restricted in the exercise and publication of Bulls and decisions coming from the Holy See by laws forbidding their publication and implementation before the civil authorities should first resolve by their own criterion whether they should be obeyed or not.” The young Bourbon prince went on to promise that if he won the war, he would consult with the Pope in order to draft new ecclesiastical policies that would reconcile “all the freedom of action the Church should enjoy and the rights and prerogatives of my royal authority.” In the meantime, Carlos VII decreed that “in the territories my brave army controls or may control, the circulation of documents received shall be completely uninhibited.”

26 Carlists defended a free Church very actively in the first decade of the twentieth century, when the Spanish government embarked on a new wave of anti-clericalism. Carlists and representatives of other Catholic parties and pressure groups spoke out in memorable parliamentary debates, at large rallies, in vigorous press campaigns, and at conferences of different types. One of the main issues was the legal status and freedom of action of most religious orders. In 1907, Catholic Spain was able to pressure the young Alphonse XIII’s (1902-1931) government to withdraw its Law of Associations Bill, which would have severely curtailed the freedom of the orders and limited their role in education. This success was the result of five or six years of intense activity and the Holy See’s threat to acknowledge the dynastic pretensions of the Carlist claimant if the government would not give in on the matter. One of the most famous protests against Madrid’s religious policies during these years was a three hundred page speech given in Santiago by the spell-binding Carlist parliamentarian Juan Vasquez de Mella y Fanjul. The title speaks for itself: “The Church Independent of the Atheistic State.”

Two years later, Carlists defended the Church’s freedom in a very different way. During the famous “Tragic Week” in Barcelona, when anticlericalism broke out in a wave of incendiarism barely repressed by the authorities, Carlists saved a number of churches and convents from the flames. Carlist custody of religious buildings in perilous moments would become quite common throughout the country after the October Revolution of 1934.

Don Jaime reiterated Carlism’s commitment to a free Church after the First World War, saying that his people “submitting to the Church, like an obedient son, want to return to her all the independence she was given by the Redeemer; and especially the freedom that pertains to her teaching mission and the economic independence to which she has a perfect right, and which has been so curtailed by the current regime.”

The last Carlist claimant, the octogenarian Alfonso Carlos, led the Spanish legitimist movement during the left-wing and very anticlerical Second Spanish Republic, which annulled all the gains the church had gradually made during the previous half century in the period known as the Bourbon Restoration (1875-1931). A few months after becoming Carlism’s standard-bearer, Alfonso Carlos reacted to the wave of anti-Catholic legislation at the outset of the Republic by establishing an annual Carlist festivity honoring the Cross. In his 1932 decree, the exiled pretender says: “The Cross, sacred emblem of our redemption, has been banished from schools; adoration of the Cross raised high in public religious ceremonies has been prevented; and the presence of the Cross has been forbidden in our cemeteries, where it was a vivid witness of our faith, and in whose holy shadow our elders rest, and under whose loving arms we hope to repose.” Alfonso Carlos ordered that this Fiesta del Triunfo de la Cruz be celebrated on May 3 in every Carlist circle in Spain and that the Carlist press publish articles exalting the Cross. As late as the 1970s, the remnants of Carlism still began their major rallies with outdoor Stations of the Cross in early May at Montejurra, in Navarre, and at Montserrat, in Catalonia.
Under the auspices of their elderly pretender, Spain's traditionalists began to prepare for a fourth Carlist war against the government. At the last moment, the Carlist conspirators and paramilitary forces joined the rebels in the regular army in what became the Spanish Civil War. The legitimists put aside their particular political aspirations for the time being. Instead of fighting for all four components of their motto, “God, fatherland, regional rights, king,” Carlists agreed to downplay the last three. They joined their traditional enemy, the regular army, in the defense of “Dios.” A large number of the hundred thousand Carlist Requetes, who fought in the war with an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus sewn on their uniforms, volunteered for religious reasons. They wanted the Church to be free and to be acknowledged publicly.

NOTES

1The wars were: First Carlist War (1833-1840), Second Carlist War or War of the Matiners (1847-1849), Third Carlist War (1872-1876), and Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Some historians classify the Matiners conflict as a rebellion, not a war as such.

2All five claimants belonged to the Bourbon Family. Their names and dates follow. Carlos V (1788-1855) was Carlos Maria Isidro. The Carlist movement was named after him, and he led the legitimists between 1833 and his retirement from politics in 1845. Carlos VI (1818-1861) was also known as Count of Montemolin. Named Carlos Luis, he was Carlos V’s oldest son, and was the pretender between 1845 and his early death in 1861. Carlos VII’s name was Carlos Maria de los Dolores (1848-1909). Carlos VI’s nephew led the traditionalists between 1868 and 1909. Carlos VII was succeeded by his son, Jaime III (1870-1931), who was the claimant between 1909 and 1931. The last pretender in the direct line was Jaime’s elderly uncle Alfonso Carlos I (1849-1936), who was Carlos VII’s brother. Alfonso Carlos headed the Carlist movement until he was killed in a car accident in Vienna in 1936. The Carlists rejected the prince who should have been their leader immediately after Carlos VI, his brother Juan Carlos Maria, because he was liberal.

3Carlos V, Manifesto to the Spaniards, dated at Durango, Vizcaya, 20 Feb., 1836, Melchor Ferrer, Domingo Tejera, and Jose F. Acedo, Historia del tradicionalismo espanol (Seville: Ediciones Trajano and Editorial Catolica Espanola, 1941-1979, XXX vols.), v. X, p. 282. Most quotations in this study are from Historia del tradicionalismo espanol (hereafter abbreviated as HTE). All translations from Spanish are my own.

4St. Ferdinand was king of Castile in the thirteenth century.


7Maria Teresa de Braganza bore the title Princess of Beira because she was the oldest daughter of a Portuguese ruler, John VI. As a widow in her forties, Maria Teresa married her widowed brother-in-law, the Pretender Carlos V, whom she outlived.


9Carlos VII, Manifesto to the Spaniards, dated at La Tour de Peilz, Switzerland, 8 Dec., 1870, HTE, v. XXIII, t. II, pp. 148-149.


11See Vicente Garmendia, Vicente Manterola, canónigo, diputado y conspirador carlista (Vitoria: Caja de Ahorros Municipal, 1975), p. 44.

12 María Teresa, Princess of Beira, Letter to the Infante Don Juan de Borbón, dated at Baden, Austria, 15 Sept., 1861, HTE, v. XXII, p. 216.

13Quote from Manterola’s long speech in the Cortes on 12 April, 1869, Garmendia, op. cit., p. 71.

14Ibid., p. 72.

15Ibid., p. 73.
18 Carlos VII, letter to Enrique Aguilera y Gamboa, Marquis of Cerralbo and Count of Alcudia, dated at Venice, Italy, 2 Feb., 1889, HTE, v. XXVIII, p. 93. Cerralbo was Carlos VII’s delegate in Spain at the time.
21 Alfonso Carlos I, *Decree Instituting the Regency*, dated 23 Jan., 1936, HTE, v. XXX, p. 74. The regent was Prince Javier de Borbon Parma.