

# CARÁCTER IDEOLÓGICO Y LITERARIO DEL QUIETISMO DE

MIGUEL DE MOLINOS

EN SU

GUÍA ESPIRITUAL

The life and writings of Miguel de Molinos (Muniesa 1628--Rome 1696) constitute the crepuscule of Spanish Golden Age mysticism. The purpose of this study has been to give an objective overview of his ideology and to present a transcript of the original manuscript of his *Guía Espiritual*, never published in its entirety.

The analysis begins with the unfolding of Molinos' life as a portrayal of quietude and resignation amid his tremendous popularity and subsequent opprobrium. Although his thought is radically the same, since it flows from identical sources, as those of Saint Theresa and Saint John of the Cross, and while his *Guia* was endorsed by highest Church authorities, his teachings were deemed heterodox, being imprisoned and eventually condemned by the Inquisition. One theory, which I espouse, is that his crime was of a political rather than a dogmatic nature and that he was eliminated from fear of a potential danger to the oligarchical establishments, both Church and State.

Molinos' conception is the ultimate logical conclusion of the premises laid not only in the Middle Ages of European mysticism but, but from the beginnings of civilization by pre-Christian oriental philosophers such as Lao and Budha. The *Guía Espiritual* is an application of Pseudo Dionysius' apophatic principles, which sprang from the third-century merger of Neoplatonic philosophy and Christian revelation. The later influence of Meister Eckhart and other Northern Mystics filtering into Spain in early Renaissance translations was absorbed by Molinos through the elaboration of previous Spanish mystics. The writings of Juan Falconi (1600-1642) were an important link in the long chain of influences.

The idea of mystical quietude pervades the *Guía* and characterizes each of the steps required to reach the Godhead. Miguel de Molinos argues for purgation with the simple reasoning that like is only known and loved by like, and since God is pure spirit, the mystic soul must withdraw from all multiplicity and exteriority into the annihilation of self. The individual must encounter terrifying experiences of which the most horrendous is the staggering feeling of God's abandonment. Once he or she is detached from the senses, their soul must turn upon itself in utmost concentration, searching for its deepest center, where God resides. Upon arrival at that point, the soul must remain, with a serene and quiet attitude, in the contemplation of the Divine itself. In such passive state, which is synonymous with divine, the soul reaches its ultimate goal of deification.

Molinos' stylistic simplicity, in contrast to the baroque excesses of his time, endows his ideas with a special impact. The clear, logical presentation and psychologically sound method of his *Guía Espiritual* contributed to making his work an overwhelming and universal success, confirmed by its immediate translation into all major European languages as well as Latin with quick numerous editions.

With the current resurgence of interest in mysticism and on the occasion of the *Guía's* tri-centennial, Miguel de Molinos' contribution merits a due share of attention.

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