



Scott Eastman. *Preaching Spanish Nationalism across the Hispanic Atlantic, 1759-1823.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011. 264 pp. \$42.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8071-3957-8.



Reviewed by Charlton Yingling (University of South Carolina)

Published on H-Nationalism (June, 2013)

Commissioned by Paul Quigley (University of Edinburgh)

Religiosity, Liberalism, and National Identity in Spain and Its Atlantic Empire in the Revolutionary Era

Amid political shock waves from the French Revolution and later warfare associated with Napoleonic invasion, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were times of crises for Spanish identity. In this era, questions of sovereignty, social contract, and the body politic were tied to contests over the scope and meanings of the homeland, civic and patriotic duty, and national belonging. Scott Eastman contends that in this cultural conflict, which stretched across Spain's Atlantic empire, Spanish ideological mobilizations were neither as reactionary, absolutist, nor conservative as a range of scholars have asserted. Though such elements persisted within the church, priests' opinions and influence were more diverse. Eastman proposes that, through clerical agency, Catholic norms converged with liberalism and popular sovereignty rooted in the Hispanic Enlightenment to produce a Spanish nationalism of righteousness, continuity, and moderation in contrast with French radicalism and impiety. Catholicism, as the predominant marker of the collective in Spain, fused together a polity beset with long-standing regionalist tensions. As

he states, "Religion and tradition were bound together within a burgeoning nationalist script, challenging the logic that nations were constructed out of the ashes of a confessional society" (p. 16). Through discursive analysis of sermons, pamphlets, ecclesiastical correspondence, and debates over religiosity in the public sphere, Eastman reconstructs the cultural common ground that motivated popular actions and informed Hispanic identities of Catholic reformism and evangelical nationalism both in Iberia and across Spain's Atlantic empire.

Eastman unveils the Spanish process of melding enlightened and pious traditions as one of complexity and ferment, unlike the Spain of intellectual stasis depicted by some scholars. Clergy were both key formulators and promulgators of liberal nationalism, just as many liberals among the laity were central to maintaining a Catholic society. Though Spain's lengthy Enlightenment legacies ultimately produced neither lasting representative government nor constitutional parameters for the monarchy, Eastman proposes that despite the unrealized goals of the Cortes de Cádiz of the early 1810s and Trienio Liberal

of the early 1820s, aspirations for pious, liberal nationalism were never extinguished. He claims that the core national idioms that emerged during war against the French in the 1790s, which were expanded during the resistance to Napoleon's occupation in 1808 and the ephemeral liberal surge of the 1820s, remained fundamental to Spanish identity and future aspirations. Eastman unpacks the logic and choices made by the actors who interwove ideologies of tradition and modernity, otherwise considered incompatible by such theorists as Anthony Marx and Ernest Gellner, who viewed the confluence of religion and Spanish nationalism as haphazard or backward. The book also challenges the interpretive lenses of Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm, who asserted that the nation emerged as the salient collective identification out of the primacy of religious affiliation. It complicates scholarship that conflates nationalism with modernity, posits the incompatibility of liberal representative forms with traditional corporatism, or harbors latent perceptions of church influence as retrograde or backward. Instead, Eastman draws on postcolonial historians, such as Dipesh Chakrabarty, to propose that Spanish nationalism of this period was a mixed modernity of Catholic tenets and enlightened ideals which formed a cultural bridge to all social classes, including those of Spanish America.

The book contains six chapters, many of which are structured around microcosmic urban or prosopographical case studies. Chapter 1, which sets the foundation for the book and its central claims, covers the apex of the Spanish Enlightenment under Carlos III (1759-88) and the baggage of challenges to Bourbon absolutists. In this era, and particularly during the French Revolution, the children of God in Spain evolved into the Spanish people, in no small part due to priests who facilitated discourses of familial cultural affinity and place. Here Eastman undertakes a valuable exegesis of the loaded lexicon of homeland, nation and state, citizen and vassal, and patriotism as deployed by clerics and others. Individual engagement with scripture and vernacular sermons, coupled with proliferate discussion of natural law and social contract from Spanish and Enlightenment traditions, weakened the social hierarchy and opened questions of sovereignty. Though the Crown remained a rallying point, Eastman shows how clergy braided these liberal trends with righteous indignation against French violence, republicanism, and secularism to entice Spanish support for war against the First French Republic (1793-95). This was a prelude to the more bellicose, rampant, and liberal nationalism that emerged with Napoleon's invasion of 1808, when, in the absence of a legitimate

monarch, many Spaniards embraced self-determination against French interlopers. Intriguingly, during the occupation, the Book of Maccabees and stories of Israelite resistance to imperial impositions inspired Spanish collective struggle. In chapter 2, Eastman makes this intellectual history concrete as he details the move from corporatist patriotism and local mobilization against the French occupation to the unified Catholic nationalism. This transition was spurred on and conceptualized from the pulpit, as Eastman shows in the urban revolts of Seville and Valencia. In these cities, which rebuffed the French for years after the invasion, diffused decision making and calls for the reinstatement of the Cortes emerged in the absence of Bourbon bureaucracy. A cadre of liberal priests were central to local politics and the legitimization of these actions. Eastman contends that they represented a contingent of like-minded clergy in the juntas that emerged across Spain and its colonies, which strained against Old Regime symbols and supported the liberal, representative Cortes de Cádiz. Participants increasingly defined their local actions as part of a national struggle of Catholic sibling regions in a patriotic family defending the motherland. Through resistance, and the incapacitation of Old Regime partisans or French sympathizers, the Spanish people had attained a popular sovereignty that defended a nation of common faith, upheld a constitution, and demanded the restoration of Fernando VII, rightful claimant to the throne. Though in 1814 Fernando VII suppressed the liberal policy innovations of this era, his regime grafted the language and symbols of pious nationalism and popular empowerment into its cultural repertoire of legitimation.

In chapter 3, Eastman deals with the counteroffensive undertaken by devout Catholics and the clergy against the French and their sympathizers in the print media and realm of public opinion. This was a primary connection between liberal priests, the public sphere, and debates of nationalism. The role of Catholicism in the nation, and of political ideology within faith and doctrine, was widely contested in writing, speeches, and debates. In discursive combat, liberal and church rhetoric converged against Napoleonic tyranny and apostasy after 1808, which also spilled into colonial contexts. Clergy became pundits, politicians, and citizens in the rationalized Catholic public sphere as the short-lived Constitution of 1812 codified the role of faith in the nation. Citizenship, as shown in chapter 4, was nevertheless limited based on race, gender, and the status of one's family past with the Inquisition. While religious affiliation was a nationally inclusive symbol of Spanish identity, it also cast asper-

sions on the full participation of some, such as those with suspected Jewish heritage or French sympathy. Women came to be seen as patriotic symbols and bastions of modesty, piety, and Marian values who should resist immoral Frenchmen and uphold Spanish Catholic national virtues. In the colonies, those with indigenous and especially African heritage were marginalized from full inclusion as Spaniards. As lineage trumped Catholic credentials, local identities and desires to separate from the empire grew, which Eastman discusses specifically in the context of Mexico. In chapter 5, Eastman investigates shifts in Mexican identity between 1810 and 1823 as it turned away from a common Spanish nationalism. Justifications for actions on both sides of the early independence wars were both deeply worded for the defense of religion. After abrogation of the Constitution of 1812 and the failure of the Trienio Liberal to accept Mexicans on equal footing as citizens, the Mexican nationalist discourse for independence rejected Spain's inability to fulfill promises of both enlightened and pious governance. Thus Mexican nationalism, though initially tied to Spanish Enlightenment and Catholic communal ideas, emerged to embrace the uniquely American Virgin of Guadalupe as a national symbol. Liberal clergy sought to redeem the religious and liberal promises of the Constitution of 1812 while conservative priests joined the Mexican nation to guard their faith from Spanish Jacobinism of the Trienio Liberal. Chapter 6 and the epilogue ponder the outcomes and legacies of Hispanic nationalisms. Eastman discusses

how the cultural politics of this religiously infused tradition played out in Spain and Mexico from the 1820s to negotiations of historical memory, national identity, faith, and sovereignty over the past two centuries.

In sum, Eastman offers an important analytical and empirical corrective to scholarship on Spanish nationalism and revolutionary era politics and piety. His analysis is compelling, as is his reluctance to dichotomize the nuanced texture of entwined religious and liberal discourses and actions, though he concedes that these tenets were in tension over the long-term trajectory of representative statecraft. This book prods scholars of Spanish America to reconsider how liberal clergy and religiosity shaped identities in the region, including Spanish and early national belonging, and how this arose in tandem with processes in Iberia. Though he offers provocative critiques of scholarship on Spanish America, his contentions are only concretely developed through the proxy of Mexico. His broader points on cultural connectivity in the late empire, an extant analytical lens that obviates his reliance on Atlantic world terminologies, should nonetheless precipitate new considerations of religion, popular motivation, and liberal discourse in the independence era. This book is an important contribution to historiography on Spain, and also Spanish America, in the early nineteenth century. It should find an audience of scholars and graduate students engaged in these fields and will appeal to those with thematic interests on the intersections of nationalism, religion, modernity, and tradition.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-nationalism>

Citation: Charlton Yingling. Review of Eastman, Scott, *Preaching Spanish Nationalism across the Hispanic Atlantic, 1759-1823*. H-Nationalism, H-Net Reviews. June, 2013.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=38995>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.