

CRUSADE

July/August 2007

Magazine



Don Pelayo and the *Reconquista* of Spain

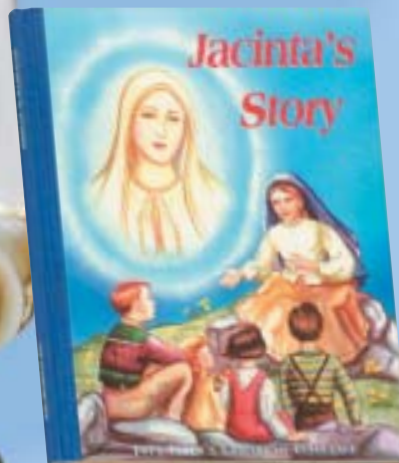
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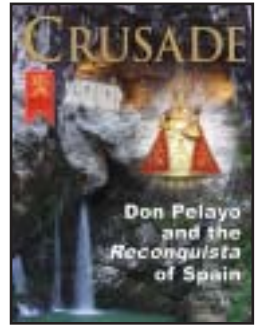
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The American TFP

The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property (TFP) was founded in 1973 to confront the profound crisis shaking the modern world. It is a civic, cultural and nonpartisan organization which, inspired by the traditional teachings of the Supreme Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church, works in a legal and peaceful manner in the realm of ideas to defend and promote the principles of private ownership, family and perennial Christian values with their

twofold function: individual and social. The TFP's words and efforts have always been faithfully at the service of Christian civilization. The first TFP was founded in Brazil by the famous intellectual and Catholic leader Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira in 1960. His work inspired the formation of other autonomous TFP sister organizations across the globe, thus constituting the world's largest anticommunist and antisocialist network of Catholic inspiration.



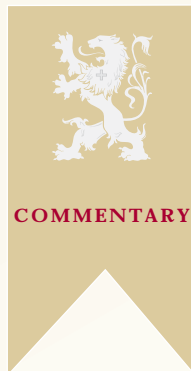
Our Lady broke through the moral murkiness of the twentieth century like a beacon of light for those worried about an impending moral disaster.

FATIMA: An Appeal to Beauty, Purity and Reparation

BY MICHELLE TAYLOR*

The life of a Catholic today can be challenging yet glorious. It is tough and painful to counter the evil in the culture that hangs in the air like smog. It is not easy to deal with a friend wandering from the straight and narrow, a son being influenced by harmful fads, or a daughter dazzled by questionable customs and fashions. It is an uphill battle to try to bring back to God those who giddily insist on plunging into a world of sin.

However, the challenge of striving for



God in a neo-pagan world makes it a glorious struggle, and that very difficulty is an occasion for merit and growth. Light is never as bright as when shining in the night, a lily never as white as when blossoming in a swamp. It is precisely in this darkness of faith and morality that has fallen upon the world that we have been called as Catholics to “shine our light.”

A Century of Revolution

The word that best characterizes the twentieth century is Revolution with a

capital *R*. Revolution is a violent change against order. While not every change needs to be violent or affect order, today’s Revolution is a change characterized by its violence and disorder. History has labeled the last century as one of its bloodiest, and it certainly was also one of the most un-Godly.

Revolution in Fashions and in Music

The 1968 Sorbonne student riots in Paris, France, was a revolt against everything that is orderly, beautiful and sensible. Up until then, fashions were still tasteful and elegant. However, after the Sorbonne Revolution, fashions entered a downward spiral trend. The feminine wardrobe suffered a radical overhaul that de-emphasized women’s natural charm, femininity and modesty; the new wave introduced masculine attire, immodest styles and unflattering adornments.

Soon afterward, the world was introduced to rock ‘n roll, which was to the Cultural Revolution what the *Marseillaise* was to the French Revolution. The *Marseillaise* is a military march with fatalistic undertones of Revolution; rock ‘n roll has the lure of a mad dance suggesting the unraveling of all discipline and temperance.

Our Lady of Fatima

Foreseeing all of the above, Our Lady appeared in an extraordinary manifestation of beauty and purity, contrasting the gray, impure atmosphere that was fast invading the world. In 1917, she broke through the moral murkiness of the twentieth century like a beacon of light for those worried about an impending moral disaster.

The children saw above a holm oak, “a lady dressed in white, more brilliant than the sun, shedding a light clearer and more intense than that of a crystal goblet filled with crystalline water and struck by the rays of the most brilliant sun.”

An Innocent Setting

The Fatima message is wrapped in innocence. The seers, Francisco, Jacinta and Lucia, were three innocent shepherd children, born to Portuguese peasant families, who in their simplicity practiced the Catholic Faith in all its wholesome temperance. They lived close to nature, took their sheep to pasture, played their simple games, went to church and said their prayers in the calm cadence of peasant life. They were three normal, truthful, modest children, instructed in God’s commandments, and unhindered by movies, television, video games, talk shows or peer pressure.

An Angel and a Lady

One spring day in 1916, as they played among the rocks, they saw a figure approaching over the trees. In their matchless words, “a transparent young man who was more brilliant than crystal struck by rays of the sun.”¹ In the second apparition, he introduced himself as the Guardian Angel of Portugal.

The following year, on another spring day, the children noticed two flashes of lightning after which they saw above a holm oak, “a lady dressed in white, more brilliant than the sun, shedding a light clearer and more intense than that of a crystal goblet filled with crystalline water and struck by the rays of the most brilliant sun.” Her face, indescribably beautiful, “was neither sad nor happy, but serious” with an air of mild reproach. Her hands, joined together as if she were praying, were resting at her breast and pointing upward. A Rosary hung from her right hand. Her clothes seemed to be made of light. Her tunic was white, and her veil was also white and edged with gold.²

A Counter-Revolution of Purity

“Transparent,” “brilliant,” “crystal,” “sun,” “clear,” “crystalline,” “water,” “rays,” “lightning,” “beautiful,” “white” and “gold” were the words

the three little shepherds used to describe what they saw. The Fatima message is replete with heavenly “staging” and “body language,” and the children’s words paint a marvelous picture. Everything is so full of light and so pearly white that it expresses purity in every possible way. This lady, this shimmering apparition before them, is the Immaculate. She attracts and enchants through her purity, and makes us feel the beauty of purity. Her whiteness was luminous. Purity loves daylight. It is connatural with clarity, open air and freshness. The Fatima message calls us to the apostolate of purity.

Practicing Purity in an Impure World

Practicing purity is difficult, especially when the tentacles of impurity, lust and pornography reach electronically into homes.



Our Lady, pure white as the lily, calls us to be pure amid the moral pollution that surrounds us and creeps into our very homes.

Purity takes application, discipline, vigilance and, above all, prayer. But the saints assure us that though difficult, it is a virtue easily granted when asked of God.

The Catholic Church has always had the formula for purity of life and customs. First and foremost, the Church tells us to avoid the occasions of sin. This is done by avoiding bad company, guarding one’s eyes and monitoring thoughts. Purity comes in a total package or not at all. It must involve all of a person’s faculties. The secret to bodily purity and chastity is purity of eyes, mind and heart—look at no evil, think of no evil and desire no evil. “But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. 5:28).

Saint Alphonsus Liguori writes in *How to Live a Holy Life*:

Avoid idleness, immoral friendships, immodest conversations, and above everything else, avoid all occasions of sin, especially where there is the danger of impurity. In order to avoid impurity it is important to keep the eyes from dwelling on any dangerous objects. A person who does not avoid the voluntary occasions of sin, especially those sins that have frequently proved fatal to their innocence, will soon discover that it is morally impossible to persevere in the grace of God: ‘He who loves danger will perish therein’ (Sirach, 3:26).³

Sacramental Life

Avoiding sin, so to speak, is the “negative” side of the battle for purity. On the “positive” side of the struggle, the Church provides us with the all-available strength of the Sacraments of Confession, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist. In the first, we receive God’s forgiveness that comes with a special fortifying grace. In the second, we are spiritually armed with an increase in the gifts of the Holy Ghost for the spiritual combat.

The 1968 Sorbonne student riots in Paris, France, was a revolt against everything that is orderly, beautiful and sensible. Up until then, fashions were still tasteful and elegant. However, after the Sorbonne Revolution, fashions entered a downward spiral trend.

In the third, we receive Our Lord in Holy Communion. Received worthily in the state of grace, having confessed all mortal sins, Holy Communion distills the impurities of our nature, spiritualizes our nature, increases our sensitivity to sin, and therefore our rejection of sin.

Again, Saint Alphonsus Liguori writes,

Holy Communion, as the Council of Trent teaches, is the grand medicine. Holy Communion purifies us from our daily venial faults, and preserves us from mortal ones. The person who frequently receives Communion will be free from sin and will make the best progress in divine love, as long as it is received with a good desire.⁴

Modesty, the Priceless Pearl Society Lost

An integral part of purity is modesty. In Fatima, not only did Our Lady give the supreme example by the way she dressed, but she also told the world through Jacinta, “Fashions will appear that will greatly offend Our Lord.”⁵

Every girl is born with the innate virtue of modesty. Before it is stripped or diluted by the habit of immodesty, it is so strong an element of her nature that some girls have given their lives rather than forfeit it, like Saint Maria Goretti and many others through time. Thus, a

crisis in virginity is linked doubtlessly to a crisis in modesty.

In Christianity’s history, no other epoch has engaged in a more systematic persecution of the virtue of modesty than ours. This persecution is intended to strip femininity of its aura of dignity and beauty. As Professor Corrêa de Oliveira put it, “We must not fall into the error of wearing things of doubtful purity or positively impure attire to please others. No! The apostolate of purity is to show the beauty of purity.”⁶

The *beauty* of purity; here is the for-

mula for the “apostolate of purity.” Purity, as a beautiful spiritual quality, must be attractive outwardly as well. If women and girls wish to take upon their shoulders the cross of purity and modesty today, they must do it with wisdom and discernment to influence others. There are ways of dressing in accordance with the Church’s norms that are also attractive. One of the best books written on the subject is *Dressing with Dignity* by Colleen Hammond, a former model, now a model Catholic, wife and mother.⁷

Reparation

A definition for “reparation” is “the act of making amends, offering expiation, or giving satisfaction for a wrong or injury.”⁸

In Fatima, the Angel of Portugal and Our Lady asked the children to pray, sacrifice and make reparation, and to ask the world to do the same. For their part, Francisco, Jacinta and Lucia, fascinated with the beauty of virtue they had seen, and horrified by the vision of Hell that Our Lady showed them, fell in line joyfully and resolutely with the Angel’s and Our Lady’s request.

They prayed and sacrificed, offering up all the sufferings of life, and extra penances to make amends to God for the sins of humanity, that repeatedly offend His infinite goodness and majesty. This became their mission, sanctified them, and today they enjoy the eternal happiness that Our Lady promised them. In their case, “making amends” applied only insofar as their small faults and childish sins had affected their otherwise innocent souls.

The Cleansing Power of Reparation

In a world that has bought the lie that morality is a burden and ugliness is beauty, only to find out that immorality enslaves and ugliness depresses, it is a



A scene during the 1968 Sorbonne student revolt, an event that accelerated the downward spiral of the Cultural Revolution. Among their many slogans, the revolutionaries shouted, “It is forbidden to forbid!”

consoling thought that there is a way to repair the offense to God and the damage done to the beauty and innocence of our souls. That way is prayer and penance as Our Lady repeatedly asked at Fatima—especially the penance of embracing a life of virtue.

Reparation is a word laden with hope: “[I]f your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow; and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool” (Isaias 1:18), and “Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed: thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow” (Psalms 50:9).

Perhaps the most touching aspect of the parable of the Prodigal Son is that when the young man finally cleared the bend of the road back home, his watchful father saw him before the Prodigal Son saw his father.

The picture of a God who waits day and night for each soul should encourage us to continue shining our small lights as Catholics to help illuminate the way for all those seeking the way back



Like the Prodigal Son's father, God awaits the return of every wayward soul. Contrary to the spirit of the jealous brother in the parable, we should encourage repentance and make reparation by our example.

home. There can be no better reparation, for us and for others, than to join our small lamps of practicing Catholics to the light of the “Lady more brilliant than the sun.” With her, no way is too difficult, no task impossible. ■

*Based on a talk by Plinio Corrêa Oliveira on June 5, 1994.

Notes:

1. Antonio A. Borelli and John R. Spann, *Our Lady of Fatima: Prophecies of Tragedy or Hope?* (York, PA: The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property, 1998), 29.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Saint Alphonsus Liguori, ed. Reverend Thomas M. Santa, C.Ss.R., *How to Live a Holy Life, a Rule of Life by Saint Alphonsus Liguori* (Liguori), 15.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Our Lady of Fatima: Prophecies of Tragedy or Hope?*, 65.
6. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, closing remarks, June 5, 1994.
7. Colleen Hammond, *Dressing with Dignity* (Rockford, IL: TAN Books & Publishers, Inc., 2005).
8. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 1055 (11th ed., 2004).



In Memoriam

*Eugenia Garcia
Guzmán*



*August 12, 1927–
May 23, 2007*

***“The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup:
it is thou that wilt restore my inheritance to me.”*** Psalms 15:5.

Crusade deeply mourns the passing of one of its associate editors, Eugenia Garcia Guzmán, on May 23, 2007.

Mrs. Guzmán emigrated with her family from Cuba to America during the early years of the Castro takeover. Leaving everything behind, the family struggled bravely to start a new life.

In the early seventies, Mrs. Guzmán met the American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property, becoming an enthusiastic supporter and loyal friend. She also, on several occasions, met with the founder of the Brazilian TFP, Professor Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, whom she admired greatly and strived to imitate.

From an old Spanish Basque family, Mrs.

Guzmán added the qualities of Catholic Spain to Cuban charm and sociability. Always a perfect lady, she faced the painful events in her life with unflinching valor, positive attitude and solid faith. Against trying odds, she made of God and His law her only portion, placing her unwavering trust in Him and growing in His love and that of His Church all the days of her life.

Mrs. Guzmán spoke Spanish, English, Portuguese and French fluently, contributed with translations and proofreading to the works of the American TFP and *Crusade*. We will miss her very much.

She leaves behind her sister Cecilia, her son Javier, and her granddaughter Alejandra. ■

Rather than surrender to the Moors, Don Pelayo and his handful of men retreated to a cave where they began the advance that would retake Spain.



Don Pelayo and the *Reconquista* of Spain

BY FELIPE BARANDIARAN



One fascinating aspect of the Old Testament is God's interventions favoring those who do all they possibly can while facing overwhelming odds and counting on Him to do the impossible. As we read about David and Goliath, Gideon and the Battle of Jericho, the Maccabees and others, we have the impression that God actually dons armor and goes to battle on their side. New Testament history counts a number of such interventions. Among these is the marvelous story of the *Reconquista*, or recapture of Spain from Islamic domination.

Jihad

Less than seventy years after the death of Mohammed in 632, his followers had already conquered most of the Middle East and North Africa. In the beginning of the eighth century, the leaders of the new religion turned their eyes to Christian Europe, dreaming of new Moorish conquests.

On the other side of the Strait of Gibraltar, Visigoth Catholic Spain was in a state of decadence, undermined by the Arian heresy, steeped in vice, its army and people lax, and its leaders divided.

In 711, because of internal divisions, traitors informed the Muslims about the weak points along

the Spanish southern coast. Not waiting for a second invitation, the Islamic army landed. The poison of treachery added to the ruthlessness of the scimitar conquered all of Spain in a few years.

But the Lord of Hosts had long prepared the Spanish David who would face the new Islamic Goliath.

A Warrior, a Cave and a Queen

The Cantabrian Range in northern Spain forms a natural fortress of lofty peaks, deep gorges, narrow valleys, steep cliffs and evergreen forests. This region numbers among the "Peaks of Europe" and was once the paradise of hermits, and the home of bears, mountain goats and soaring eagles. It is also known as the cradle of Catholic Spain, and it is the starting point of our marvelous saga.

One day, around the year 718, a troublemaker clambered desperately up rocks and boulders fleeing from a young warrior intent on his capture. Suddenly, the pursued man dashed into a large cave and disappeared into its dark depth. Chasing after him, the warrior found the troublemaker clinging desperately to a venerable hermit. Beside the old man stood a small image of Mary Most Holy with the Infant in her arms. At the hermit's

request, the warrior granted the troublemaker sanctuary and gave up the chase. "God will bless you for this, my friend," spoke the hermit.

The troublemaker's and the hermit's names perished with history, but the young warrior's name was Pelayo, a nobleman of royal lineage and fearless disposition. The cave is known to this day as Covadonga, and the diminutive image of Mary venerated there as Our Lady of Covadonga, Deliverer and Queen of Spain.

Early Spain

In the beginning of the eighth century, Spain was ruled by the Visigoth King Vitiza, a man as insolent as he was corrupt. While still a prince, Vitiza murdered the Duke of FÁfila and exiled his son Pelayo.

After Vitiza died, his sons were unable to secure the throne because of their cruel father's unpopularity. Taking advantage of the chaos, the worthy Rodrigo, Duke of Bética, seized power and proclaimed himself king. At this, the supporters of Vitiza and his sons swore revenge. They sent messengers to Mohammed's followers across the Strait of Gibraltar in North Africa and revealed to them all the weak points along the Spanish southern coast.

Tariff ben Ziyad was the one chosen for the task by the shrewd Musa ben Nusayr, governor of Muslim Africa. Aided by yet another traitor, the Count of Olian, Lord of Gibraltar, then at odds with King Rodrigo, Ziyad won many successive battles in 711.

Less than seventy years after the death of Mohammed in 632, his followers had already conquered most of the Middle East and North Africa.

What began as a simple incursion became a full-blown war of conquest as many enemies of the Visigoth regime joined forces with Ziyad.

The Fateful Battle of Guadalete

Finally, King Rodrigo was able to gather an army of 100,000 ill-trained men and met the Muslims in Guadalete. In the heat of the battle, the supporters of Vitiza and his sons joined the invading Moors, and attacking from behind decided the day for Ziyad. King Rodrigo was killed and his body vanished. Centuries later his tomb was discovered in Portugal.

Pelayo Emerges

In that battle, Pelayo, whose father the Duke of FÁfila had been killed by Vitiza, also fought. After the defeat of Guadalete, Pelayo fled with family members to Asturias in northern Spain.

Not My Sister

Meanwhile Nusayr grew jealous of Ziyad and decided to share in the glory and the spoils of con-



A map of Spain as it was, when invaded by Moors from northern Africa between A.D. 711-1031

A small chapel nestled within the Cave of Covadonga. Devotion to Our Lady at the cave existed even before Don Pelayo's battle against the Muslims and up until this day.



The hermit who inhabited the cave of Covadonga placed in Pelayo's hand a wooden cross saying, "Behold the sign of victory." Pelayo positioned this cross at the top of his standard to be carried in battle.

quering Spain. He crossed the Strait of Gibraltar with a powerful army and, with it, conquered Granada, Malaga, Merida, Seville and Zaragoza.

Continuing to join infamy to treachery, Vitiza's followers surrendered town after town to the invader. Like dominoes, region after region fell, leaving only a few towns free from Muslim domination in the Cantabrian region near the Pyrenees.

The Muslim Munuza was appointed governor of Gijón in this region and was to cross paths with Pelayo by falling in love with the Spaniard's sister. Pelayo opposed the match and was sent prisoner to the south of Spain. Evading his captors, he returned to his family to find Munuza planning a wedding. His opposition enraged the governor, who ordered his imprisonment.

An artist's rendition of the Moors besieging the Christians at Covadonga. Miraculously, the stones and arrows hurled against the Christians returned to the Moors. The outnumbered Christians engaged in a melee that resulted in the rout of the Moors.

The Resistance Begins

Warned by friends, Pelayo sought refuge in the mountains of the Cantabrian region and swore to resist the new regime. His natural leadership, his fame as a fearless warrior and his rank as a prince of royal lineage attracted many Catholics who wished to combat the invader. Around him gath-

ered a force of about a thousand strong. Unanimously, they proclaimed Pelayo king in 716 or 718.

Tradition says that since the crimson flag of the Goths had disappeared in the fateful battle of Guadalete, the hermit who inhabited the cave of Covadonga placed in Pelayo's hand a wooden cross saying, "Behold the sign of victory." Pelayo positioned this cross at the top of his standard to be carried in battle.¹

Noticing that Islamic attention was now focused on trying to conquer France,² Pelayo launched forays against Muslim strongholds obtaining successive victories.

Hearing of the insurrection, Munuza sent word to Alahor, the Emir of Córdoba, who in turn sent his lieutenant Alkama with a large force to crush the rebels. With him, Alkama brought Don Opas, the bishop of Seville, a relative of Pelayo and a Muslim collaborator, hoping that he might convince Pelayo to give up the impossible task. Meanwhile, Pelayo had distributed his small force throughout strategic positions of the Cantabrian Range while he with a few men took their positions inside the cave of Covadonga where the image of Mary Most Holy was venerated.

Interview with Don Opas

Before the battle, Alkama sent Don Opas to try to persuade Pelayo to put down his sword by promising pardon and many benefits. Don Opas is quoted as saying, "Brother, I am sure that you work in vain. What possible resistance can you put up when all of Spain and its armies could not resist the Ismaelites? Listen to me. Settle down, and enjoy your many possessions in peace with the Arabs like everyone else is doing"

To this, Pelayo answered,

I want no friendship with the Islamites and will not be subject to their empire. Don't you know that the Church of God is like the moon that once eclipsed returns to her fullness? We trust in God's mercy and know that from this mountain will emerge the health of Spain. You with your brothers as well as Olian, minister of Satan, decided to give to these people the reign of the Goths. But we, having Our Lord Jesus Christ as our advocate



before God the Father, despise this multitude of pagans in whose name you come. And by the intercession of the Mother of God, who is Mother of mercy, we believe that this small army of 105 Goths will multiply like seeds from a tiny grain of mustard.³

Realizing there was no compromise in Pelayo, Don Opas returned to the Muslim army and said, "Go on to the cave and fight because only the sword will obtain anything from him."

The Battle (718–722)

On that day, two different civilizations and religions faced each other. Islam, which had triumphed over the Middle East and North Africa, was now poised to crush the last stronghold of a ruined country, a destroyed civilization, an enslaved people and a profaned religion. There, at Covadonga, was to be decided whether Spain would be an extension of Islam or the spearhead of Christian Civilization.

As Pelayo and his men looked down from the cave of Covadonga they saw a massive Muslim horde. Alkama and his men jeered, sure of an easy victory. A chill of fear compounded the chill of the cave but the indomitable leader, pointing to the small image of Our Lady of Covadonga, reminded his brave men to place all their confidence in her protection. This little Lady "beautiful as the moon, brilliant as the sun, terrible as an army in battle array,"⁴ could not disappoint their trust. Thus began that terrible, unequal fight.

At a signal from Alkama, a multitude of stones and arrows were hurled against the men in the cave. It was then that a wonderful thing happened. The acclaimed sixteenth-century Spanish historian, Father Juan de Mariana, describes the battle:

They fought at the entrance to the cave with all sorts of weapons, and a shower of stones. Then it was that God's power was manifest, favorable to ours and contrary to the Muslims because the arrows and spears that the enemy launched returned to them causing great harm among them. The enemy was astounded at such a miracle. Heartened and on fire with the hope of victory, the Christians emerged from the hideout, few in number, soiled and ragged, and engaged in a melee. They fell fiercely upon the enemy who, thrown off balance, turned and ran.⁵

Meanwhile, the other warriors, placed in strate-



The "mustard seed" of Don Pelayo's unwavering faith in God and Our Lady inspired generations of Spanish Crusaders who were willing to lay down their lives rather than give in to the oppression of Islam.

gic positions throughout the mountains, pushed down huge boulders and tree trunks on the Muslim army now trapped in the deep valleys of the region. Others shot their arrows. At the same time, a frightful storm broke out, which added to the panic, and caused the Muslims to flee in disarray. Pursued by the Christians, they were killed in the Cangas Valley in a terrible battle.

The traitorous Don Opas was taken prisoner, and Alkama was slain along with thousands of Muslims. The remaining Moorish army took flight only to be buried by a mountain close to the Deva River that suddenly fell upon them and drowned them in the river. For centuries after that, whenever the river swelled in winter, bones and parts of armor floated to the top.

Back in Gijón, on hearing of the astounding defeat, Munuza fled with his troops, only to be pursued by the Spaniards who caught up with him near Oviedo, killing him and his men.

Growing Support For the Cause of Spain; Don Pelayo After Covadonga

Encouraged by such a victory and Pelayo's example, an increasing number of Christians joined him. One of them was Alfonso, the son of the Duke of Viscaya, who left his father and his lands to join the fight at Pelayo's side. Alfonso later married the hero's daughter, Ormisinda, and at the premature death of Pelayo's son Fávila, became King Alfonso I the Catholic.

Rather than establishing his court in Gijón, the most important city of Asturias, Don Pelayo chose Cangas de Onis, in the region of the "Peaks of Europe," since it was a more defensible position.

Pelayo did not enjoy much peace. He neither sought it nor could he expect it from the Muslims. He spent the rest of his life battling the Moorish invader. He died from natural causes in Cangas de

"I want no friendship with the Islamites and will not be subject to their empire.... We trust in God's mercy and know that from this mountain will emerge the health of Spain."

The Basilica of Our Lady of the Battles in Covadonga, Spain.



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Onis in 737 and was buried by his wife Gaudiosa near the altar of Our Lady in the Cave of Covadonga. The epitaph on his tomb reads:

Here lies the holy king Don Pelayo, elected on the year 716, who in this miraculous cave began the restoration of Spain...

Generations of Heroism

The defeat at Covadonga cost the Islamic cause dearly. Arab historians lament that they had despised the Spaniards as “only thirty hungry men who lived on the honey of bees made in the cracks of rocks; and what can thirty men amount to?” Given the consequences of this defeat for the Islamic world, their historians morosely comment, “A grave miscalculation which was the cause of great affliction for Islam.”⁶

Indeed, this was a miscalculation of historic proportions for, according to the Spanish historian Menéndez Pidal, the average Spaniard was a man who endures the lack of amenities with strong resignation; resists all covetousness and the disturbing allurements of pleasures; is ruled by sobriety, which inclines him to a certain ethic austerity applied to all of life; his is a habitual simplicity of customs, dignity and noble stance, evident even in the humbler classes; he is strong in the family virtues; and when necessary, capable of a heroism rarely imitated.⁷

In other words, Islam chose the wrong country through which to begin the invasion of Europe. For, after Pelayo, and under the patronage of the Lady of Covadonga, a host of warriors undertook the eight-hundred-year war to reconquer for the Cross what the Crescent and treachery had taken in a decade.

Outstanding in heroism and dedication to the cause were men like Fernán González (930–970), who defeated the Muslims in the great three-day battle at the *Valle de las Espadas* (Valley of the Swords), where it is said that Saints James and

Millan appeared to aid the Christians in the battle.

Another hero of the *Reconquista* is Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, better known as El Cid (1040–1099), the epitome of manly honor and loyalty to the cause of Spain despite rejection by his own king.

Another outstanding figure is Saint Ferdinand III of Castille and León (1199–1252). This holy king, with a tender devotion to Our Lady, had a precious ivory statue of the Mother of God and her Infant Son, “The Virgin of Battles,” set in his saddle horn. He never lost a battle. When he breathed his last at fifty-three, exhausted by a warring life, only the kingdom of Granada in the south of Spain was still in Islamic hands, though reduced to being a vassal state to the Christian kingdom.

In 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic Kings, after a long, tedious war, received the keys of Granada from its last Muslim king, Boabdil el Chico.

The recapture of Spain was complete.

May Don Pelayo and all the saints and heroes of the *Reconquista* pray for all Catholics who, though in different circumstances today, feel backed into a “cave” pressured by the universal “politically correct” call to compromise or dilute their Catholic convictions and principles. Unfortunately, at times, the clamor even comes from individual members of the clergy more intent on conforming to the spirit of the age than to the spirit of immutable Truth, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The deposit of God’s Truth in the Divine Magisterium of His Church is the sure beacon, and the eternal inspirer of all those willing to attempt the possible knowing that they can then expect the impossible from the Lord of Hosts and His Holy Mother. ■

Notes:

1. Later, Alfonso III had this cross covered in gold and precious stones. Today, it is kept in the Cathedral of Oviedo with the name of “Cross of Victory.” [http://www.arbil.org/\(31\)pely.htm](http://www.arbil.org/(31)pely.htm).
2. Charles Martel, son of Pepin of Herstal and father of Charlemagne, defeated Islam at the battle of Tours. See “Charles Martel,” <http://www.newadvent.org/?catheon/03629a.htm>.
3. [http://www.arbil.org/\[31\]pely.htm](http://www.arbil.org/[31]pely.htm).
4. Canticle of Canticles 6:9.
5. From an article by José Maria dos Santos, published in *Catolicismo* (October, 2002), based on Father Juan de Mariana, *Historia General de España*, vol. I, enriched and completed by Eduardo Chao (Imprenta y Librería de Gaspar Roig, Editores, Madrid, 1848), 308.
6. From an article by José Maria dos Santos, published in *Catolicismo*, based on Menéndez Pidal, *España y su Historia*, vol. I (Ediciones Minotauro, Madrid, 1957), 247, 248.
7. *Ibid.*, 15, 16.



America Needs Fatima®

July/August 2007

PROGRESS REPORT

Spreading Public Square Rosaries

BY ROBERT E. RITCHIE

To commemorate the ninetieth anniversary of Our Lady of Fatima's message, the American TFP and its America Needs Fatima campaign are sponsoring Public Square Rosary Rallies in cities all over America. The TFP's Student Action branch is doing a similar campaign called the Campus Rosary Crusade. This spiritual crusade is an historic opportunity to proclaim publicly the Fatima message: pray the Rosary, do penance for the conversion of sinners, amend our lives and practice the devotion to the Five First Saturdays.

We are happy to report that several Public Square Rosaries were already held, and others are planned for July, August and September, leading up to

1,000 rallies planned for October 13, 2007, the ninetieth anniversary of the miracle of the sun at Fatima, Portugal.

Public Square Rosaries

On May 12, 2007, more than eighty Catholics gathered in downtown Cleveland, Ohio. The Pilgrim Virgin statue processed into the public square to the tune of *Hail Holy Queen Enthroned Above*. The Rosary, hymns and the litany of Our Lady were recited. After the Rosary, everyone, some on their knees, prayed the consecration to Our Lady. To end the rally, the participants shouted three times, "Finally, my Immaculate Heart will triumph!"



More than eighty Catholics publicly prayed the Rosary in downtown Cleveland, Ohio, to honor the ninetieth anniversary of Our Lady's apparitions at Fatima.

Campus Rosary Crusade

There are Campus Rosary Crusades at colleges in twelve states, plus the District of Columbia and Canada. The number of college students holding monthly campus Rosaries is increasing. Some Rosary leaders even decided to start praying a weekly Rosary.

Eric Asso, Rosary coordinator from Lancaster, Pa., writes,

[W]e said the Rosary in front of San Juan Bautista Church on Saturday, April 7, 2007. Five of us were out there with a sign saying, "Pray for the Safety of the Troops." There is a lot of traffic on that street. I expect more people next month because we're going to put an announcement in the church bulletin.

At Virginia Commonwealth University, besides having the bagpipes and anti-abortion literature, a public Rosary was recited for the end of abortion. Two students were so happy that they joined on the spot to pray. "We need more militant



As part of their Campus Rosary Crusade, members of TFP Student Action prayed the Rosary at the University of Delaware.



Catholic groups like yours!" said Kimberly, a student who wants to start a Campus Rosary Crusade chapter. Another student added, "Wow! You guys look like medieval warriors! Good luck!"

Colin Salinger, organizer of Campus Rosary at Louisiana State University, told the student newspaper, *The Daily Reveille*, that he organized the event to "bring the Rosary to people" and to encourage more students to stand up for the Catholic Faith.

Kyle Duhon of the University of Lafayette, La., writes, "I love doing it, I plan to do many [Campus Rosary Rallies] for the summer and the rest of college. Thank you all for calling me and asking me to be a campus Rosary leader!"

Margaret Beacom writes, "This is great! Carry on, brave young soldiers of Mary! The Rosary is the most powerful weapon against the evils of our world."

To lead or join a Public Square Rosary please call toll free (866) 584-6012 anytime for advice or supplies to help expand the 1,000 Public Square Rosary Crusade. ■

Pro-Homosexual Conference at DePaul University Tramples Catholic Identity

BY JAMES BASCOM

DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois, plans to host a pro-homosexual conference on October 19–20, 2007 titled, "Out There: The Second National Conference of Scholars and Student Affairs Personnel Involved in LGBTQ Issues on Catholic Campuses."

"Catholic universities should be centers of virtue and purity, not sin and scandal. The Catholic Church teaches that homosexual vice is a grave sin, not something to celebrate or be comfortable with," said TFP Student Action Director John Ritchie. "Thank God more and more students are waking up. They realize that a culture without morals leads to anarchy."

Students and parents are praying, protesting and calling DePaul University. If nothing is said now, what will happen to Catholic higher education? By extension, if nothing is said now, what will happen to the Faith?

Respectfully, but firmly, protest the scheduled pro-homosexual "Out There" conference by calling or writing to:

Father Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M.
DePaul University President
1 East Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, IL 60604-2287
Phone: (312) 362-8890
Fax: (312) 362-6822
E-mails: dholtsc@depaul.edu
president@depaul.edu



Another Seven Regional Conferences

BY GARY ISBELL

In the May/June issue of *Crusade* we reported on the March 10 Regional TFP Conference in Topeka, Kan., the first of eight planned such events across the nation. Since then, TFP speakers have held similar one-day seminars in Los Angeles, Calif.; Sacramento, Calif.; Chicago, Ill.; Lafayette, La.; Saddle Brook, N.J.; Rochester, N.Y.; and Hazleton, Pa.

At each location, eager audiences listened to enlightening talks applicable to

Catholic lives today. Mr. Norman Fulkerson spoke eloquently on the themes from the book *Revolution and Counter-Revolution* by Professor Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira. Mr. Luiz Solimeo delivered a fascinating discourse on, "Eternal Law, Natural Law and Positive Law" (see page 16 for the transcription), and Mr. Michael Drake effectively linked Fatima to the struggle of countering the nega-



Over sixty friends and supporters participated in the Los Angeles Regional Conference. Similar one-day conferences were held in six other locations throughout the country.

tive aspects of today's culture.

At all the seminars, breaks and lunch time were occasions for lively discussions. Both speakers and attendees left invigorated after a day discussing a common ideal. ■



Small Cloths Make One Great Banner

BY MICHAEL GORRE

With the March/April issue of *Crusade*, America Needs Fatima friends and supporters received a small piece of blue cloth. They were requested to write their names and intentions on each swatch, and to return these to our headquarters for the purpose of attaching each cloth onto a great banner to be unfurled on the site of the apparitions in Fatima, Portugal.

The response was wonderful! Thousands sent in their inscribed blue cloths. Presently these are being affixed onto a great prayer banner that will be ready to be sent to Fatima mid-July to commemorate Our Lady's

third apparition.

Together, all these prayer intentions make an impressive, moving statement. This banner will be at the shrine, close to the very place Our Lady appeared, as another silent sentinel of efficacious prayer of the America Needs Fatima family. ■

Our Readers Write...



✉ Three days after the Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Our Lady of Fatima graced our home, we heard from our daughter after more than two years of searching and praying for her. I continue to say the daily Rosaries in thanksgiving for this blessing and the many graces that continue to follow.

N.B., McLeansville, N.C.

✉ The statue of Our Lady of Fatima was present at our Rosary group meeting. I was amazed at the special graces that flowed to our family after this visit. The very next weekend we prayed the family Rosary, something I'd longed for some time. It was a beautiful experience with my husband and grown children. In the past, my daughter would leave the scene and turn on the television! I know Mary is truly with us and able to help us accomplish all things for Jesus!

N.M., Streetaboro, Ohio

✉ The Rosary and poster arrived in perfect condition. We look forward to the Rosary Rally and to pray openly with others, professing our love and devotion to the Blessed Mother. We have personally felt her protection many times in our lives and hold fast to our belief in the power of the Rosary.

M.N., Boynton Beach, Fla.

✉ I have several Rosaries. Some I'm giving away, but I hope to be buried with this one [that you sent] as I have requested my family to do.

M.Y., Rushville, Ohio

✉ After receiving the Miraculous Medal, I began praying the accompanying novena. I prayed that my mother would come back to the Church. Shortly after completing it, she

started coming back to Mass. She promised to go to confession and to do everything necessary to re-enter the Church. This, in turn, inspired the rest of my family to increase their devotion to the Holy Mother by saying the Rosary, as well as praying the novena. Thank you for the beautiful medal. It has not only increased my devotion, but also my whole family's devotion to the Holy Mother.

J.D. (15 years old), Gallipolis, Ohio

✉ We attended [recently] the Kansas Regional Conference and enjoyed it thoroughly. The talks were very inspiring and it was an honor to take part in the public Rosary afterward. We hope that the TFP will continue to hold these regional conferences and look forward to next year's conference! Thank you and may Our Lady continue to bless your efforts in spreading the Fatima message!

M. and A.S., Topeka, Kan.

✉ Finally! A balanced look at the death penalty. I think your article was well written. I have often had to defend my stance as a Catholic who upholds the death penalty. . . . I must admit that I expected this article to be against the death penalty for you are a conservative and very traditional group. Boy, was I ever pleasantly surprised! My thoughts are that the death penalty shouldn't be levied lightly, and not every murder case should be applied the death penalty, but only certain types of cases. Levying the death penalty should only be done after much deliberation. . . . Thanks for such a thoughtful, insightful article!

H.C., via e-mail

✉ Well done—I pray that more students will join your group. You are the future of a great country that the world has looked up to. May God continue to bless your efforts to stand up for Him in an increasingly godless world. With young people like you, there is hope for the future.

D. and B.F., Surrey, B.C., Canada



COMMENTARY

Eternal and Natural Law: *The Foundation of Morals and Law*

BY LUIZ SÉRGIO SOLIMEO

With morals and natural law under siege today, and the liberal agenda's crosshairs targeting our right to voice our moral convictions, we must be prepared to defend our position's legitimacy.¹ Either we accept that the foundation of morals and law lies in God's wisdom or we become mired in the quicksand of today's relativism.

Without Objective Moral Law, Chaos Follows

For moral order to exist, there must be an objective moral law easily perceived, common to all men and obliging to all equally. Otherwise, everything would be subject to men's fantasies or to the rulers' whims, leading to social chaos and tyranny. Today we witness complete scorn for any moral rule that restrains

individual behavior, especially in sexual matters, and a kind of legislative/judicial dictatorship imposing unnatural laws on society. On the one hand, liberal judges approve death by starvation, abortion "rights" and favor the homosexual agenda while on the other hand they remove religious symbols from public places.

Moral Law Is Connatural to Man

Without an objective moral law, social order is impossible. Therefore, an objective moral law must exist to guide human behavior, and prevent that individual freedom and the good of society be endangered. Not only must moral law be objective but also be in accordance with man's nature, that is, connatural with him. If what the law commands, forbids and allows did not resonate deep within man's conscience, the only thing keeping man from breaking the law would be the fear of the police. In that case, morality would depend entirely on the number of policemen, and each man would need a policeman to watch him at all times. But then, as Juvenal, a pagan Roman satirist, put it, "*Sed quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*" "But who shall watch the watchmen?"

In that case, morality would depend entirely on the number of policemen, and each man would need a policeman to watch him at all times. But then, as Juvenal, a pagan Roman satirist, put it, "Sed quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" "But who shall watch the watchmen?"



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The Law and the Will of the Legislator

Let us consider another point. All law is a manifestation of the will of a legislator

If there were no objective moral law that resonates within each man's conscience, the only "solution" to chaos would be to establish a police state. But then, "who shall watch the watchmen"?



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who imposes, commands, forbids, permits and punishes. If the law is only a fruit of man's will, how can it be imposed upon other men? Since we all have the same nature, the will of any man is equal to that of another, and no one man can impose his will on another. Therefore, for a man-made law to bind other men, it must proceed from a will superior to man's will. For a law to be effective, it must originate in the God's divine will.

Saint Paul makes this clear when he affirms that all authority comes from God: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers: for there is no power but from God: and those that are, are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation."²

This is the solution—a human legislator is only the representative of the Supreme Legislator, and when we obey the will of the human legislator, we submit to God's will, not to a man's will.

The law that precedes all human law is called Eternal Law. How can we prove through reason the existence of Eternal Law?

The Laws of Nature

We begin by observing reality. As we contemplate the universe, we sense a harmony, an order that reverberates deeply in our souls and fills us with peace and awe. Order is the proper disposition of things according to their end. Saint Thomas Aquinas teaches that the order of the universe is not random but of God.

As Supreme Wisdom, God could not

As we contemplate the universe, we sense a harmony, an order that reverberates deeply in our souls and fills us with peace and awe.

create without a goal in mind. Being infinite, God has in Himself all that is necessary to the perfection of His nature. Therefore, the goal of Creation could only be God's extrinsic glory. This goal is what orders and gives meaning to the universe.

The order of the universe is only possible because created beings are endowed with perfection, with laws that guide them to their individual and general finality. For instance, all celestial bodies move in an orderly manner following a specific pattern. In a word, with the Psalmist we must say, "The heavens shew forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands."³ Thus, laws direct the whole universe. What about man?

Intelligent Beings and the Laws of Nature

In this orderly universe—guided by the laws of nature that God uses to direct things—there are creatures that, though having material bodies, are endowed with a spiritual soul superior to matter: human beings.

The laws of nature compel material things to react in a predetermined man-

ner. These are applicable to the human body, not to the soul. Would man in his superior part, the soul, not also have laws to help him understand and make decisions? In a universe guided by laws, could the creature whose intelligence and free will place him above all others be the only one not guided by laws? Of course not. In his intelligence and will, man is also guided by laws that help him without impairing his liberty. He is naturally subject to the laws of logic that direct his reasoning, and to the principles of morals that direct his behavior.

These laws that guide men have been made by God.

Eternal Law

In order to explain Eternal Law, Saint Thomas Aquinas makes a comparison: just as an artisan conceives a project, such as a stained glass window, or a ruler conceives a law before executing it, so does God, before creating something, conceive in His Divine Wisdom the idea that will serve as a model for the being He wanted to create. And since for God there is no time, He conceived Creation and its laws from all eternity. This is why we call *eternal* the laws that Infinite

Ancient Greek pottery portraying the arrest of Antigone. In Sophocles' play, Antigone disregarded the unjust command of the tyrant Creon to leave her brother's corpse unburied. In facing the tyrant, she upheld the superiority of eternal and natural law.



Divine Wisdom conceived. “Accordingly,” says Saint Thomas, “Eternal law is nothing else than the type of Divine Wisdom, as directing all actions and movements.”⁴

Natural Law

Saint Thomas Aquinas explains that natural law is nothing more than the rational creature’s participation in the Eternal Law. Its general precept, from which all the others follow, is that “good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided.”

By his natural reason, man perceives what is good or bad for him. He preserves his life, his property; he tends to marry and procreate. At the same time, the fact that he shares the same nature with all men creates a natural link of fraternity to his fellow men. Thus, man perceives the goodness of his life, the legitimacy of his property and the sanctity of his marriage; and he knows that it is bad to kill, to steal someone’s property or to commit adultery. He also knows the end of each of his acts and how they must be in accordance with happiness on this earth and eternal beatitude.

As a consequence, he knows it is wrong to transform the means that help him accomplish an act into the finality of that act. For instance, if he did not take some pleasure in eating, an act that is fundamental for maintaining his life and health, he would tend to neglect eating. The same goes for procreation. If some pleasure were not linked to it, it would also be neglected, thereby causing problems for the perpetuation of the human race.

But, if man transforms pleasure, which is a means that facilitates the abovementioned acts, into an end in itself, he goes against his own reason that shows it as a disorder. And in doing so he contradicts natural law and violates the objective norm of morality. As further proof to this point, Saint Paul taught the Romans that the natural law is inscribed in man’s heart.⁵

Disorder as a Sin

Saint Thomas Aquinas affirms that order is connatural with nature, and thus, when something is disordered, it does not proceed from nature. We can say that disorder is unnatural. Therefore, to disobey a law is to disobey God, and since God is the Author of natural law, to disobey natural law is to sin, and sin is a disorder.⁶

Universality of the Natural Law

Being rooted in human nature, natural law is *universal* and *immutable* because it applies to the entire human race equally. It commands and forbids consistently, everywhere and always. All men who have the use of reason recognize natural law. This knowledge is incomplete in young children and impaired in insane people. The same occurs with savages, since extreme cases of savagery can obscure the acknowledgement of natural law. Extreme religious or moral degradation can cause the same phenomenon. History registers several examples of religions engaging in human sacrifice as with the Carthaginians, and Aztecs and “sacred” prostitution in the case of the Phoenicians.⁷

Even the Pagans Knew About Eternal Law and Natural Law

Historically, even pagan cultures had the notion of Eternal Law and natural law. Thus, in *Antigone*, Sophocles writes of a tyrant, Creon, who upon conquering a city forbids that the corpse of the city’s leader be buried. Antigone, the sister of the city leader, defied this cruel law and buried her brother. She is summoned before Creon:

Creon: Tell me briefly—not in some lengthy speech—were you aware there was a proclamation forbidding what you did?

Antigone: I’d heard of it. How could I not? It was public knowledge.

Creon: And yet you dared to break those very laws?

Antigone: Yes. Zeus did not announce those laws to me. And Justice living with the gods below sent no such laws for men. I did not think anything which you proclaimed strong enough to let a mortal override the gods and their unwritten and unchanging laws. They’re not just for today or yesterday, but exist forever, and no one knows where they first appeared.⁸

Positive Law

Positive laws are those that God or man enacts, set as precept and command obedience under threat of punishment. In the first case, we have Divine Positive Law (for instance, the Decalogue). In the second case, we have human positive law, which is made by human legislators.

Human positive law must be based on natural law, and not on anyone's whims, popular consensus or historical circumstances. When positive law is not based on natural law, it is not a true law. We are not obliged to obey it, and sometimes cannot obey it, as in *Antigone*.

Objective Moral Law Versus "Choice"

If we deny in theory or in practice the objectivity of moral law, we transform the moral act into a mere "personal choice." Many declare, "It is my conscience that decides what a moral act is." It is true that conscience guided by reason judges whether something is good or bad, but to judge correctly conscience must apply correct moral principles, which are the objective norms that must guide our actions. In other words, personal conscience does not create the norm of morality: it only applies the moral rules embodied in the natural law.

Liberals confuse these two things and convert morals into a capricious personal choice. By claiming that one can "choose" to act as one wishes they deny the objectivity of the moral law and the fact that all men have a fundamental notion of good and evil.

Moral Chaos and the Revolutionary Process

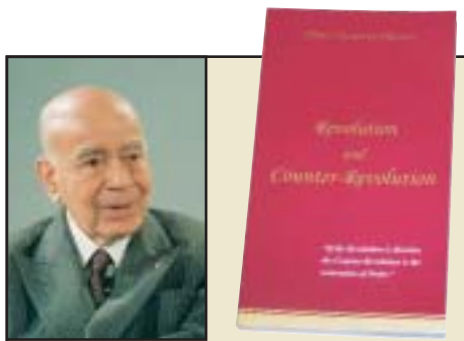
Today's moral chaos is the consequence of the revolutionary process that Professor Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira called the "Revolution," and denounced and analyzed in his masterpiece, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*. He saw this chaos as a result of the abandonment of the basic principles of Catholic doctrine and of Christian Civilization.⁹

Professor Corrêa de Oliveira emphasized that the loss of the sense of sin is one of the main causes of the current crisis. And he presented, as an important task for the Counter-Revolution, to revive the notion of good and evil, of sin in general, Original Sin and actual sin.¹⁰ Thus, the notion of Eternal Law and natural law, as the basis of morals and the law, is of crucial importance nowadays.

More people are longing for something they have never really known: Christian Civilization. There is a widespread notion that we must return to the basics, to the essentials of life, to the Eternal Law and natural law, to the Truth.

At the Apex of Revolution, an Opportunity for Counter-Revolution

If it is true that the moral fiber of society is disintegrating and we are entering a time of persecution for Catholics, it is also true that this tragic situation offers hope. The Revolution is an evil process. But its power lies in disguise and hypocrisy, like with the devil. That is why Our Lord defined the devil as "a liar, and the father thereof."¹¹ And Saint Paul admonishes us that "Satan himself transformeth himself into an angel of light."¹² But when the Revolution proclaims that the vice against nature is a reason for "pride" and that a mother can "choose" to kill her baby, its true hideous face begins to appear and consequently its power of seduction weakens.



Revolution and Counter-Revolution
By Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira

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"The Truth Shall Make You Free"

Although many are seduced by the power of the Revolution, those who wish to "counter" it have something the deceived do not. They have the force of truth and the power of grace. In spite of the general confusion and chaos, many people harbor a growing disgust for the lies of the Revolution, its ugliness, tyranny and darkness.

Slowly but surely, to use Professor Corrêa de Oliveira's metaphor, more and more people are getting off the train of Revolution and turning toward the ideals of Counter-Revolution. More people are longing for something they have never really known: Christian Civilization. There is a widespread notion that we must return to the basics, to the essentials of life, to the Eternal Law and natural law, to the Truth. In a word, people are beginning to long for the promise of Our Savior, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."¹³

And since without grace we can do nothing, what could be better than to resort continuously to Our Lady, who the Church calls, seat of the Incarnate Wisdom and throne of the Divine Word Himself? ■

Notes:

1. This article is based on a lecture given to TFP supporters in April 2007.
2. Romans 13:1-2.
3. Psalm 18:2.
4. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II q. 93, a. 1.
5. Cf. Romans 2:14-15.
6. Cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 71, a. 1.
7. Some apostate kings of Judah adopted, at times, the Phoenician cult of Astarte and Baal with the "sacred" prostitution and were condemned by the Prophets (cf. I Kings 14:23-24; II Kings 23:7).
8. Sophocles, *Antigone*, trans. Ian Johnston; <http://www.mala.bc.ca/%7Ejohnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm>.
9. Cf. "Revolution and Counter-Revolution," http://www.tfp.org/what_we_think/rcronline.html.
10. Cf. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution* (Hanover, PA: American Tradition, Family and Property, 2002), 73; http://www.tfp.org/what_we_think/rcr.pdf.
11. John 8:44.
12. 2 Corinthians 11:14.
13. John 8:32.

Chapter XXII

Clash of Cultures

Part Two: Moctezuma and the Aztecs

BY JEREMIAS WELLS

Many of us, at least occasionally, have a tendency of viewing activities of past centuries, especially the sixteenth, through the prism of contemporary sensibilities. These frequently reflect a modern mind-set shaped by liberal political correctness that was totally absent in the motivations and convictions of the principal players of that century.

Although pioneered by the Portuguese and Spanish, overseas expansion among the heathen soon captivated the adventurous spirit of the English and other European nations. All adhered to the law of nations (*jus gentium*), which conferred the right to bring civilization and Christianity to the Indians and in return subject them to the authority of their sovereign.

We must also admit certain realities. Although Christian doctrine stated that all men were equal in the eyes of God because all mankind had descended from Adam, certain distinctions were drawn based on religious and cultural viewpoints. European Christians of the sixteenth century saw pagans as inferior peoples because they had never known Christ, and the Jews and the Moors were held in suspicion as potential enemies because they had rejected Him, and the latter certainly returned that animosity.

The distinction between hostile religions was not lost on the Spanish for they had endured Moslem territorial oppression for almost 800 years. When Ferdinand and Isabella made their triumphal entry into the Moorish city of Granada in 1492 to receive the sword of victory, Christopher Columbus stood there watching.

The same religious zeal and desire for glory provided the momentum that carried the Spanish across the ocean seas to America, which became an extension of the Reconquest. That Cortes followed the same crusading inspiration should not surprise us, for both his father and uncle fought in the campaign against Granada. In his letters to Charles V, which are considered important literary works, he often referred to Indian temples as mosques and indicated that the service of God required him to bring the unconverted into the fold or to make war on those who refused. Moreover, like many other thoughtful Catholics of his day, he saw that the world was governed by two forces: God and Satan and that God had chosen his sovereign to

remove the devil from the Indies and his power over the Indians.

Hernan Cortes

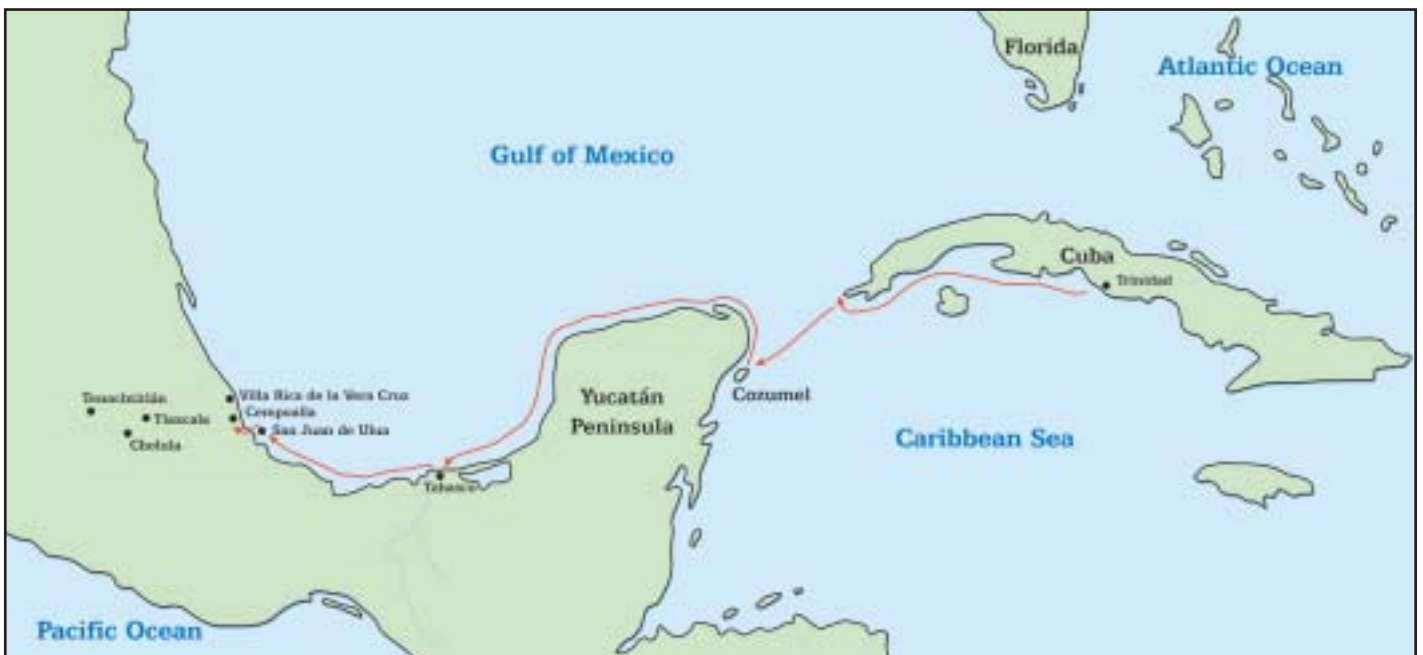
Cortes was born into a family of the lesser nobility in the harsh, uncompromising Extremadura region of Spain where most men learn to ride and bear arms as a second vocation. At the age of fourteen he entered the University of Salamanca, one of the four great learning centers in Christendom, where with an exceptionally astute mind he studied Latin grammar and law. After two years, he found the constraints of academia irksome and spent the next few years wandering about looking for adventure and plying his trade as a public notary.

The educated adventurer sailed to the Caribbean, arriving in Hispaniola, Columbus' favorite island, in 1504. Six years later he accompanied Diego Velasquez as secretary in his capture of Cuba, soon to be the staging area for the conquest of Mexico. Heretofore, Cortes achieved his moderate success owing to his enormous skill in diplomacy and the art of handling men.

Velasquez sent out two expeditions to explore the Mexican coast. The first one was ambushed, badly mauled and returned with the captain-general mortally wounded after the crew suffered overwhelming hardship and thirst. The second failed because the captain lacked effective leadership and succumbed to overcautiousness. The qualities necessary to conquer and settle Mexico against millions of homicidal Indians required a man of great inner strength and vision, qualities that Cortes possessed in abundance.



Spanish Conquistador Hernan Cortes (1485-1547).



Hernan Cortes' route from Cuba to Mexico. After establishing the town of Vera Cruz, Cortes made it clear that retreat was not an option by burning his ships.

What Velasquez wanted was a man completely subservient to him and feared that the shrewd commander would cast off his authority as he had done to the Columbus family when he seized Cuba. Nevertheless, the corpulent governor allowed Cortes to organize the expedition by recruiting soldiers, enlisting ships and their men, and securing supplies. Just before embarkation, the governor tried to recall him, but the young adventurer was not going to allow petty motives to stand in the way of a glorious enterprise that would be pleasing to both God and his king and sailed off into greatness and a date with destiny.

Cortes roughly followed the same route and procedure of the first two expeditions with the exception that he brought to his task greater determination and preparation and a stronger faith in God. He landed on an island off the northeast coast of the Yucatan Peninsula, then sailed past the northern end and halfway down the west coast where he encountered fierce opposition. Outnumbered 300 to 1, he routed the natives because he had the foresight to bring heavier artillery and 13 horses, the first the Indians had ever seen. After killing 800 with only 2 dead and 14 wounded on his side, the intrepid adventurer moved 300 miles up the Gulf of

Mexico where he reconnoitered the area for a base camp. There he gleaned the outstanding information about a huge, wealthy empire 200 miles inland from that point and its powerful emperor, Moctezuma.

Aztec Degeneration

When one studies the pre-Christian, pagan empires, a continual pattern of overwhelming rapacity and cruelty emerges. However, the Aztecs carried the imposition of human pain and muti-

The Aztecs carried the imposition of human pain and mutilation to extremes never imagined by the Assyrians, Babylonians or the Seleucids during the time of Antiochus IV, which almost obliterated the faith among the Jews during the Machabean resistance.

lation to extremes never imagined by the Assyrians, Babylonians or the Seleucids during the time of Antiochus IV, which almost obliterated the faith among the Jews during the Machabean resistance.

With all available land occupied, the Aztecs, the last, most feared and least humane tribe to arrive in the Valley of Mexico, built up a fabulous city, Tenochtitlán, on the waters of Lake Texcoco. Using fear and ruthless aggression, they then subjugated the neighboring tribes to their form of brutal worship and political control.

As the Mexica extended their dominion, they sent word to distant cities and tribal compounds to accept Aztec sovereignty, pay tribute and to turn over a regular supply of young men for sacrificial victims, for from the middle of the fifteenth century until the victory of Cortes they used human sacrifice as the chief instrument of intimidation and control. If the various tribal units complied quickly, the cost remained minimal. However if they dalled, the cost increased. For those who refused, the Aztec legions came and slaughtered until the recalcitrants cried out for mercy. The conquerors then dragged a large segment of the population, sometimes numbering in the thousands, back to Tenochtitlán to be

He overcame the lack of enthusiasm in his own soldiers by resorting to one of most audacious maneuvers in the history of daring exploits. He burned his own ships.

sacrificed to the great god of creation, Huitzilopochli.

The priests lined up the victims before the great temple, dragged them up the long staircase one by one to the top and handed them over to six priests. Four priests grabbed the next victim, one on each limb, turned him over and slammed him on his back onto a large stone. The fifth slid a hook over his throat to squelch the screams and the officiant with a forceful, clean stroke split open the rib cage, reached into the chest cavity and ripped out his beating heart and then kicked him over the side. In the decades before the arrival of Cortes, the Mexica introduced more excruciating forms of torture and violent death to symbolize their power, but the above description should be sufficient to illustrate their ruthless disregard for human compassion, benevolence and justice that should be a characteristic of any true civilization.

Moctezuma II

Between the ascension of Moctezuma in 1503 and the arrival of Cortes less

than two decades later, a profound degeneration infected the Mexican Empire. The members of the royal family (ruling lords) proliferated at an enormous rate due to the extravagant indulgence in the harem system. They kept hundreds of concubines and each member produced well over a hundred children that created a bloated upper class, especially when the results of the promiscuity of the second and third levels of the lesser lords is added to the total. A process of dehumanization resulted that turned the peasants into serfs and then slaves in order to supply the food, clothing and luxury items demanded by the highborn parasites.

The Mexica extracted a ruinous tribute from the conquered nations and

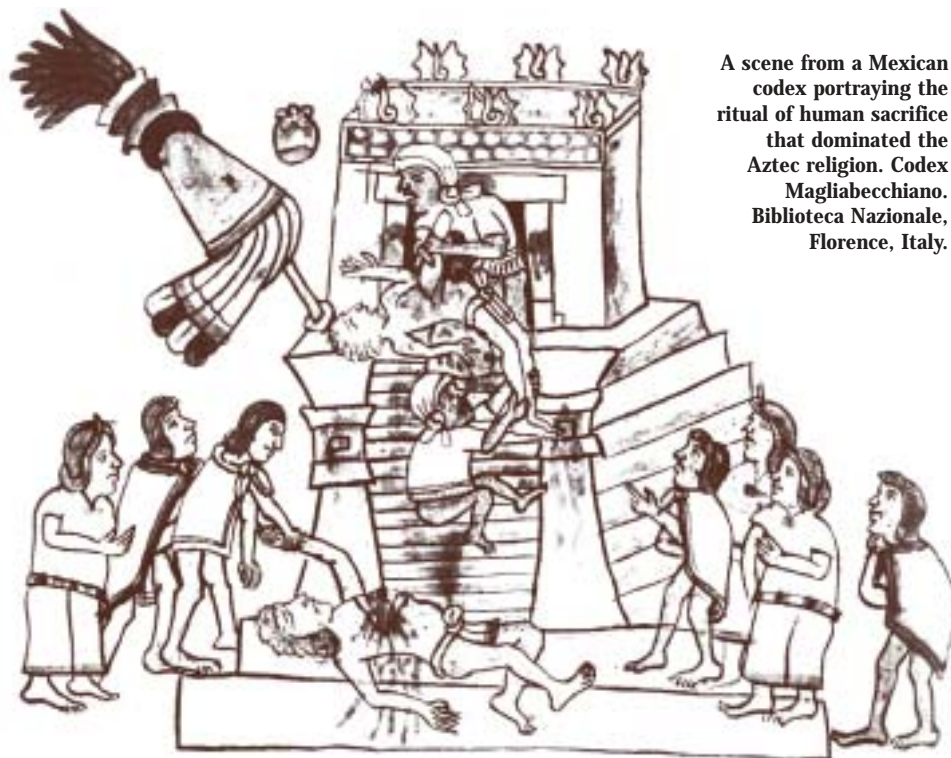
tribes that reached one third of their production, not to mention the thousands of young men required for sacrifice to their demonic deities. Only two classes existed in the Valley of Mexico, those born for pleasure and those born to perpetual servitude. Resistance and frequent insurrection arose in the provinces and distant cities where control was hindered by the distance from the capital city. Closer to home, many potential and dangerous enemies lay waiting for an opportunity to bring down the knavish cause of their torment. One city-state, Tlaxcala, halfway between the coast and the lake district that always maintained its independence, would eventually provide significant support to the Spanish.

The foundation of the empire built on fear and oppression began to crumble as unrest and rebellion increased. Strange natural phenomena such as an unusually bright comet or a destructive flooding of the lake were whipped up by hysteria into omens of imperial collapse. However, when Moctezuma heard reports of strange floating castles arriving offshore manned by men with white skin and dark beards who had power over thunder and lightning, his arrogant self-confidence was shattered and he entered into a period of self-doubt and uncertainty.

The advice from his principal counselors ran all the way from resistance by force to providing a friendly reception since the Conquistadors told the coastal natives that they were ambassadors from a foreign prince. The superstitious mind of the emperor, however, chose the middle ground, which is often the least viable. He sent then an embassy bearing rich impressive gifts, but refused permission to allow them to approach Tenochtitlán.

Troubles of Cortes

Meanwhile on the beach, Cortes had his own problems. Nothing tries the patience of a soldier as the idleness of a military camp, especially when he suffers from excessive heat and irritating



A scene from a Mexican codex portraying the ritual of human sacrifice that dominated the Aztec religion. Codex Magliabecchiano. Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence, Italy.

Continued from back cover...

buildings lucky to last a few generations, much less centuries. Variety gives way to abject simplification and soulless standardization. Industrialization minimizes exception and inequalities, limiting creativity.

Soon, the "spirit" of the machine becomes an autocratic force that man must recognize, dictating to man who must adapt to what the machine produces. Immense proportions, hard lines, devoid of curves and adornment, cold steel, sleek glass, and noisy streets leave the human soul cold. The styles may be "in" but they never quite make it "into" man's innermost sanctum, the place that pines for the laws of his God-made nature.

Although the ultimate "functional" man is what modern cities produce, the stress of dehumanization eventually sets in, and man pines over a brochure of a little medieval town. He dreams of a smaller place with enough spiritual space for his soul to breathe and to spread the wings of contemplation; a place where he can feel as a unique human being with a name and



The medieval town of Assisi, Italy. Proportion, quality and variety combine in this town to give "breathing space" to modern man's soul, often crushed by the disproportion of metropolises.

*Something deep within
one's being rejoices at
the stone buildings with
two-foot-thick walls,
withstanding proudly
the test of time, their
age an adornment
rather than a blemish.*

not just a number, a place where he can touch real stone and not composite material, a place where his eyes may delight in the variety of centuries of artistic inspiration.

Which city is bigger? Physically, little Assisi could fit into a couple of blocks of the huge metropolis. But the place that contributed to create the universally known founder, crusader, mystic and saint, cannot be small. If our readers are ever in Assisi, Italy, we invite them to visit this jewel of medieval ingenuity and judge for themselves. ■

* "The Poor One."

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insects. The questionable loyalty of many of his troops who were followers of Velasquez added to the problems of the wily commander. While pondering his next move, Cortes struck up a friendship with the Totonacs, one of the oppressed tribes that provided him with invaluable intelligence about the growing discontent inside the Aztec Empire, along with several hundred men who served as laborers and porters.

The keen mind of Cortes quickly saw the value of the internal friction as a tool to overthrow the barbarous regime, yet few military commanders have sat in such a precarious position. The base from which he departed was in control of an inveterate enemy who would imprison him at the first oppor-

tunity, if indeed he did not execute him. Half his men still loyally followed Velasquez and the other half thought their families and farms on Cuba offered better prospects than tangling with several million vicious cannibals. He resolved the political problem by legally transforming the military camp into a civil community according to Spanish law in which he was well versed from his studies at Salamanca. After he built the town of Vera Cruz (True Cross), he chose as town officials a man from his own party and one from the opposition, and the entire company then elected their shrewd leader captain general and chief justice, thus ending the jurisdiction of Velasquez. Henceforth he had to

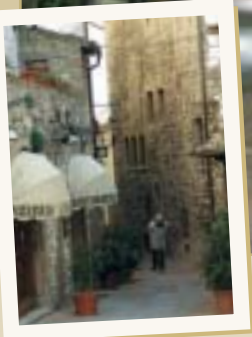
answer only to Charles V and dispatched a ship laden with gold and other treasures to the Spanish court with the news. He overcame the lack of enthusiasm in his own soldiers by resorting to one of the most audacious maneuvers in the history of daring exploits. He burned his own ships. No options remained: move forward into enemy territory or die on the beach. ■

Bibliographical Note:

Although most histories of Mesoamerica touch on the violence of Aztec life, at least to some extent, the most complete picture can be found in R.C. Padden, *The Hummingbird and the Hawk* (Ohio State U. P., 1967). Written in 1843, William H. Prescott's *The Conquest of Mexico* is, nevertheless, still useful. It is available in several editions.

Medieval Town and Modern Metropolis: *Which is BIGGER?*

BY ANTHONY MILLER



The photos above are of Assisi, Italy, home to Saint Francis, “*Il Poverello*,”* whose great soul is so rich that it fills this enchanting town. Even the official tourist guide claims the saint’s spirit hovers over the city. “The peace of Assisi is so thick you can cut it,” comments one pilgrim. Attested by many visitors, this fact is certainly the main reason for this peace, but there is also a natural reason for the well-being one feels when walking narrow winding streets lined with quaint houses, as one looks down a picturesque alley, as one crosses a graceful arch or marvels at a corner shrine. This factor, which was present before Saint Francis was born, cradled him, nurtured him and helped his spirit soar.

This factor is proportionality.

In medieval Assisi everything answers to a need in us for proportionality to ourselves. There are no mammoth buildings, no gigantic skyscrapers, no roaring subways and no massive malls. As one walks upon cobbled pavements, listening to the soft echo of one’s footsteps, a wonderful soothing feeling takes over. No one feels alienated. There are no “numbers” in this town, only names.

Another factor is quality.

Something deep within one’s being rejoices at the stone buildings with two-foot-thick walls, withstanding proudly the test of time, their age an adornment rather than a blemish.

Somehow those walls live with the personalities of those that have made the town great, and look down on one with the benign composure of centuries-old wisdom.

Another factor is variety.

The medieval artists’ expert hands carved the stone into an endless variation of shapes and forms, bringing forth the exception in the creativity of each artist. One cannot help but smile while walking through such a town filled with silent eternal artistic testimonies.

Proportionality rests, quality pleases and variety inspires. In Assisi, one’s spirit ascends.

Modern Contrast

In this other photo, we see a modern industrial metropolis, the result of the power of the machine. The advent of industry, with all its promises for the betterment of humanity, soon forgot serving man. Along with the practicality of the machine, came the “spirit” of the machine spelled in one talismanic word, “functionality.”

Something in the very dynamism of functionality ignores proportionality in favor of megaprojects. As buildings grow gigantic, machinery proliferates and noise increases. Quality is sacrificed to quantity as the production line sends up



AMBIENCES,
CUSTOMS AND
CIVILIZATIONS

Continued on reverse...