

JESÚS INFANTE'S BOOK ON THE OPUS DEI: THREE LETTERS

Concerning Mr. Jato's review of Ynfantes' calumnious book in the September [1972] issue of *Hispania*, [p. 577] let me attempt to set the record straight regarding the worldwide Catholic lay association Opus Dei.

The men and women who belong to Opus Dei—now numbering nearly 60,000, from all five continents, representing some 80 nationalities, of which Spaniards constitute a clear minority—are ordinary citizens who strive to live as Christians, each one in his own state, profession or occupation, and circumstances. Each one is his own man. Each enjoys the same freedom as any other Christian, the same autonomy as any other citizen. They are as different and varied as any random selection of 60,000 persons could be.

The only reason they have turned to Opus Dei is to be reinforced in their desires to live Christianity as well as possible. Opus Dei's exclusive mission, in turn, is to offer the spiritual advice and instruction that its members and non-members seek and accept freely. Anyone who thinks that taking one's Christianity seriously will result in following a single "Catholic line" in social, political or economic matters displays crass ignorance not only of Christianity but of the fact that neither the Catholic Church nor, consequently, Opus Dei has ever felt qualified to advance *the* Christian solution to all these questions. Such matters fall outside the realm of competence of both the Church and this strictly spiritual and apostolic association. Grappling with these secular concerns is the exclusive right and duty of laymen, each in his own way, from his particular perspective and set of experiences. No, Opus Dei does not tell its members what to do or think. Rather, it constantly reminds them that, whatever they do or think, they should do it well, increasingly for God and others.

Neither is Opus Dei so bereft of faith in the Good News that it mistakenly thinks that human power, prestige, money, influence, etc., are necessary means to "impose" Christian beliefs and morals. No, the only ambition of members of Opus

Dei as such is a spiritual one: striving for sanctity, union with God. They recognize that the only power and influence is that of good example imprinted upon their deeds of service and their often unspectacular life of hard work. No, Opus Dei is not neo-Caesaro-papism nor Torquemada revivus; it is staunchly committed to giving to Caesar what is his and to God what is His. Can we be surprised if those who think that the claims of Caesar or God cancel out those of the other fail to understand the freedom and concomitant spiritual commitment of Opus Dei members?

I should hope that *Hispania* does not fail to compensate—out of justice and fairness—for the errors aired in its pages last month.

DENNIS M. HELMING
Schuyler Hall, New York, N.Y.

Let me protest Mr. Jato's biased account of *Santa Mafia* in the "Society and Culture" section of *The Hispanic World* (September issue of *Hispania*).

It is dangerous business to refer ideologically to a book professing ignorance of the author and its publishing house, Ruedo Ibérico. Jesús Ynfante, according to Spain's most prominent newspaper, *ABC*, is not a pseudonym, but a college dropout who fled with some of the stolen research of a Spanish journalist to France wherein the better to indulge his Marxist propensities. Not surprisingly, Ruedo Ibérico is commonly know to exhibit Communist tendencies.

May I copy some paragraphs from a book review written by José María Ruiz Gallardón which appeared in *ABC* (Oct. 29, 1970)?

We must understand something very well from the outset, for this book of Jesús Ynfante is essentially, intrinsically, a libel—an expression coined long ago to designate a writing whose aim is to defame persons, things or institutions . . . One can judge and evaluate a book, and others can agree or disagree with that review. But one cannot critically judge an insult. And that is my predicament. This book is no mere attack, not an exercise in contrariness. This is pure and simple outrage . . . a no-holds-barred assault on the honor, prestige and name of per-

sons and institutions . . . How well does this book remind us of the worst of the anti-religious propaganda of the 19th century!

This book has mutilated a great topic, a subject which urgently needs to be dealt with at the level of *Opus Dei* itself . . . It would have been difficult for one single book to commit more mistakes, more incredible and obvious blunders . . .

While neither Ynfante's book nor Jato's reference tell us anything about *Opus Dei*, I'm afraid they do tell us much about the ideological and spiritual bent of Ynfante and Jato—and bent they are.

JORGE J. RODRÍGUEZ-FLORIDO
Univ. of Illinois at Chicago Circle

The recent review of the book *La Santa Mafia* (*Hispania* vol. 55, No. 3, Sept. 1972, pp. 577) contains some factual misinformation and misunderstandings that should be clarified for the sake of *Hispania's* consistently high editorial standards.

The reviewer shows unfamiliarity with *Opus Dei* by missing the title of the well-known book *Camino* by the founder; he gives it as "*El Camino*." He refers to the "highly secret nature, aims, composure, and present status of the movement" when it is not a secret movement.

According to articles and interviews published in *Time*, the *New York Times*, *Le Figaro*, etc. and to conversations with members of *Opus Dei*, the aim is the sanctification of persons from all walks of life in their ordinary occupations. The approach to the idea may be new, but it is not secret.

The review states that *Supernumerarios* contribute "a set portion of their salaries," but in fact they do not. It states that *Cooperadores* are "friends of the *Opus Dei* who help to place members in good positions," when they are actually friends who contribute to the support of schools, residences, etc.

In spite of such factual misinformation, the reviewer confidently states that the book shows "surprisingly few errors of fact." He further states that it is a piece of "sound investigation." If the reviewer knew so little about the subject that he did not detect the errors mentioned, how can he pose as an expert?

The book is easily identifiable as a libelous tract. Such books have been written about every worthwhile endeavor in history, but they should not be confused with sound investigation.
Georgetown Univ.

ROBERT LADO

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