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Review of: Scott Eastman, *Preaching Spanish Nationalism Across the Hispanic Atlantic, 1759-1823*

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Scott Eastman, *Preaching Spanish Nationalism Across the Hispanic Atlantic, 1759-1823*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2012. 251pp.

How was Spanish national identity constructed between 1788 and 1823 and what was the role of the clergy and other religious in that process? Scott Eastman boldly goes where few scholars have gone before in attempting to answer that complex pair of questions. He contends that national identity, at least in the Spanish case, has been misunderstood, as has the role of Catholicism, in the process of its construction. Eastman observes that, for a time, somewhere in the nexus of patriotism, regionalism, Catholic identity, and liberal nationalism Spaniards, briefly, defined a transoceanic Spanish national identity that was common currency on both sides of the Atlantic, but that eventually fractured into local nationalisms that nonetheless reveal a common, recognizable inheritance. Catholicism, and thus the clergy, was essential in developing a common cultural foundation upon which this far reaching national identity could be built. Eastman's study destroys the notion that clergy were uniformly a monolithic, conservative presence in Spanish society, an omnipresent impediment to modernity. His examination results in a compelling argument for a revision in the way scholars think about citizenship, national identity, and the role of religion therein that is well done, but not without its challenges.

The introduction and first three chapters discuss Eastman's methodology of discursive analysis in the emerging public sphere of print journalism toward the end of the Spanish Enlightenment and through the national period, signaled by Spaniards defense of their homelands from three French invasions between 1795 and 1823, with the period from 1808 to 1823 providing the bulk of the discursive evidence. Here *Preaching Spanish Nationalism* clearly lays out the rhetorical and actual shift in views of sovereignty from subject to citizen. Clergy played a role throughout that shift on both the conservative and the liberal sides and their rhetoric mixed old and new political language, demonstrating the process was in transition. We also find that clergy led guerrilla bands that opposed the French occupying army, rhetorically exhorted them to battle, in person, and were profoundly active contributors to the emerging space defined as the Catholic public sphere. Throughout the first three chapters Eastman adroitly weaves together the ideological commonalities that were extant and continued to be cultivated between peninsular Spaniards and their brothers in Spanish America. Indeed, he notes "Public opinion grew out of the overlapping spaces of religious

culture, print media, salons, and politics. Just as many priests joined the struggle and took up arms as soldiers in Spain and Spanish America in the wars sparked by peninsular turmoil, clerics acted as citizens, writers, deputies, and representatives of the church in opening up the Catholic public sphere across the Spanish Monarchy” (92).

Beginning with chapter four the story takes a turn as the record of the clergy became more fractured between liberal, moderate, and conservative proponents. In part, it was a question of the issues being debated: the role of the Inquisition as a definer of religious nationality was not accepted and fiercely divided the clergy nonetheless. Debates about who were conferred citizenship, thus who could claim the emerging Spanish national identity, revealed more cleavages. More conservative expression is revealed here – the ideal citizen and Spaniard was a white, Catholic male resident peninsular Spaniard. Creoles were included in that definition. The key signifier though, as Eastman cogently argues, is Catholicism. Non-Catholics were *apriori* neither citizens nor Spaniards. Africans were generally excluded, though some could ‘pass’ owing to the shade of their skin color – in some instances legal documents attested to their citizenship. Indigenous were included, indicating liberals had won the day on that issue. If Jews did not convert, they were excluded, again reaffirming the Catholic religion as essential and foundational. Conservative clergy and deputies excluded women, despite the rhetorical presence of treatises by Benito Feijoo and Josefa Amar attesting to women’s attributes, thus conservative clergy and deputies had won the debate on that issue. A new national identity and the citizenship it conferred was being defined at Cádiz in 1812 and this event identified all the conflicts and problems inherent in such an effort, especially one that had as its goal liberal inclusivity and transoceanic unity.

The remaining two chapters relate just how complex was this process of defining a transoceanic national identity even with the presence of Catholicism and other cultural criteria providing a common substrate upon which to build it. From 1812, many clergy proclaimed a robust Spanish identity, but then it became American, and after Hidalgo’s attempted revolt, it became Mexican. I wonder what happened to those who, as late as 1821, the date of Mexico’s independence, still pledged Spanish loyalty? Here the constantly shifting opinions that accompanied the painful separation of Spanish America from the *madre patria* become apparent and blame falls on the openness of the public sphere, the intransigence of Fernando VII, the persistence of the insurgents, and the inability of *doceanistas* to consolidate the more inclusive liberal nationalism that was clearly integral to the politico-cultural context of the time. Alternately, perhaps they accomplished too much as the language of national identity logically led to

conceptions of a smaller and more geographically contiguous community of adherents from which to build a national identity as such identities are, in large part, dependent upon shared lived as well as historical and imagined experience.

Eastman's work underscores the idea that national identities are inherently fungible and founded upon contingent conceptual frameworks. They are never really stable, rarely, if ever, derive from a single source and religion remains as important now as it was then as an informer of personal and national identity. There is a huge umbrella under which a variety of competing, occasionally mutually exclusive, and even radically opposing visions of national identities can find shelter.

Preaching Spanish Nationalism is an engaging, well written and researched scholarly, revisionist tome with a superbly balanced admixture of primary and secondary sources. There are a few areas where its contentions could be broadened and challenged, none of which diminish the book's excellence. Indeed, it has already highlighted some needed changes for lectures in my Spanish history courses and provided a wonderful prompt for a class debate about weight of the past on the present and continuity and change in history. First, Spanish America and the Hispanic Atlantic are integral elements in its ambitious purview, yet the bulk of the evidence actually emanates from Mexico. I am not certain that Mexico equates to Spanish America. Second, national identity is inherently squishy, muddy conceptually and there is a difficult space to negotiate between it and the idea of citizenship – the possession of civic and civil rights. Eastman portrays the complexity and fluidity of national identity very well, but does not reconstruct the notion of citizenship as fully. Finally, one of *Preaching Spanish Nationalism's* continuities is expressed by “The lack of nationalist consensus in the nineteenth century revealed ideological struggles, contestation, and conflict, but it did not inevitably lead to the civil wars and revolutions of the twentieth century” (175).

Well, okay, it is an axiom that there are no historical inevitabilities. But one of history's fundamental premises is that decisions made in the past profoundly affect our own decisions and events in the present and into the future. Can anyone deny that the past decision to join the European Monetary Union is having a profound effect on Spain in the present? Obviously, the absence of national consensus did not *inevitably* lead to the later twentieth century tragedies of Spanish history, but it charted a path. Liberal representative democracy functions, when it functions, because it allows the ideological struggles, conflict, and contestation of an *informed* and often *uninformed*, body politic. What emerges from that process is a course of action that, if not a total consensus of the

polity, represents compromise agreement on the path chosen. When that process spills over into armed conflict within the polity, then liberalism has failed. Consequently, there is a direct path from the inability of liberals and conservatives to resolve their issues in a fashion befitting constitutional, parliamentary government in 1812 to the deaths of Spaniards on battlefields during three Carlist civil wars during the nineteenth century, the agonies of Cuba from 1868 through 1898, and eventually the Civil war of 1936. The very nature and Catholicness of Spanish identities *Preaching Spanish Nationalism* addresses, and over which Spaniards killed one another, were contested again in 1936, accompanied by more killing. Yes, not inevitable, but it was most assuredly avoidable.

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