

Duncan SIMPSON, *A Igreja Católica e o Estado Novo Salazarista*, Lisbon, Edições 70 (Coll. 'Lugar da História'), 2014, 307 p., €19.90, ISBN 978-972-44-1774-5

In this book, adapted from his Ph.D. thesis at King's College London, Duncan Simpson writes a systematic analysis of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the *Estado Novo* in Portugal, from the taking of office of Oliveira Salazar as Finances minister in the military dictatorship government of 1928 to the end of his political life in 1968. The author aims to accomplish a critical review of the historiography and bring new elements to the historical analysis resulting from his research in several archives, particularly the Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV).

Generally Simpson underlines the formation of an institutional alliance between the *Estado Novo* and the Catholic Church, stating that the Church was a supporter, not a victim of Salazarism. He points out the important links between Catholic missions and the Salazarist imperial impulse, as well as the decisive role played by the colonial wars in political and religious life during the final years of Salazar's rule.

Simpson criticizes some of the most influential perspectives on the role of the Catholic Church in the *Estado Novo* for being too ideological. That is the case of Manuel Braga da Cruz who claims that Salazarism, unlike Franquism, was not a "national-catholicism". Cruz argues that the separation between the State and the Catholic Church established by the 1940 Concordat corresponded to a real autonomy of political and spiritual power. And he stresses that the Catholic Church became progressively more critical about the dictatorship after the Second World War. But Cruz does not distinguish between the Catholic hierarchy and the lay "progressive Catholics" so critical of the Catholic hierarchy as well as of the authoritarian government; and he also does not distinguish between the Catholic resistance to secularization throughout the *Estado Novo* period and the resistance to the abuse and illegitimacy of political power.

Standing on the opposite side of the ideological spectrum, Simpson also criticizes the interpretation of Fernando Rosas who sees the State-Catholic Church model of the *Estado Novo* as a "functional neo-regalism" in a context of the formal separation between the political and the spiritual spheres. The Catholic Church was subordinated to the political and ideological purposes of the *Estado Novo* and played an important role in its legitimation. In return the Catholic Church received from the dictatorship huge tax exemptions and protection from the competition of other religions.

Simpson emphasises the contributions of the social sciences to the understanding of the question. António Costa Pinto stressed for example the role of Catholicism as a limitative factor in the development of fascism in Portugal. Traditional Catholicism was a decisive influence in the construction of the ideological foundations of *Estado Novo*. However Catholic organizations favoured the limited pluralism of the regime. Manuel Lucena, on his side, argued that Catholicism was unfavourable to the totalitarian tendencies of *Estado Novo* and he pointed out as a weakness the fact that the dictatorship's depended on the legitimation of the Catholic Church. Simpson also values the ideas of Valentim Alexandre who developed the perspective of Richard Robinson about the influence of Thomistic philosophy in the ideology of *Estado Novo*. For Valentim Alexandre, it was the Christian democracy of the early 20th century that allowed Salazar to reconcile the concepts of “organic democracy” with “corporative democracy”.

The structure of Simpson's book is based on the author's periodisation of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the *Estado Novo*. The first period begins in 1928, with Salazar's nomination as finance minister, and ends in 1933 with the approval of the Constitution of *Estado Novo*. The Constitution marks a process of “gradual Catholicization” of Portuguese society which resulted from the collaboration between the Catholic Church and the political regime – this constitutes a second period. The Concordat and the Missionary Agreement are fruits of this process. After the end of the Second World War, the Catholic Church participated in a process of renewal of the *Estado Novo's* legitimacy. A third period goes from the presidential election of Craveiro Lopes in 1951 and another constitutional revision to the beginning of the colonial wars in 1961 when the role of the Catholic Church is conditioned by the Cold War and a strong anti-Communist campaign. A last period goes from the first years of the colonial wars and the last years of Salazar's rule (1961-1968); it is marked by the complexity of the Catholic movement and the impact of the Church's *aggiornamento*. The Portuguese Catholic hierarchy adopted the luso-tropicalism ideas of Gilberto Freire to justify the existence of Portuguese territories in Africa. Catholic opposition to the dictatorship remained marginal and dispersed.

Duncan Simpson concludes that Salazar established a new kind of regalism which subordinated the Catholic Church to the political interests of *Estado Novo*. The specificity of this regalism, compared with the anti-clerical regalism of the first Republic, is that the *Estado Novo* shared a vision of society with the Catholic Church.

A point of disagreement I have with Simpson is that I do not endorse the association between the “paradigm of disintegration” of the *Estado Novo* and an allegedly consequent emphasis in Catholic opposition to the same *Estado Novo*. There are only two academic works dedicated to the Catholic opposition to the *Estado Novo* (my own book and António Araújo Ph.D. thesis). In my book I stress that the importance of Catholic opposition is explained by the close relationship between *Estado Novo* and the Catholic Church. Araújo underlines the fragility of the Catholic opposition. Simpson also ignores that Portuguese historians have recently studied Catholic intellectuals who cannot be seen as a model of progressivism, such as António Lino Neto who was a conservative who played a key actor in the Church's *ralliement* with the First Republic and who cannot be reduced to a position of supporter or opponent to the *Estado Novo*.

This all said, I agree with Duncan Simpson that there are still a lot of issues in need of research about the history of the relationship between *Estado Novo* and the Catholic Church. And I must say that Simpson’s book is an important contribution to this future history.

João Miguel ALMEIDA

Instituto de História Contemporânea da Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas da Universidade Nova de Lisboa and Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa da Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Lisboa, PORTUGAL.