

ARINTERO (Juan González)

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Juan González Arintero, dominican, was one of the most outstanding representatives of the Spanish theology of the first half of the xxth century. He was born in the town of Lugueros on Feb. 24th, 1860. In July 1875, he moved to the Dominican convent of Corias to begin his novitiate, which coincided with the period of restoration of the order in Spain. He lived in the convent of Corias until 1881. He moved to Salamanca to study physical-chemical sciences before completing his studies of theology, this circumstance forced Father Arintero to be, to a certain degree, self-taught in his theological education, since, afterwards, he was dispensed from the schooling of the three pending courses. For the young Arintero, experiencing the culturally superior and spiritually adverse environment of the University of Salamanca, where the evolutionism and the transformism were the most popular theories at that time, and the incredulity and the religious indifferentism were attitudes frequently shown in scientific environments was difficult but a circumstance that benefited him greatly. From his years as university student there is a writing titled *Discurso sobre la excelencia de la teoría de Santo Tomás acerca del conocimiento (Discourse on the excellence of the theory of Saint Thomas about knowledge)*. It is a speech addressed to a university audience on the occasion of the feast of Saint Thomas on Mar. 7th, 1883. At the end of his studies in Salamanca, he was assigned as a science teacher in the School ran by the Order in Vergara (Guipuzcoa). His years in Vergara were of intense scientific and educational activity. At this time, and moved by the desire to demonstrate the compatibility between faith and science, he studied evolutionary theories more closely. In this attempt to show the harmony between the Christian faith and human culture, he published two works in the last years of his stay in Vergara : *El paraíso terrenal y origen celestial del hombre, rey de la creación (The earthly paradise and the heavenly origin of man, king of creation)*, as a series of articles published during the year 1890, and his book *El diluvio universal de la Biblia y de la tradición demostrado por la geología y la prehistoria (The Great Flood of the Bible and the tradition demonstrated by geology and prehistory)*, published between 1891 and 1892. In these works he was in favor of a moderate concordism.

In 1892 he was transferred again to Corias. In this second stage he continued his works about scientific matters and published a series of articles in the magazine *La Ciudad de Dios*, with the title *La universalidad del diluvio (The Universality of the Flood)* and his work *Egipto y Asia resucitados (Egypt and Asia resuscitated)*, and projected an extensive work in eight volumes titles : *La Evolución y la filosofía cristiana (The Evolution and Christian philosophy)*. From this work only the General Introduction and the first volume, entitled *La evolución y la mutabilidad de las especies orgánicas (Evolution and the mutability of organic species)*, were published ; both appeared in 1898. These writings defended a moderate evolutionism, fully concordant with the Catholic doctrine. Also in these years he showed an increased interest in mysticism. Reading authors such as Luis de Granada, Santa Teresa de Jesus, Juan Tauler, Blessed Enrique Susón, as well as the experiences of some people whom he directed spiritually made him realize that attention to mysticism was not only a possibility, but also an inherent duty to his priestly ministry. Therefore, he decided to study in depth spiritual theology.

In May of 1900, the Provincial Chapter of the Order to which Father Arintero attended as the representative of the convent of San Esteban, decided to found a school of higher education in Valladolid, and Arintero was entrusted with its commissioning. In 1901 he published *El Examerón y la Ciencia Moderna (The Examerón and Modern Science)* and in 1904 he published *La Providencia y la Evolución (Providence and Evolution)*. In Valladolid, he also developed an intense activity of spiritual direction, especially among religious women. By 1903, the prestige that Father Arintero had acquired as an apologist for religion, from the scientific field, motivated his superiors to transfer him to Salamanca to teach Apologetics. In this new stage, natural science studies gave way to theological ones. During his second stay in Salamanca he projected, drafted and began to publish his great ecclesiological work, *Desenvolvimiento y vitalidad de la Iglesia (Development and vitality of the Church)*. It is the most important of all his works and consists of four large volumes, each with its own subtitle : *Evolución orgánica, Evolución doctrinal, Evolución mística, Mecanismo divino de los factores de evolución eclesiástica (Organic evolution, Doctrinal evolution, Mystical evolution, Divine mechanism of the factors of ecclesiastical evolution)*.

To Arintero, the Church is a living organism that has to grow, develop and evolve. This evolution takes place on three levels : organic, doctrinal and mystical. The mystical evolution is the action of the Holy Spirit that is carried out, partly, through saints ; this is the most important because it is the engine of the others. In fact, the first volume he published was, precisely, the third of the whole work : *Evolución mística (Mystical Evolution)*, in 1908. The "arinteriana" ecclesiology has been placed in the line of the renovation of J.A. Mölher's or Newman's, who are at the base of the ecclesiological development of the Second Vatican Council.

During his theological teaching in Salamanca he reached his almost definitive orientation toward mysticism, which would make him the true promoter of the "mystical question" in Spain. The mystical question, which polarized spiritual literature in the first three decades of the xxth century, involved the mystical orientation not only of the study of spiritual science but also of lived piety. Its origins must be placed mainly in France around the controversy over some fundamental problems of mysticism raised by the canon of Angers Auguste Saudreau and the Jesuit Augustin François Poulain.

The themes developed were the unity and continuity of spiritual life, the nature of mysticism, species and degrees of contemplation, and so on. Arintero was, in general, on the side of Saudreau but providing a more profound theological understanding. Starting from the unitary conception of the evolutionary process of grace, he defended the unity of the spiritual life and, as result, the universal vocation to mystical life.

The book *Evolución mística (Mystical Evolution)* had a positive reception at the time of its publication and probably this was one of the reasons that contributed to Arintero being required as a teacher in Rome for the recently opened *Angelicum*. He stayed there for a year after which he returned to Salamanca in order to finish the publication of *Desenvolvimiento y vitalidad de la Iglesia (Development and vitality of the Church)*.

His last period as professor extends from December of 1910, when he returns from Rome, until the end of the course 1917-1918. During these years, his transition to mysticism was definitively completed. The year 1913 marks the end of its ecclesiological stage and the beginning of the exclusively mystical stage. This transition was partly motivated by the harshness with which the rest of his ecclesiological work was received. Just as the publication of *Evolución mística (Mystical Evolution)* had been initially welcomed, *Evolución doctrinal (Doctrinal evolution)* was received with mistrust and criticism.

He was accused of modernist and evolutionist, with a criticism that would lasted from 1911 to 1913, although it must be considered the result of the anti-modernist hypersensitivity that prevailed in many Catholics following the promulgation, in 1907, of the encyclical *Pascendi* and the decree *Lamentabili* of Pope Pius X. In February of 1914, after completely abandoning the ecclesiology, he began publishing in *Ciencia Tomista* a series of articles that considered the continuation of *Evolución mística (Mystical Evolution)*. In 1916, they were published, as a book, with the title *Cuestiones Místicas (Mystical Questions)*. The last of the *Questions*, titled *Grados de oración (Degrees of Prayer)*, had five separate editions. In June 1918, Father Arintero finished his teaching activities. From thereon he carried out an intense activity of spiritual direction and preaching, especially among religious women, but also among priests and lay people, and he continued writing. In 1927 he published *Las escalas de amor y la verdadera perfección cristiana (The Scales of Love and True Christian Perfection)*, and also this year was published the second edition of *Cuestiones Místicas (Mystical Questions)*.

In these years we should also mention its involvement in a noisy controversy around the acquired contemplation that took to faced him with some Carmelites. The debates surrounding contemplation are framed within the context of the mystical question referred to above. The notion of "acquired contemplation" was defended by those who maintained the existence of two different paths to holiness : one ordinary, crowned by acquired contemplation, and another extraordinary, crowned by infused contemplation. The existence of acquired contemplation was rejected by those who considered infused contemplation as the ordinary term of Christian perfection. Juan González Arintero believed that the concept of acquired contemplation was an invention of some Carmelite in the xviith century, that they betrayed the "true traditional mystique" exposed by Santa Teresa and San Juan de la Cruz. One of his fundamental objectives was to demonstrate the inexistence of this acquired contemplation and to restore the true traditional mysticism. The controversy did not abate until 1926 and,

although sometimes it was a hard dispute, it also had its positive aspects. It served, in particular, to create great interest in mystical questions and to encourage the reading of the great masters of spirituality.

Finally, we should mention three other activities that caught up much of his time and energy in the last years of his life : the foundation of the monastery of Clarisses in Cantalapiedra ; the spread of devotion to Merciful Love and the magazine *La Vida Sobrenatural*, which he founded in 1921. Juan González Arintero died in his cell at San Esteban de Salamanca on Feb. 20th, 1928. His body was buried in the cemetery of Salamanca, but in 1941, he was transferred to the monastery of Cantalapiedra. The Dominican theologian, Juan González Arintero, is considered a precursor of Vatican II for his insights on the Church and the role of mystical life in its growth. His beatification process is under way.

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