
Angélica Thumala

Maria Olivia Mönckeberg, *El imperio del Opus Dei en Chile*

Santiago du Chili, Ediciones B Grupo Z Santiago de Chile, 2003, 714 p. (index, illustr., annexes)

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tente de proposer une typologie des attitudes religieuses depuis l'abandon de la foi jusqu'à sa réaffirmation malgré tout et le renforcement de la conscience religieuse dans l'épreuve.

Yves Chevalier.

128.34 MÖNCKEBERG (Maria Olivia).

El Imperio del Opus Dei en Chile. Santiago du Chili, Ediciones B Grupo Z Santiago de Chile, 2003, 714 p. (index, illustr., annexes).

M.O.M. is a journalist with a distinguished career in the press of opposition to the regime of the now retired General Augusto Pinochet. She worked for the magazine *Ercilla* (1973-1977) and was co-founder of the legendary *Hoy*, where she was editor of the economics section between 1977 and 1981. This author is also co-author of the book *Crimen bajo estado de sitio* about the murder in 1985 of Jose Manuel Parada, Santiago Nattino and Manuel Guerrero. After working for the now disappeared centre-left newspaper *La Epoca* (1987-1990) she wrote *El Saqueo de los grupos economicos al estado chileno* (2001) where she described the privatization of nationalized companies undertaken by the military government as a political strategy destined to keep certain groups in power even after the regime's end.

Following on from her research into the origins of some of Chile's main economic conglomerates, the A. pursues in this, her latest project, the task of unveiling the reality behind what she calls Opus Dei's 'empire', to highlight that the strength and extent of the movement's influence is much larger than commonly believed. The author questions why Opus Dei remained in the shadows since its arrival in the country in 1950 until today, when, after discreet proselytism by its members and a focus on the education of the elites it has gained undeniable power. The beatification of the movement's founder, San Jose Maria Escriva de Balaguer in Rome in October 2002, attended by more than 300 thousand people, has not only helped legitimize the movement but has also encouraged its participants to more public exposure.

The theme that runs throughout the book, a thorough journalistic investigation prepared for over a year, is the reluctance of the members of Opus Dei to reveal their true aims or the organization's internal dealings. Examples of the mystery surrounding the movement are the alleged unwillingness of its members to identify themselves as such, as well as the sensitive issue of the movement's finances, which are managed by individual members because the movement

as such has no property. The author researches and makes public both the names and the activities of the members of "la Obra" (the work). On some occasions the reader is left with an after-taste of conspiracy theory, but the book is well documented and provides abundant interview material. A key contribution that it makes is its account of a history that was unknown in Chile: that of the arrival of the movement in Santiago and its growth among the upper class. M.O.M., herself a member of a traditional Santiago family, is intrigued by the reasons that have motivated a great number of her kin to join the organization. Not only have school friends and relatives joined Opus Dei but also the school of journalism where she studied, the *Escuela de Periodismo* at the *Universidad Catolica*, was founded by, among others, the first Chilean Opus Dei priest, Jose Miguel Ibanez Langlois. M.O.M. provides rich descriptions of the experiences of two former classmates of hers at the school of the *Monjas Francesas* who became numerarias (a special condition within Opus Dei: a lay version of a nun). The book is generous in providing names, not only of the families that welcomed Balaguer's envoy, Adolfo Rodriguez in 1950 and who helped him make his way among the upper sector of Chilean society, but also of all the numerarios (lay "monks"), and super-numerarios (unlike numerarios they can marry and have children) that arrived from Spain, as well as the names of those who joined the movement in Chile, the companies they belong to and the commercial transactions they have made on behalf of the movement, especially in buying and selling property. For Opus Dei, the latter is a matter of great importance since they own, among other properties, several houses (where they provide accommodation for students from outside Santiago as well as for numerarios and numerarias) five schools, located in the richest areas of the capital (very popular among the elite), two schools in a poor area, and a private university that is, according to the A., the symbol of the movement's power.

Those unfamiliar with Opus Dei will learn that the movement was granted the status of Personal Prelature by John Paul II in 1982 and that it counts eighteen bishops among the 80 thousand members it claims to have in the world. According to M.O.M.'s research two thousand five hundred of them live in Chile. The figure includes priests, numerarios, supernumerarios and agregados (aggregates), people involved with the movement but who do not follow the strict life plan that members follow. The plan, in the case of numerarios, consists of a daily routine that starts at around six in the morning with prayers and mass and continues with each individual's professional work, the

product of which is given complete to the movement. Also part of the life plan are the weekly practice of confession and the use of 'disciplinas y silicios' (the self-infliction of pain by whipping the back and tying a leather band with small metal attachments to the thigh). The interviewees explain the purpose of these practices is self-perfection and try, in vain, to persuade the A. that the rule of obedience is much more difficult to bear than the discomfort produced by the silicio.

With the help of the testimonies of former and current numerarios and supernumerarios of both sexes, M.O.M. presents us with what would, in principle, explain the willingness to follow the rigorous life plan of Opus Dei: its 'vocation'. Repeated in a standardized way by the interviewees, the ideals of Opus Dei appear extremely simple: sanctify yourself through work, "each one in their own job, in their home, with their children, with their husband, with their family." (p. 49). For the A. this simplicity is, nevertheless, very powerful. Opus Dei has a strong cultural impact in Chilean society. Their schools and charitable works reproduce, as M.O.M. shows, the patterns of stratification predominant in the wider society: gender and class separations are strictly kept in the movement's houses and educational institutions. These are important points to make. Yet no critique is elaborated beyond the presentation of these issues. Considering that the author's intention appears to be critical it is somewhat disappointing to find the only unfavorable commentaries quoted in the book are either tangential (the famous theologian Von Balthasar is cited only in regard to a comment he makes about Camino, Balaguer's famous book) or weak and outdated (from the liberation theologian Jose Comblin).

Despite its lack of analytical content, the book conveys a good idea of the 'moral climate' among the upper class during the sixties and seventies, their search for ways of realizing the Christian ideals learned in school and university through different vocations, and how some of them were drawn to Opus Dei. M.O.M.'s work is of great value as a document for a much-needed study of Chile's religious culture and also as an unusual insight into the life of Opus Dei generally.

Angélica Thumala.

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PARAÏSO (Jean-Yves).

Catholicisme et socialisme en Allemagne (1848-1933). Aux origines du catholicisme de

gauche. Paris, L'Harmattan, 2003, 406 p. (bibliogr., annexes).

Ce remarquable travail d'histoire des idées offre, pour la première fois en langue française, une vue d'ensemble sur les origines du catholicisme de gauche en Allemagne.

L'auteur commence en rappelant la figure étonnante de Franz von Baader, penseur catholique conservateur du début du XIX^e siècle et philosophe romantique, qui va, bien des années avant le *Manifeste Communiste*, dénoncer les maléfices du capitalisme et la condition misérable des « prolétaires » (c'est lui qui introduira ce terme en Allemagne). Cependant, malgré quelques homologies structurelles et affinités virtuelles, il n'y aura, au XIX^e siècle, aucune convergence possible entre l'anti-capitalisme catholique, romantique et passéiste, et celui, radicalement progressiste, des socialistes : il s'agit de visions du monde diamétralement opposées. Ceci explique aussi l'échec de l'éphémère rapprochement de l'évêque de Mayance, Wilhelm von Ketteler, au mouvement socialiste, dirigé à l'époque (années 1860) par Ferdinand Lassalle : il était fondé sur un formidable malentendu, qui allait bientôt se dissiper. Avec l'essor du mouvement socialiste et du marxisme, c'est la réaction hostile qui va prédominer dans le camp catholique, que ce soit avec l'encyclique *Rerum Novarum*, ou avec l'offensive anti-socialiste des jésuites allemands Heinrich Pesch et Viktor Cathrein.

Ce n'est qu'après la Première Guerre mondiale que va apparaître, dans l'Allemagne de Weimar, un courant socialiste religieux. Ses précurseurs sont des pasteurs protestants suisses, Hermann Kutter et Leonhard Ragaz, partisans d'une lecture sociale de l'Évangile, qui voit dans le socialisme une préparation du Royaume de Dieu. Dans un article important de 1929, « Qu'est-ce que le socialisme religieux ? », Ragaz se prononce pour l'humanisme de Marx contre le dogmatisme du « marxisme établi », et légitime le socialisme non par la science mais par un acte de foi, une espérance messianique. Deux courants politico-religieux distincts vont se constituer dans cette mouvance :

I – La Fédération (*Bund*) des socialistes religieux d'Allemagne, fondée en 1926, qui se réclame de Marx, mais se trouve divisée entre les partisans des deux principales forces du mouvement ouvrier allemand : les socialistes et les communistes. Son président, Erwin Eckert, décide en 1931 d'adhérer au KPD (PC allemand), mais se trouve illico écarté de son poste et démissionne du *Bund*.