

# Religious Reconquest, Social Commitment and Marks of Secularisation in *relationes ad limina* of some Spanish Bishops (1947-57)

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**Abstract** The essay examines the *relationes ad limina* written by some Spanish bishops between 1947 and 1957. In these documents the bishops deal with the pastoral action carried out to restore Catholicism to Spain after the years of the Second Republic and the civil war and they describe the intense social commitment promoted since the end of the 1940s to combat illiteracy and misery of workers and peasants. They also report behaviours and data that highlight a growing secularisation and contrast with the image of a compact Catholic Spain.

**Keywords** Relationes ad limina. Spanish Church. Francoist regime. Religious reconquest. Social Catholicism. Secularisation.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 The Religious Reconquest in the *relationes* of 1947. – 3 Social Commitment in the *relationes* of the 1950s. – 4 Indifferentism and Detachment from Catholic Morality.



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## 1 Introduction

In the long and complex question of Francoist Spain, the years between 1945 and 1957 are known as the period of 'Catholic hegemony'.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the Second World War, the necessity to get out of international confinement produced by the defeat of German National Socialism and Italian Fascism induced Franco to promote a 'Catholic' image of the regime, placing members of Catholic Action in top political positions (the most famous example was the designation as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Alberto Martín-Artajo, president of Spanish Catholic Action, in July 1945) and supporting the National Catholic intentions of building an *intégriste*, antimodern society, based on the binomial Catholicity-Hispanity.<sup>2</sup> In those years the involvement of the Church in the life of the regime was strong, higher than that there was in the 1960s with the rise to power of so-called 'technocrats' of Opus Dei. This involvement reached its peak in August 1953 with the signing of the Concordat with the Holy See, an event that, with the agreements signed with the United States in the previous month, marked the end of Spain's international confinement and opened the way for the subsequent admission in the international body of United Nations system.

In the light of these synthetic considerations, some interest might rise by proposing an analysis of the *relationes ad limina* presented to Consistorial Congregation in 1947, 1952 and 1957 by the bishops of Barcelona, Burgos, Calahorra y La Calzada, Ciudad Real, Malaga, Seville and Solsona. These documents are characterised by the rigidity of a model of *relatio* developed in 1918. Despite this, the *relationes* offer many information like accounts of the material and moral conditions of dioceses or the difficulties with which the bishops and their clergy had to measure themselves. From a particular point of view, the *relationes* give information on the transition from the period of reconstruction following the civil war to the period of the social commitment of the Spanish Church, characterised by orientations that considered the policies of the regime with growing perplexity. These are sources that, beyond their specificity,<sup>3</sup> provide data and information that describe a more complex and many-sided socio-religious framework than the image of a compact Catholic Spain publicly promoted by Francoist authorities and ecclesiastical

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1 Cf. Di Febo, Juliá, *Il franchismo*, 36-68.

2 About the trend of "collaborazionist Catholicism" and the relationship between Francoist State and Catholic Church in this period: cf. Tusell, *Franco y los católicos*. On National Catholicism in Spain: cf. Botti, *Nazionalcattolicesimo e Spagna Nuova*.

3 On the specificity of *relationes ad limina* as historical source: cf. Cárcel Ortí, *Introducción general*; Menozzi, "L'utilizzazione delle *relationes ad limina*".

hierarchy; most of all, they testify to the presence of growing and diversified social apostolate that will constitute the fertile ground in which the ferments destined to explode with the Second Vatican Council were inserted.

The sample taken into consideration is small - the *relationes* examined were 20 on a total of 153 presented by the Spanish bishops to the Holy See between 1947 and 1957, corresponding to 13% of the total - but it can be considered significant. The *relationes* examined concern, in fact, dioceses of different dimensions<sup>4</sup> and different geographical positions.<sup>5</sup> Therefore the *relationes* examined can offer a sufficiently ample overview to offer elements suitable for the deepening of the passage of the Spanish Church from the triumphant period of National Catholicism, which reaches its peak in the International Eucharistic Congress in Barcelona (1952), to the self-criticism which, in the 1960s, will lead the detachment from the Franco regime.

## 2 The Religious Reconquest in the *relationes* of 1947

The *relationes* of 1947 relate to the commitment developed, between 1942 and 1946, in continuing the recovery of the damage caused by the civil war, which ended in 1939. The bishops informed the Holy See of the efforts made to rebuild or restore hundreds of churches and ecclesiastical structures devastated during the conflict<sup>6</sup> and to reinstate diocesan administrations severely affected by the destruction of the archives.<sup>7</sup> They informed about the commitment to increase

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<sup>4</sup> According to the data of 1947, two dioceses (Barcelona and Seville) were chosen with over one million inhabitants, three dioceses (Burgos, Ciudad Real, Malaga) with a population between 500,000 and 1 million inhabitants and two dioceses (Calahorra y La Calzada, Solsona) with less than 250,000 inhabitants.

<sup>5</sup> Two dioceses are located in northern Spain (Burgos and Calahorra y La Calzada), two in Catalonia (Barcelona and Solsona), one in the central region of Castile-La Mancha (Ciudad Real) and two in southern and extensive Andalusia (Malaga and Seville).

<sup>6</sup> In Seville, according to what Cardinal Pedro Segura y Sáenz reported, more than 190 churches had been rebuilt in the five years from 1942 to 1947 (Seville 1947, 10, no. 21), while from Barcelona Bishop Gregorio Modrego Casás informed that all the churches of the diocese had been destroyed or heavily damaged during the civil war, but the reconstruction and restoration works were completed when he was writing the *relatio* (Barcelona 1947, 26, no. 21).

<sup>7</sup> The bishop of Ciudad Real, Mons. Emetterio Echeverría Barrena, announced the reconstruction of the destroyed diocesan archive was in development (Ciudad Real 1947, 6, no. 13). From Malaga, the apostolic administrator, the bishop of Granada, Balbino Santos Olivera, informed that, even if the loss of the oldest documentation was complained, the Curia archive, which were set on fire in 1931 and then again in 1936, had been brought back into use, and that the parish archives, after "the very recent devastation of the Marxists", had resumed their conservative function but contained only documents dating back to 1937 (Malaga 1947, 14, nos. 14-15).

the number of diocesan clergy, greatly reduced by the drop in vocations caused by years of anti-religious struggle and by the killings of priests suffered during the civil war<sup>8</sup> and therefore unable to guarantee the priestly presence in many parishes, as happened in the dioceses of Burgos and Calahorra y La Calzada where 500 and 132 parishes respectively had no priest.<sup>9</sup>

In particular, in the *relaciones* the bishops accounted for the efforts made to realise the “religious reconquest” of Spain<sup>10</sup> through a traditional pastoral strategy, based on catechistic teaching,<sup>11</sup> on popular missions,<sup>12</sup> on spiritual exercises promoted for age groups, and on public manifestations of devotion to the Eucharist and to the figure of Virgin Mary.<sup>13</sup> In this work of reconquest, the bishops assigned a central role to Catholic Action, called to promote religious education and access to the sacraments,<sup>14</sup> to defend the value of Christian marriage against the practices of onanism and neo-Malthusianism,<sup>15</sup> to support the Catholic expectations of moralisation of the Spanish society through pressure on civil authorities to control clothing and behaviour in public places<sup>16</sup> and requests for greater control of state censorship to avoid the propagation of subjects deemed indecorous in the press.<sup>17</sup>

An important tool for reconquering Spain to Catholicism was represented by the school, which, following the reform measures of pri-

<sup>8</sup> The bishop of Ciudad Real, for example, reported that 104 priests had died during the war (Ciudad Real 1947, 9, no. 29).

<sup>9</sup> Burgos 1947, 14, no. 64; Calahorra y La Calzada 1947, 19, no. 64.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Callahan, *La Iglesia católica en España*, 360-5.

<sup>11</sup> All the *relaciones* relate that catechistic teaching was carried out regularly on Sundays and holidays for children and young people and that special catecheses were given in the preparation to the sacraments of communion and confirmation. Catechistic teaching of adults seems to be more problematic: in Seville it was neglected by the parish priests “vanis pretextibus” (with vain pretexts) (Seville 1947, 49, no. 72), while in Malaga it was cared for by few parish priests (Malaga 1947, 48, no. 74), and in Ciudad Real the bishop noted that the parish clergy did not work for the catechism for adults with the same fervour as they did for the younger age groups (Ciudad Real 1947, 17, no. 74).

<sup>12</sup> The following *relaciones* report on missions among people carried out on a parish scale during the Lent period: Barcelona 1947, 64, no. 75; Burgos 1947, 17, no. 75; Solsona 1947, 11, no. 75. In Seville, in 1946, all parishes had given missions among people: Seville 1947, 29, no. 73. In Calahorra the Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary were entrusted to organise the missions according to a turnover that provided for their carrying out in all parishes every ten years (Calahorra y La Calzada 1947, 20-1, no. 75). The translations from Latin into English are edited by the Author.

<sup>13</sup> In Barcelona, in addition to spiritual exercises carried out in a cloistered regime, the consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary was carried out in May 1943 and a diocesan Eucharistic congress was organised in 1944 (Barcelona 1947, 92, no. 100).

<sup>14</sup> Seville 1947, 32, no. 83.

<sup>15</sup> Burgos 1947, 19, no. 87.

<sup>16</sup> Barcelona 1947, 92-3, no. 100.

<sup>17</sup> Malaga 1947, 62, no. 96.

mary and secondary education issued between the end of the 1930s and the first half of the 1940s (*Ley de Reforma de la Enseñanza Media*, 1938, and *Ley sobre Educación Primaria*, 1945), had assumed a confessional character. “Omnes scholae et publicae et privatae sunt confessionales” (all public and private schools are denominational), wrote the bishop of Calahorra and the apostolic administrator of Malaga:<sup>18</sup> in all the *relationes* the bishops marked the teaching of Catholic religion at school and the carrying out of weekly inspections by parish priests. In a more or less articulated way, they informed the Holy See of the *victoria católica* on the education front.<sup>19</sup> About this the *relationes* of 1947 omitted limits and problems starting from the fact that rural areas, poorly supported by public authorities and particularly subjected to school dropout, were sparsely considered by religious orders who preferred to open their institutes in large urban centres and aim at medium-high social classes.<sup>20</sup>

Concessions on scholastic front were just some of the forms of support that the Francoist State granted to the Church and to the Catholic religion, indicated as the state religion in the by *Fuero de los Españoles*, the charter that had established formally the rights and duties of all the Spanish people (July 1945). They were intertwined with the economic support to the Church through the provision of funds for the reconstruction of sacred buildings and allowances for the maintenance of the clergy. To these privileges were added the prohibitions of proselytism for non-Catholics, the measures for festive rest, the acknowledgement of the civil effects for religious marriage, the exercise of a censorship that had crushed the spiritism and theosophism, for the bishops widely publicised during the Second Republic. The bishops rendered an account of these aspects in their *relationes* and they affirmed that, in the new political context, the enemies of the faith represented by Liberalism, Socialism and Freemasonry were absent or, in any case, forced into a condition of marginalisation and clandestinity.<sup>21</sup>

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**18** Calahorra y La Calzada 1947, 24, no. 91; Malaga 1947, 59, no. 91.

**19** Cf. Canales Serrano, “El bachillerato en los años 40”.

**20** Cf. Callahan, *La Iglesia católica en España*, 352-3. An aspect that comes out, but is not developed, was the disincentive to opening private Catholic schools, since all public schools were denominational. In the *relatio* of 1947, the bishop of Solsona wrote that “non dantur scholae confessionales propriae, quia scholae publicae sunt confessionales” (no confessional school of their own are given because the public schools are denominational) (Solsona 1947, 13, no. 91).

**21** “Si quid massonismi post leges latas adhuc est, in umbris operatur. [...] Id dicendum de socialismo” (If there is something Masonic after the promulgated laws, it operates in the shadows. [...] The same is true of socialism) (Ciudad Real 1947, 22, nos. 97-98). “Massonicae sectae hodie in Hispania iuridice prohibita sunt, nec possunt infaustam activitatem suam palam exercere. Plurima tamen mala secreto machinantur, quae difficile admodum vitari queunt, adversus Ecclesiam et Statum civilem” (Masonic sects

In the *relationes*, the recognition of a favourable condition towards the Church did not necessarily correspond to an appreciation of the political situation in Spain, even if expressions such as “greatest Duce” and “happy outcome of the civil war” betray the appreciation for the regime by bishops such as Gregorio Modrego Casaus, diocesan ordinary of Barcelona, and Luciano Pérez Platero, archbishop of Burgos, figures closely bound to Francoism.<sup>22</sup> Because of the particular purpose of the documents, the bishops do not expose themselves in flat judgments, even when they are of well-known anti-Francoist positions, as in the case of Fidel García Martínez, bishop of Calahorra y La Calzada.<sup>23</sup> The only exception is constituted by Cardinal Pedro Segura y Sáenz, archbishop of Seville: in his opinion, the main error against the faith in Spain was represented by Falangism, considered guilty of making confusion among the believers through the attempt to establish a natural religion.<sup>24</sup> It was, however, a judgment based not on political reasons but on a Catholic integralism, which

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today in Spain are forbidden by law, and they can't openly carry out their injurious activity. However, many evils are secretly plotted, which can hardly be avoided, against the Church and the civil state) (Malaga 1947, 62, no. 97).

**22** Examples in: Barcelona 1947, 17, no. 4; Burgos 1947, 6, no. 17. Gregorio Modrego Casaus (1890-1972) was a close collaborator of Isidro Gomá y Tomás, bishop of Tarazona and later archbishop of Toledo, cardinal and primate of Spain. Modrego was consecrated bishop in 1933 and was coadjutor of Cardinal Gomá. In 1937 he was appointed military pro-vicar general and, on the death of Gomá, he was designated apostolic administrator of the archdiocese of Toledo. At the end of December 1942, he was appointed bishop of the diocese of Barcelona, where he entered in March 1943. In Barcelona he was involved in the reconstruction of the churches destroyed during the civil war, he promoted numerous charitable works and an intense pastoral activity in the suburbs area. For a biographical profile, cf. Cárcel Ortí, “Modrego Casás, Gregorio”. Luciano Pérez Platero (1882-1963), after having held various positions in the Curia and in the Seminary of the diocese of Calahorra, was bishop of Segovia (1929-44) and archbishop of Burgos (1945-63). A radical conservative and an opponent of the Second Republic, he supported the military revolt and collaborated with the Franco regime. He was a member of the Cortes Españolas. He was a convinced promoter of Catholic Action and promoted the birth and spread of the Hermanas Misioneras de Acción Parroquial, a religious congregation aimed at supporting the pastoral action carried out in parishes. For a biographical profile, cf. Brocos Fernández, “Pérez Platero, Luciano”.

**23** Bishop of Calahorra y La Calzada since 1927, Fidel García Martínez, during the Second World War, was very critical of the Franco regime's support for National Socialism and, in 1947, he was one of the four Spanish bishops who did not vote in the referendum on the *Ley de Sucesión en la Jefatura del Estado*, which gave Franco the right to choose his successor. Harshly opposed by the Falange, he was forced to renounce the episcopate in May 1953. Cf. San Felipe Adán, “García Martínez, Fidel”.

**24** “Praeter socialismum et communismum, qui hodie propter persecutionem legalem non audent se exhibere, praecipuus error qui contra fidem in hac dioecesi, sicut in omni Hispania serpit, est ‘Nacional Sindicalismo’ Falangismo, ut ajunt, qui pro viribus satagit confusionem in principiis Religionis inter fideles seminare, atque quamdam speciem novae religionis naturalis imponere” (In addition to socialism and communism, which today don't dare show themselves because of legal persecution, the main error against the faith in this diocese, as it spreads among all Spain, is the ‘National Sindacalism’ Falangism, as they say, which strives to create confusion in the principles of Religion

was suspicious towards the State, that drove Segura to clash several times with Franco and the regime authorities.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the intense evangelising action developed in the 1940s and the support of a State that declared itself confessional, the bishops were forced to transmit data not particularly flattering regarding attending Mass and the fulfilment of the Easter precept, important indicators of religious affiliation. From the *relaciones* of 1947 it emerges that in Burgos only 60% of the population fulfilled the festive and Easter duties,<sup>26</sup> in Barcelona 62% celebrated Easter<sup>27</sup> and in Ciudad Real “many forget the sacred precept”.<sup>28</sup> In Malaga only 5% of men and 15-20% of women attended Mass and received sacraments during the Easter period, while in Seville, where the precept of the festive mass was “too neglected”, only 30% fulfilled Easter duty.<sup>29</sup> The situation was better in the smaller dioceses, where, however, there were significant differences related to the size or social context of each parish. In Solsona the Easter precept was satisfied by all the believers in the rural parishes but in the mining areas the percentage of fulfilment collapsed to 30% among men and 60% among women.<sup>30</sup> In Calahorra, 80% of the men living in the territories of the smaller parishes fulfilled Easter duty, a percentage that dropped to 50% in the major parishes, where the control capacity of the clergy and of the social system was lower.<sup>31</sup> The statistics testified a contradiction between the optimistic narrative of a Catholic Spain, supported by the massive public demonstrations of faith, and the reality, where, despite the efforts made, religious adherence found difficul-

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and to impose a kind of new religion) (Seville 1947, 9, no. 15). Identical considerations are present in: Seville 1952, 10, no. 16.

**25** Pedro Segura y Sáenz (1880-1957) was bishop of Apollonia and Coria, archbishop of Burgos, Toledo and Seville and cardinal of Santa Maria in Trastevere. He was a strong supporter of the monarchy and of King Alfonso XIII, who recommended the appointment of Segura for the see of Burgos and Toledo. Segura was openly hostile to the republican regime that arose after the elections of 1931 and the departure from Spain of Alfonso XIII; for this reason, in September 1931, he was forced to renounce the office of archbishop of Toledo and moved to Rome. In September 1935 he was appointed archbishop of Seville by Pius XI. He frequently clashed with the Franco regime due to the suppression of Catholic social organisations and condemned Spain's alliance with the totalitarian regimes of Germany and Italy. He was also very critical of the agreements signed between Spain and the United States. In the post-concordatory context, Segura was flanked in the leadership of the diocese of Seville by the Coadjutor Archbishop Bueno Monreal and his figure was progressively isolated. About Cardinal Segura, cf. Gil Delgado, *Pedro Segura*; Cárcel Ortí, “Segura y Sáenz, Pedro”.

**26** Burgos 1947, 19, no. 86.

**27** Barcelona 1947, 72, no. 86.

**28** Ciudad Real 1947, 20, no. 86.

**29** Malaga 1947, 56-7, no. 86; Seville 1947, 32-3, no. 83.

**30** Solsona 1947, 12, no. 86.

**31** Calahorra y La Calzada 1947, 23, no. 86.

ties to take root, especially among the poorest and more disadvantaged social classes, represented by the workers circles, still considered connected to the communist ideology, and by the farm workers who worked in the large landed estates of Andalusia.

As we have seen, in order to face these obstacles, the *relaciones* give account of traditional pastoral strategies. The only one which moves away from this line is the *relatio* of Mons. Vicente Enrique y Tarancón, bishop of Solsona, who, in the final judgments on the diocese, speaks about the need for a social apostolate among workers aimed at combining religious and moral formation with a commitment to social promotion, which, however, was forced to compete with the prohibition of trade union association imposed by the regime.<sup>32</sup> Belonging to the ranks of bishops supported by Martín-Artajo, who wanted an episcopate attentive to social renewal,<sup>33</sup> Tarancón realised the need for a change of strategy to respond to the needs of specific social classes and create the potential premises for their re-evangelisation, identifying a path which would be firmly embraced by the Spanish Church in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

### 3 Social Commitment in the *relaciones* of the 1950s

Between the end of the 1940s and the early 1950s, the Spanish Catholic reality initiated, even if not in a homogeneous way, a social discourse. In 1946, at the request of Pius XII, the *Hermandades obreras de acción católica* (HOAC) and the *Juventud obrera católica* (JOC) were launched under the aegis of Catholic Action with the aim of re-evangelising workers' reality considered by the Spanish bishops still affected by social-

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<sup>32</sup> Solsona 1947, 14-15, no. 100.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Tusell, *Franco y los católicos*, 139. Vicente Enrique y Tarancón (1907-1994) was a leading figure in the history of the Spanish Church in the second half of the twentieth century. Ordained priest in 1929, during the 1930s he undertook to reorganise Spanish Catholic Action, collaborating with the Casa del Consiliario established by Ángel Herrera Oria. From 1945 to 1964 he was bishop of Solsona, where he stood out for his organisational dynamism and care for the formation of the clergy. In 1964 he was transferred to Oviedo, where his pastoral government was characterised by a marked participatory tone. In 1969 he was assigned to the diocese of Toledo and in the same year he was appointed cardinal. In December 1971 he was appointed archbishop of Madrid-Alcalá, a diocese which he held until 1982. Between 1972 and 1981 he was president of the Spanish Bishops' Conference: in this office, he committed himself to make the Spanish Church independent from political power and promoting its renewal according to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. He had a decisive role in the process of peaceful transition from the Franco regime to the democratic system. For an outline of Tarancón, cf. Cárcel Ortí "Enrique y Tarancón, Vicente". See also: Infiesta, *Tarancón: el cardenal de la reconciliación*; Bort Castelló, *Vicent Enrique i Tarancón*. About pastoral action of Tarancón in Solsona: Berettini, "Tarancón. Obispo de Solsona".



ism and communism.<sup>34</sup> In 1949 the Social Weeks of Spanish Catholics, suspended during the years of the civil war and the world conflict, resumed. In 1951, in a period of heavy economic crisis, the metropolitans published an instruction dedicated to justice and charity, which reminded the public authorities of the duty to intervene to mitigate the conditions of poverty caused by famine.<sup>35</sup> These were the first phases of a path that was consolidated in the 1950s and which saw the Spanish episcopate increasingly convinced of the necessity of an improvement of social conditions to ensure a religious future for the Church.<sup>36</sup>

This social attention was reflected in the *relationes* transmitted to Rome in 1952. In them, bishops informed of the launching of the HOAC and the JOC in their dioceses and of the opening of evening schools for workers.<sup>37</sup> To this were added the reports of initiatives with the purpose to promote a solid Catholic social conscience. From Barcelona, where the preparations and the celebration of the International Eucharistic Congress of 1952 had incited the beginning and the strengthening of social initiatives, Bishop Gregorio Modrego announced the opening of the Instituto católico de Estudios Sociales aimed “to train men who know the social doctrine of Church and offer adequate solutions to the social problems that are arising”, and the existence of Orientación Católica profesional del dependiente, an institution aimed at discerning professional attitudes, protecting the rights of workers and forming a Catholic-social conscience in them.<sup>38</sup> From Malaga, Bishop Ángel Herrera Oria, a figure with an important political past and founder in 1951 of the Leo XIII Social Institute in Madrid for the labour apostolate, informed that every Sunday he gave homilies, broadcasted by radio, dedicated to justice and charity.<sup>39</sup>

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**34** On the circumstances that led to the HOAC birth: cf. López García, *Aproximación a la historia de la HOAC*, 27-35.

**35** Cf. “Deberes de justicia y caridad”.

**36** Cf. Callahan, *La Iglesia católica en España*, 324-9.

**37** The following *relationes* report the HOAC and JOC existence: Burgos 1952, 12, no. 94; Solsona 1952, 17, no. 100. It is reported the presence of evening school for workers in: Barcelona 1952, 74, no. 91; Ciudad Real 1952, 17, no. 94.

**38** Barcelona 1952, 80-1, no. 94.

**39** Malaga 1953, 19, no. 27. Ángel Herrera Oria (1886-1968) was one of the founders of the Asociación Católica Nacional de Propagandistas (ACNP) and editor of the Catholic newspaper *El Debate* from 1911 to 1933. Supporter of the political unity of Spanish Catholics, in 1931 he founded Acción Popular, a confessional party that the following year changed the name to Acción Nacional and in 1933 joined the Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas (CEDA). Designated president of Spanish Catholic Action in 1933, he left the charge in 1936 to move to Friborg, where he conducted his theology studies. Returning to Spain in 1943 after his priestly ordination, he saw his political influence increase starting in 1945, with the ascent at important roles in the regime by personalities connected to the ACNP. In 1947 he was appointed bishop of Malaga, a diocese that he held until 1966. For a biographical profile: cf. Orella Martínez, “Herrera Oria, Ángel”.

In the final judgments they wrote at the end of the *relaciones*, some bishops paid attention to the social problems that afflicted the populations of their dioceses and that threatened to have an impact on religious life. Tarancón spoke of inflation and the housing crisis that worried the workers, distracting them from caring for spiritual things.<sup>40</sup> Mons. Echeverría Barrena, bishop of Ciudad Real, wished for greater social justice,<sup>41</sup> a question faced in a more articulated way by Herrera who denounced the presence of a capitalist socio-economic system that forced the workers into misery.<sup>42</sup> On these topics, however, the final judgment written by Mons. García Martínez remains silent, although the bishop of Calahorra had offered the HOACs, between 1950 and 1951, a set of original observations that focused on the lack of growth of the Spanish economy rather than on the unbalanced distribution of wealth, an aspect on which the part of the Iberian episcopate most attentive to social issues was concentrating.<sup>43</sup>

The judgments were expressive of the persuasion that there was a profound connection between religious detachment and unresolved social and economic problems, which produced misery and inequality, as asserted by Tarancón in the pastoral letter *El pan nuestro de cada día*, published in 1950, in which he denounced the social injustice present in Spain. For this Tarancón was accused of being a “red” and “communist” bishop.<sup>44</sup> However, this vision did not translate into alternative proposals with respect to regime policies.<sup>45</sup> In their 1951 instruction, the metropolitans had shown themselves to be sympathetic to the National Catholic vision, attacking liberalism which they considered contrary to the common good and natural law.<sup>46</sup> Despite the fact that they felt the burden of not being able to organise Catholic workers’ associations, the bishops continued to be opposed to the trade union freedom required by the HOACs, because they feared it could open the way<sup>47</sup> for communism and, publicly, they invited the believers to collaborate with the trade union system regime.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, as emerges from the *relaciones*

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<sup>40</sup> Solsona 1952, 17, no. 100.

<sup>41</sup> Ciudad Real 1952, 18, no. 100.

<sup>42</sup> Malaga 1953, 48-9, no. 100.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Arizmendi, de Blas Zabaleta, *Conspiración contra el obispo*, 212-17.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Enrique y Tarancón, *El pan nuestro de cada día*.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Callahan, *La Iglesia católica en España*, 317-18.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. “Deberes de justicia y caridad”, 261.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Tusell, *Franco y los católicos*, 212.

<sup>48</sup> Still in 1955, speaking at the 15th Social Week of Spanish Catholics, Tarancón declared that the worker had “the duty to actively and loyally participate in the trade union” and to respect the laws of the State that established trade union unity (Rodríguez Martín, “La crítica del obispo Pildain”, 127).

themselves, several bishops, like the Catholics who had roles of responsibility in the regime, were persuaded, between the end of the 1940s and the early 1950s, that the trade union organisations promoted by the Francoist authorities were in agreement with the Social Teaching of the Church.<sup>49</sup>

Pastoral attention to social problems was maintained throughout the 1950s, as attested by the *relationes* of 1957. In them the problems of the outskirts and the housing shortage emerge: these issues were faced by coordination structures such as the Secretariat of the suburbs of Barcelona, opened in 1956 with the aim of implementing concrete proposals on the social, cultural and religious level in the suburbs of the city,<sup>50</sup> and through the construction of houses for the working class families, as it happened in Seville.<sup>51</sup> Most of all, the commitment of dioceses in Education and in professional training is consolidated, as testified by the presence of after-school programs managed by Catholic Action in Burgos<sup>52</sup> and professional workshops in Malaga.<sup>53</sup>

This last theme appears to be of fundamental importance in the pastoral action of Mons. Herrera and Mons. José María Bueno Monreal, dynamic coadjutor with right of succession to Cardinal Segura in Seville.<sup>54</sup> The first, with the financial support of Francoist authorities, promoted the construction of 250 schools-chapels aimed to combat illiteracy and religious ignorance in the district of Malaga.<sup>55</sup> The second, according to what he wrote in the detailed *relatio*

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**49** The *relationes* of Ciudad Real (Ciudad Real 1947, 21, no. 94) and of Malaga, which indicated the regime trade unions constituted “with a Christian spirit and under priestly counsel” (Malaga 1953, 16, no. 94), expressed themselves in this sense.

**50** Barcelona 1957, 101, no. 100.

**51** Seville 1957, 48, no. 100. In the *relatio*, the coadjutor archbishop informed that 1,000 houses for the workers had been built by the Catholic Action and that the construction of another 1,500 houses was planned. Also in Barcelona, between 1952 and 1956, 1,600 homes were built for families belonging to the lower and middle social classes with funds raised by the institute *Viviendas del Congreso Eucarístico Internacional* (Barcelona 1957, 102, no. 100).

**52** Burgos 1957, 17, no. 91.

**53** Malaga 1958, 16-17, nos. 94-95.

**54** José María Bueno Monreal (1904-1987) was appointed coadjutor archbishop of Segura in Seville in October 1954, after having been bishop of Jaca and Vitoria. In April 1957, after the death of Cardinal Segura, he became the titular archbishop of the diocese and in December 1958 he was created a cardinal by John XXIII. He participated in the Second Vatican Council and, in the wake of conciliar teaching, provided for the enhancement of the laity in apostolic activities, integrated men and women religious into diocesan life, and renewed the spiritual life of the diocese. For a profile: cf. Cárceles Ortí, “Bueno Monreal, José María”.

**55** Cf. Sánchez Jiménez, *El cardenal Herrera Oria*, 73-8. Herrera offers only a mention of this commitment in the *relationes*, claiming to be totally dedicated to the construction of state and parochial schools (Malaga 1953, 50, no. 100).

brought to Rome in 1957, considered cultural and professional promotion a decisive element in preventing the return of violence against the Church: in his opinion, anarchist and communist ideas had, in fact, been able to spread and produce a brutal detachment from the Church because of inequalities and ignorance present in the Andalusian countryside. For this reason, in an area where he estimated that 50% of children did not go to school, he expressed the intention, concretised through parish schools, to contrast illiteracy and cultural degradation of the peasant masses.<sup>56</sup>

Through the list and description of charitable and educational activities, the *relationes* testified, therefore, the transition from charity to social justice, characterised by the ambiguity of a State-Church relationship suspended between support and criticism.<sup>57</sup> Meant to re-evangelise, the social commitment they described had, however, to clash with dynamics that indicated detachment from the Church and its teachings and discussed the public image of a compactly Catholic Spain.

#### 4 Indifferentism and Detachment from Catholic Morality

The progressive social commitment of which the bishops informed in their *relationes* in the 1950s did not bring great advances on the pastoral level, as the trend of religious life indicated. The majority, in some cases almost all, of the people living in the territories of the dioceses were baptised, married in church and, when dying, received the sacraments.<sup>58</sup> However, the data transmitted to the Holy See on attendance at Sunday Mass and on the fulfilment of the Easter precept indicated that the levels of participation in ecclesial life had remained those of the second half of the 1940s, with a trend to decline rather than growth. Compared to the 1947 data in Barcelona and Seville, the number of pascalizers was falling: in Barcelona they went from 62% in 1947 to 58% in 1957 and in Seville from 30% to 20%.<sup>59</sup> The fulfilment of the Easter precept was growing in Burgos (it passed from 40% in 1947 to 95%-100%, depending on the parish, in 1957), where, however, the number of participants in Sunday Mass

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<sup>56</sup> Seville 1957, 47, no. 100.

<sup>57</sup> On the theme: cf. Montero, *La Iglesia*, 52-8 especially.

<sup>58</sup> The only exception was represented by the suburbs of Barcelona: according to the *relatio* of 1952, 36% of the people residing there died without sacraments, a datum that increased in the following years, reaching 40% of the faithful belonging to the working class living in the suburbs (Barcelona 1952, 71, no. 86; Barcelona 1957, 81-2, no. 86).

<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, about hearing Sunday Mass, Bueno Monreal reported that “respect is very lacking” and that weekly Communion was received by a variable percentage between 1-2% (Seville 1957, 42-3, no. 86).

was decreasing (from 60% in 1947 they had fallen to 38% in 1957), and in Malaga (male pascalizers increased from 5% to 40% and female ones from 20% to 70%), where, yet, Herrera had to report that “the negligence of the people towards the sacred precept of listening to the mass is still deplorable”.<sup>60</sup>

This stalemate in religious life, which testified to the presence of parts of the population substantially impervious to the intense action of re-evangelisation implemented since the end of the civil war, intertwined with phenomena that denoted a detachment from the Church and its teaching. In *relationes* the bishops began to speak of religious indifferentism, which had nothing in common with the anticlerical hostility of the years of the civil war and took on different aspects depending on the diocese. For Herrera, bishop of Malaga, it was associated with peasant environments where cultural and religious ignorance was widespread.<sup>61</sup> For Mons. Modrego, bishop of Barcelona, it was, instead, an urban phenomenon, not connected to theoretical reflections but, rather, to ways of life that did not ask themselves the religious problem,<sup>62</sup> a judgment shared by Mons. Pérez Platero, bishop of Burgos, who considered the indifferent people present in his diocese “not enemies of the Church, but rather lazy and indolent”.<sup>63</sup>

To indifferentism, the bishops added the observation of social and private behaviours that did not agree with the Church’s teaching. In *relationes* the bishops spoke of greed for money, lack of attention to the poor and hedonism present in the wealthiest and most consumerist segments of the population.<sup>64</sup> They asserted that the sacral character of marriage was endangered by neo-Malthusianism, onanism and voluntary abortion.<sup>65</sup> Driven by government measures taken to accredit the confessional image of Spain sanctioned by the Concordat, bishops found that, following the closure of the brothels, clan-

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<sup>60</sup> Malaga 1958, 15, no. 86.

<sup>61</sup> Malaga 1953, 49, no. 100.

<sup>62</sup> Barcelona 1952, 66, no. 84; Barcelona 1957, 76, no. 84.

<sup>63</sup> Burgos 1957, 19, no. 100. The Seville *relatio* of 1957 speaks of people “who do not care at all about religion, although all, in articulo mortis, [...] receive the sacraments” (Seville 1957, 10, no. 16).

<sup>64</sup> After having affirmed that the people of Malaga were of a Christian spirit, Bishop Herrera, in the *relatio* of 1952, was forced to admit that the most common behaviours were marked by frivolity, greed and lust. In addition to social injustice, he stated that greed was present, an aspect which he confirmed in the judgment of the *relatio* of 1957 (Malaga 1953, 41, no. 74 and 49, no. 100; Malaga 1958, 17, no. 100). Mons. Modrego stated that economic prosperity in the diocese of Barcelona had induced many well-off people to arrogant conduct, devoid of a spirit of charity (Barcelona 1952, 67, no. 84; Barcelona 1957, 76-7, no. 84).

<sup>65</sup> Burgos 1952, 12, no. 87; Burgos 1957, 16, no. 84; Calahorra y La Calzada 1957, 14, no. 87; Solsona 1952, 14, no. 87; Solsona 1957, 14, no. 87. Herrera speaks about “voluntary abortion” in: Malaga 1953, 44, no. 87; Malaga 1958, 16, no. 87.

destine prostitution was spreading and began to report the presence of the homosexual phenomenon, brutally repressed by the Francoist authorities who considered it in contrast with the national Catholic vision of the strong-willed and dominant Spanish male.<sup>66</sup>

The noting of orientations and behaviours dissonant with ecclesiastical directives did not push the bishops to reflect on the pastoral strategy put forward. The *relationes* inform that the diocesan ordinaries remained convinced of the validity of the “total religiosity”, based on Eucharistic congresses, on popular missions, on the *peregrinationes* of the image of Our Lady of Fatima.<sup>67</sup> The obstacles to a Christian way of life were ascribable to the inauspicious influence of the Republican period and the civil war and to the influence coming from outside through cinema, books and tourism, a phenomenon that broke out between the end of the 1940s and the early 1950s. Foreign films, books smuggled in from abroad or taking advantage of the loose meshes of censorship, contacts with tourists were considered guilty by the bishops of spreading ideas and styles of behaviour that perverted the religious spirit and corrupted the Christian morality of young people and women, whom the ecclesiastical and National Catholic vision wanted docile and submissive to men.<sup>68</sup> Problems and dangers came from the outside, not from the interior of a country considered Christian.

The *relationes* by Echeverría Barrena and Tarancón seem to partially escape this vision. In the *relatio* transmitted to Rome in 1952, the bishop of Ciudad Real affirmed that the devotion manifested in the great celebrations did not correspond to the true Christian spirit and that many believers practised “by inertness and family custom”.<sup>69</sup> In the *relatio* of 1952, Tarancón, on the other hand, spoke of the existence of a “divorce” between religious life and the believers’ behaviour.<sup>70</sup>

Precisely the observation of this divergency induced, in the following years, the bishop of Solsona to start a process of rethinking the

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<sup>66</sup> Bishop Modrego noticed that the prohibition of prostitution imposed by the government was applied in “a different way according to the nature of the magistrates and the places” and was evaded especially in large centres (Barcelona 1957, 78, no. 84). In addition to prostitution, Bishop Bueno Monreal mentioned the existence of the “vice of male homosexuality, especially in the countryside” (Seville 1957, 41, no. 84). On the ideological basis of the repression of homosexuality during Francoism: cf. Ugarte Pérez, “Las bases ideológicas de la represión”.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Orensanz, *Religiosidad popular española*, 9-22.

<sup>68</sup> Complain about the “evil example of foreign people” and the influence of cinema: Barcelona 1957, 103, no. 100; Burgos 1957, 20, no. 100. The following *relationes* speak of the clandestine press with contents defined as “obscene” and “evil”: Calahorra y La Calzada 1957, 15, no. 96; Seville 1957, 45, no. 96. Herrera complains about public sale of books written by authors of “bad doctrine” in: Malaga 1958, 17, no. 96.

<sup>69</sup> Ciudad Real 1952, 15, no. 84.

<sup>70</sup> Solsona 1952, 16, no. 100.

comforting public image of Catholic Spain. In the mid-1950s, in two pastoral letters then republished in the volume *Examen de conciencia* or “autocrítica”, he reflected on the problems and limits of Spanish Catholicism identified in a faith connected to ritual but without ethical implications, in the poor quality of the formation of the clergy, in the uniformity of pastoral life unable to see the real needs of the believers.<sup>71</sup>

In the second half of the 1950s, Tarancón was, in a prudent manner, an authoritative voice of that portion of Spanish Catholicism that, with the help of the tools offered by French religious sociology, was initiating an ample self-criticism of Spanish Catholicism, ranging from ideological and doctrinal to ecclesial and pastoral dimension.<sup>72</sup> However, he represented a minority: most of the bishops continued to consider Spain totally Christianised and looked with suspicion at the news from France and Germany.<sup>73</sup> This was testified by some *relaciones* of 1957, where it is possible to notice the echoes of ferments that were beginning to run through Spanish Catholicism, causing in the bishops a sense of annoyance. From Barcelona Mons. Modrego reported that a worker priest had left the diocese and that some priests, “guided by false zeal”, had shown themselves to be inclined towards what he called “progressism gallicanum”, identifiable in the theological and pastoral innovation of French derivation.<sup>74</sup> Mons. Bueno Monreal, on the other hand, reported with concern the existence in Catholic intellectual circles of a “liberal sense” that refused to protect the rights of the Church on the educational and economic front, guaranteed by the condition of a confessional State.<sup>75</sup>

In the *relaciones* of the 1950s, therefore, limits and contradictions emerge: there is a Spanish Church characterised, on the one hand, by the theoretical and practical activism of social Catholicism and, on the other, by the general lack of will to rethink a pastoral action comforted from the support of the civil powers but in difficulty in transmitting a message of faith that would be able to be incisive for the conscience of people. In the *relaciones*, behind the rigidity of the form and the prudence of the tones, it is possible to discern the problematic nature of the turning point of the 1950s that leads from the triumphalism of the ‘first Francoism’ to the phase of the *España del desarrollo*, in which the message of the Second Vatican Council will act.

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**71** Cf. Enrique y Tarancón, *Examen de conciencia*. The book re-proposed two pastoral letters - “La renovación total de la vida cristiana” and “¿Espiritualidad nueva?” - addressed by Tarancón to his own diocesan clergy between 1955 and 1956.

**72** Cf. Montero, *La Iglesia*, 37-98; Carmona Fernández, “Autocrítica del catolicismo español”.

**73** Cf. Callahan, *La Iglesia católica en España*, 379-87.

**74** Barcelona 1957, 25, no. 16 e 61, no. 52.

**75** Seville 1957, 46, no. 99.

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