

RELIGION IN THE WORKS OF UNAMUNO

By

MANUEL RAMIREZ

Bachelor of Science

Oklahoma Baptist University

Shawnee, Oklahoma

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Thesis Adviser



Faculty Representative



Dean of the Graduate School

## PREFACE

Don Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo was one of the greatest writers that Spain ever produced. He delved into such profound problems as religion and philosophy, that many people are prone to neglect reading the works of such a scholarly thinker.

A liberal amount of religious thought is perceived in nearly all of his writings. Unamuno records his innermost thoughts in such a manner and style, that the reader is given an accurate portrayal of his character and personality.

Religion was of utmost importance to him because it required a certain type of everyday living. His unwillingness to be associated with any one religious group afforded him an opportunity to analyze and criticize some of the religious faiths.

Unamuno's main concern in the problem of religion was facing the realities of life, faith versus reason in living, and the belief in a life after death.

His religion in turn came to be construed as being the religion of Protestantism as is recognized in modern day Christianity.

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Manuel Ramirez

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE.....	iii
CHAPTER I.....INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II.....THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIS RELIGIOUS IDEAS IN CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH.....	6
CHAPTER III.....HIS RECOGNITION OF THE LACK OF TRUE RELIGION IN SPANISH ECCLESIASTICAL AND INTELLECTUAL LIFE.....	11
CHAPTER IV.....THE PROPHETS OF TRUE RELIGION: PURE AND UNDEFILED.....	17
CHAPTER V.....THE TRAGEDIAN OF RELIGION.....	26
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	35

## RELIGION IN THE WORKS OF UNAMUNO

## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo, a great Spanish scholar, poet, essayist and educator, was born at Bilbao, Spain on September 29, 1864. He was educated in Madrid, receiving a doctor's degree in philosophy and letters, and in 1892 was appointed to the chair of Greek language and literature at Salamanca University. In 1900 he became rector of the university.

Miguel de Unamuno was one of a very few writers who maintained a critical attitude toward the reigning regimes in Spain. His writings and speeches had national repercussions as the reader will ascertain later.

He was always vitally interested in practical affairs and so it was that later, in a campaign by means of newspaper articles and addresses against governmental corruption and abuses, he was so outspoken that he was removed from the rectorship of the university. The coup d'etat of Primo de Rivera in 1923, which established a military directorate, aroused him to such vehement denunciation that in February, 1924, he was exiled to one of the more remote of the Canary Islands. The sentence aroused much criticism and the government granted amnesty in July, 1924, but Unamuno refused to return to Spain and took up his residence in Paris.

Even though he did not live in Spain, his polemic writings concerning Spanish problems continued to come forth from his pen. In addition, he wrote many other different

types of works; among these were poetry, essays and novels.

The writer is here concerned with his works regarding primarily, philosophy and religion.

Many authors have spoken highly of Unamuno, such as Eleanor Turnbull, who quotes Julian Marias from his book Miguel de Unamuno as saying, "The reading of Unamuno, above all the most intense, that which showed itself most frequently and most genuinely in his writings, is predominantly philosophical and religious. Unamuno was a man of immense reading, but whose spirit, never erudite, showed quite clearly his preferences, and they are very revealing. Above all the Holy Scriptures, particularly the New Testament, and of that, St. Paul, whose thought he scarcely detached from his own."<sup>1</sup>

J.E. Crawford Fritch, a translator of Unamuno's, The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and in Peoples, said, "Miguel de Unamuno is today the greatest literary figure of Spain".<sup>2</sup>

The same author also described Unamuno very graphically as "a tall, broad-shouldered, bony man with high cheeks, a beak-like nose, pointed grey beard, and a complexion the colour of the red hematites on which Bilbao, his native town is built, and which Bilbao ruthlessly plucks from its very body to exchange for gold in the markets of England——and in the deep sockets under the high aggressive forehead pro-

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1. Miguel de Unamuno, (translated by E.L. Turnbull), The Christ of Velazquez, p. xii.

2. Miguel de Unamuno, (translated by J.E. Crawford Fritch), The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and in Peoples, p. xxx.

longed by short iron-grey hair, two eyes like gimlets eagerly watching the world through spectacles which seem to be purposely pointed at the object-like microscopes; a fighting expression, but of noble fighting, above the prizes of the passing world, the contempt for which is shown in a peculiar attire whose blackness invades even that little triangle of white which worldly men leave on their breast for the necktie of frivolity and the decorations of vanity, and blinding it leaves but the thinnest rim of white collar to emphasize rather than relieve the priestly effect of the whole. Such is Don Miguel de Unamuno".<sup>3</sup>

From a study of Unamuno we are tremendously impressed by the fact that throughout his works he has consciously expressed his own emotions and deepest feelings. One catches not only a glimpse, but a graphic view of his personality. His every anxiety and thought is recorded in his essays and poetry.

In the poem, Longing to Love, Unamuno says, "Give to us, Oh Lord, a passionate longing to love Thee;.....as long as our life on earth doth last, may desire to love Thee be our life".<sup>4</sup>

In speaking of Life, Unamuno describes it as,

".....Vida? La vida es un morir continuo,  
es como el río  
en que unas mismas aguas  
jamás se asientan  
y es siempre el mismo."<sup>5</sup>

From the Ensayos y Sentencias again Unamuno gives voice

3. Ibid., x.

4. Turnbull, op. cit., p. 126.

5. Miguel de Unamuno, Poesías, p. 194.

to his patriotic feelings concerning his native land by answering the question, "¿Qué es nuestra patria? Cuando los romanos se trasladaban de domicilio solían coger un puñado de la tierra en que en aquel reposaban las cenizas de sus antepasados, y echándolo allí donde de nuevo se estableciesen reanudaban religiosamente el hilo de la tradición y la perpetuidad familiar basada en el culto a los muertos antepasados. No nos hace falta coger ese puñado de tierra a nosotros los hombres de hoy, porque sabemos que lo es nuestro corazón. Nosotros mismos somos carne de la carne de nuestros padres, sangre de su sangre, nuestro cuerpo se amasó con la tierra de que se nutrieron ellos y nuestro espíritu se formó del espíritu de nuestro pueblo. Allá donde voy yo va conmigo mi patria..."<sup>6</sup>

Unamuno's patriotic feelings continue to be expressed in El Alma de España: "En el alma de España viven y obran, además de nuestras almas, las de los que hoy vivimos, y, aun más que éstas, las almas de todos nuestros antepasados. Nuestras propias almas, las de los hoy vivos, son los que menos viven en ella, porque nuestra alma no entra en la de nuestra patria hasta que nosotros no la hayamos soltado, hasta después de nuestra muerte temporal."<sup>7</sup>

His religion was deeply rooted. He arrived at his own particular idea of religion in his conception of God, immortality, the conflict between science and life, and between

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6. Wilfred A. Beardsley, Ensayos y Sentencias de Unamuno, p. 42.

7. Ibid., p. 65.



reason and feeling, from a life-long series of meditations, observations, research and logical literary expressions of his deepest emotions. His was a life-long struggle with these problems, and as this researcher will attempt to prove—— Unamuno's religion was what we recognize today as modern Christianity.

Eleanor Turnbull quotes Julian Marias in his book Miguel de Unamuno as saying, "Unamuno was one within a vital Catholic Christian tradition, that he maintained and enriched all his life by his constant reading, above all by his assiduous reading of the New Testament in the original Greek text that he always carried with him. And this with his profound religious sense, with his attitude towards God, made him feel, beneath all his ideas and his doubts the presence of God in his life, of a God who is the Christian....."<sup>8</sup>

Unamuno's boyhood and youth greatly influenced his conception of some of the fundamental bases for religion, as we shall see in the next chapter.

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8. Turnbull, op. cit., p. xi.

## CHAPTER II

## DEVELOPMENT OF HIS RELIGIOUS IDEAS IN CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

Unamuno's childhood and youth were spent in his native city of Bilbao. The young Basque was schooled in a Catholic institution, where he learned Latin, "La lengua en que los curas dicen la misa".<sup>1</sup> He also studied geography and history.

As a youth of fourteen Unamuno recalled having lost a certain sum of money in a gambling game, which caused him to say, "A quien tiene mucho se la dará más, pero al que tenga poco hasta este poco le será quitado".<sup>2</sup> He also quoted from the Bible after this incident, saying, "¡ Bienaventurados los que lloran porque ellos serán consolados!"<sup>3</sup> Again, while reading in the Old Testament, he said, "Nos empezía llegar al fin de la historia de Jose vendido por sus hermanos".<sup>4</sup> In speaking of sorrow in Paz en la Guerra, Unamuno again quotes from the Scriptures: "Gloria a Dios en las alturas, en la tierra paz; a los hombres, buena voluntad".<sup>5</sup> These quotations from the Holy Word bring one to realize how much of the Bible he knew at an early age and in later life.

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1. Miguel de Unamuno, Recuerdos de Niñez y de Mocedad, p. 31.

2. Ibid., p. 17.

3. Ibid., p. 18.

4. Ibid., p. 33.

5. Unamuno, Paz en la Guerra, p. 76.

Unamuno tells of remembering from his youth the time that he made a brief discourse in his psychology, logic, and ethics class. He discussed Christ, Christianity, the blood of the martyrs, and the performance of miracles. He then says, "Llegué a la muerte de Jesus, cité, o mejor dicho, re-cité aquello de Rousseau de que si Sócrates murió como un sabio, Jesucristo murió como un Dios...."<sup>6</sup>

He seemingly had no bad habits in youth, such as drinking, smoking and swearing. He never smoked because as a young man in his early teens he had seen the body of a good friend in his coffin. Don Miguel had previously known that this friend used tobacco, therefore, he immediately concluded in his boyish mind that this stillness called Death was the direct result of smoking. This incident served him in good stead throughout his later life, because Unamuno never became addicted to that vile habit.

Again in speaking of his youth, Unamuno recalled the problem of someone finding a certain article on the street. He bore in mind the old saying, "finders keepers, losers weepers," in dealing with found items. He believed in a person taking something if he was the first to come upon it. Unamuno said of this, "...Es corriente que espere a que otro deje un lugar para ocuparlo y cuando el primer ocupante vuelve y lo reclama, se le dice, quien fué a sevilla, perdió su silla, a lo que el otro replicaba: y el que volvió, la encontró".<sup>6</sup>

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6. Unamuno, Recuerdos de Niñez y de Mocedad, p. 26.

His childish reasoning was precocious, because his thoughts always carried him beneath the surface of the common thinker.

Don Miguel de Unamuno gave vent to the thoughts of his youth as he reflected how a youngster feels as though he were immortal. He does not think of Death and of the problem of immortality; he opines that perhaps he will live eternally. His sentiments are of such a nature that it seems to him as though each moment through which he passes were eternal. A young man hears of Death; he perchance sees people die; he may even kill certain small animals, but yet he does not fully comprehend the true meaning of Death. On occasions he may speak of Death, but it is as when he relates the many other things which he does not understand.

In the poem, En La Basílica del Señor Santiago de Bilbao, Unamuno reveals his emotions after entering the basilica of his home town,

"Entré llevando lacerado el pecho,  
convertido en un lago de tormenta,  
entré como quien anda y no camina  
como un sonámbulo".<sup>7</sup>

This thought occurred at a time when he was older and he began to reminisce about his childhood and youth,

"Aquí soñé de niño...,  
Aquí soñé mis sueños de la infancia,  
de santidad y de ambición tejidos,...  
soñé sueños de gloria,...  
...aquí el hambre de Dios sentí primero,..."

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7. Miguel de Unamuno, Poesías, p. 76.

"Aquí el misterio me envolvió del mundo  
cuando a la lumbre eterna abrí mis ojos  
y aquí es donde primero me ha sentido  
sólo en el páramo."<sup>8</sup>

Here it was that he felt so near to God. By his surroundings and environment, he was made to feel closer to his Creator. Unamuno realized the great dark mystery of the world that was around him, thus did he make it a life-long study to meditate and try to solve the problems of life.

The study of psychology, ethics and logic had been attractive to him in his youth. This unusual passion for knowing the workings of his own mind led Unamuno to become interested in the philosophy and teachings of the Catalan, Balmes, and through him he came to know such thinkers as Kant and Hegel.

The philosophy of Immanuel Kant held that the mind furnished the forms of experience and the sense organs furnish only impressions. Our knowledge, therefore, is only subjective. He showed the necessity of a belief in God, freedom, and immortality, if we are to have the institutions of civilization.

George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel held the philosophy that religion is inferior to philosophy as an exponent of the harmony between man and the absolute. In absolute religion the mystery of the reconciliation between God and man is an open doctrine. This was Christianity, Hegel believed, in which God is a Trinity, because He is a spirit. The revelation of this truth is the subject of the Christian Scriptures. The

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8. Ibid., p. 77.

history of Christ is the visible reconciliation between man and the eternal. With the death of Christ this union, ceasing to be a mere fact, becomes a vital idea—the spirit of God which dwells in the Christian community. Hegel believed that the absolute is eternally present; God reveals himself in the logical idea, in nature and in mind.

Unamuno had read and studied the philosophies of Kant and Hegel, but he leaned toward the ideas of Balmes, who like the two German philosophers believed in God and immortality. Jaime Balmes was not as pessimistic in his views of philosophical religion as were Kant and Hegel; therein was the principal difference.

Having acquired such an interest in the subject, Unamuno from his youth on, continued to delve and think about faith, reasoning, the question of immortality, and of the constant struggle that man must endure as he goes throughout life pondering the question of eternity.

Thus is one able to see that early in life, Unamuno came to grips with some of the most profound of life's problems. He had a mature mind while still a boy in his teens. He had been schooled in the Catholic faith, even though he did not profess to claim it as his religion. Thus, it was with a free mind, that in 1880 he went to Madrid where he matriculated in the Facultad de Letras, and in due course took his doctorate.

Unamuno early found a field of study which greatly appealed to him. Through the medium of the essay he was able to exploit and present his problem of finding a religion which could be acceptable to his own life and that of many others.

## CHAPTER III

RECOGNITION OF THE LACK OF TRUE RELIGION IN  
SPANISH ECCLESIASTICAL AND INTELLECTUAL LIFE

As we have seen, Don Miguel de Unamuno was concerned with his life and the subsequent fate of his soul after death. Thus did he have a passionate concern for his own destiny and salvation.

J.E. Crawford Fritch said of Unamuno, "The salvation of man, the central problem of all religion, is the axis about which his thought and emotion revolve".<sup>1</sup>

Unamuno had the belief that the individual soul was of the utmost value. Again Fritch quotes Unamuno, "Our greatest endeavor must be to make ourselves irreplaceable; to make the theoretical fact—that each one of us is unique and irreplaceable—a practical truth".<sup>2</sup>

Unamuno seems to think as does Hume in his book, The Spanish People, that sometimes the pure Spaniard has been agriculturalist by necessity and a shepherd by choice, and the rest of the time he has been a soldier. Unamuno then thinks that the pastoral character originated from as far back as Cain and Abel... "The Hebrew legend of Cain and Abel presents one of the most profound intuitions of the beginnings of human history".<sup>3</sup>

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1. Miguel de Unamuno, (translated by J.E.C. Fritch), Essays and Soliloquies, p. 22.

2. Ibid., p. 26.

3. Ibid., p. 51.

Unamuno was led to realize the lack of true religion among his own people when in speaking of the Argentine nation, he was concerned with their religious situation. He inquired of someone from that region as to the regard of religion there, to which the informant replied, "No one pays any attention to such things there; they are busy enough making money; if anyone looks at the sky it is to see whether or not it is going to rain".<sup>4</sup> (In Spanish, the word cielo means either sky or heaven.) So it was that Unamuno could become intensely concerned, because, "An irreligious nation, that is, a nation where hardly anyone is interested in religious problems—whatever the accepted solutions—is a nation of hypocrites and exhibitionists, where it is important, not to be, but to seem to be".<sup>5</sup>

As was previously mentioned, Unamuno often spoke out against the evils of lust, greed and vice. He claims that lust, gambling and drunkenness stultify a people and brutalize man.<sup>6</sup> He thought that gambling dens and brothels were to be closed if a school opened its doors to youth; otherwise the school would be of little service to the community. Again, in connection with lust, he said, "Lust is an ally of tyranny. What moralizing theologians call lust of the flesh

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4. Miguel de Unamuno, (translated by Stuart Gross), Perplexities and Paradoxes, p. 61.

5. Ibid., p. 74.

6. Ibid., p. 108.



usually stifles what the same people call pride of the spirit".<sup>7</sup>

Unamuno revealed another sign of the lack of true religion in Spanish life in his Abel Sánchez, one of the novels in Tres Novelas Ejemplares.

In this story Abel Sánchez and Joaquín Monegro had been friends since childhood. They had always played together and had entertained each other by various means on different occasions.

In a few years Abel married Helena—the sweetheart of his friend Joaquín, while the latter married a young lady by the name of Antonia.

Abel was well educated and became a painter, while Joaquín pursued the study of medicine and became a doctor. Of course Joaquín was scarcely on speaking terms with Abel because of the marriage that had taken place.

In a few short years a son, Abelín was born to Abel and Helena, and at almost the same time Joaquín and Antonia became the parents of a daughter—Joaquina.

Abelín became greatly enthused about the subject of medicine, and became fired with the ambition to be a doctor. Joaquín taught the boy, beginning at an early age, and, the youth being an apt learner never forgot the teachings of his master. Abelín in time became a practicing physician tending to the ills of the people in much the same manner as did Joaquín. At the sight of this, Abelín's father was greatly

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7. Ibid., p. 144.

enraged, because the young son cared more for Joaquín than he did for his own father.

In the ensuing years, Abel and Joaquín now being aged, Abelín and Joaquina marry, and to them a son is born.

One day when the grandparents came to see the child, Joaquín and Abel spoke of the Biblical story concerning Cain and Abel and how the two had fought resulting in the death of Abel. Thus did the two supposed friends entertain the idea of murder, but decided against such action.

Finally, Abel, on speaking with Joaquín one day, enters into a discussion concerning their children and grandchild. While they are talking, Abel is stricken with a heart attack, but does not immediately die. Joaquín rushed to the side of Abel telling him that he (Joaquín) is to blame for all that has happened between the two families, and how neither has had a successful life. In the ensuing moments Joaquín also suffers a heart attack and the two die of heart attacks.

In this simple narration Unamuno gives his readers an insight into the life of Spanish people, and at the same time suggests the need of a spiritual rebirth within such people.

Unamuno's unerring knowledge of the Bible gave him the idea of naming his characters after those of the Biblical account of Cain and Abel.

In another story, Dos Madres, taken from Tres Novelas Ejemplares, Unamuno almost parallels the Abel and Joaquín story by relating to us the strange tale of Raquel, who wants her husband Juan to have illicit relations with Berta

Lapeira, so that the latter might bear him a child, later to be claimed by Raquel.

Juan carried out his wife's suggestion, and persuaded Berta to give up the babe, so that Raquel might have a child to rear. Don Juan had succumbed to the desires of one woman, but after the birth of the child, he committed suicide by hurling himself over the edge of a high precipice.

Don Juan and Berta had shown that they had no will power, but had simply been overcome by passion which resulted in the virtual end of Juan.

The brief story related, contains an unforgettable lesson, and again at the same time gave Unamuno a means of exposing the moral conditions of contemporary Spain.

In these two novels he sets forth the emotions of people, and how those emotions govern the very lives of human beings. Unamuno herein indicates the need for a change; he sees the need of a religion whereby man can rely on some one more omnipotent than himself.

This brings one to the question of what is that religion for which Unamuno was searching? J.E. Crawford Fritch translates Unamuno's answer as, "...Every man's definition of religion is based upon his own inward experience of it rather than upon his observation of it in others, nor indeed is it possible to define it without in some way or other experiencing it".<sup>8</sup> Again the same author speaks of religion as being,

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8. Unamuno, (translated by J.E.C. Fritch), The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and in Peoples, p. 216.

"...better described than defined and better felt than described".<sup>9</sup>

Unamuno therefore is thoroughly convinced that the religious thought of his time was inadequate because (a) it did not take into account the rational in man, the cultural, historical, and scientific discoveries which play havoc with man's faith; (b) while clinging to their irrational tenets (dogmas, liturgy, symbolism, etc.) the churches have confined these and the whole world of beliefs to an area disconnected with life, the daily, real and personal activities of men whose lives exist only on a rationalistic level. Unamuno makes his own saying, "Christianity is just playing at the Christian game".<sup>10</sup>

Unamuno from this proceeds to build his own philosophy of religious belief. He sees the needs of man in the light of everyday living. Man wants to know his destiny after death, and if this life on earth will better prepare him for that destination, then man must live so as to have a hunger for self-perpetuation. He must live a life that is personal and irreplaceable. At the same time, while living that life, man must find and hold to a true religion whose beliefs best express his needs.

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9. Ibid., p. 217.

10. Luis J. Navascués, De Unamuno a Ortega y Gasset, p. 58.



## CHAPTER IV

## THE PROPHETS OF TRUE RELIGION: PURE AND UNDEFILED

Miguel de Unamuno as a poet was almost as famous as Unamuno the essayist and thinker. In much of his poetry we find the very essence of his religious and personal attitude toward life. He attempted to bare his soul by his use of rhythmic language, his play upon words and ideas, and a very rich, expressive vocabulary.

Unamuno was inspired to write his, El Cristo de Velázquez, from looking at and studying the painting of Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez. The remarkable "Crucifixion" depicts the youthful and symmetrical body of Christ upon the cross, in the midst of black space, but without any attempt to render anguish or despair.

In this work of mystical serenity, Unamuno expressed the intimate notes of Spanish Christianity and how through its images, the human feeling of sorrow can be shown as well as the longing for the absolute and the divine.

Christ is here depicted by Unamuno as One who, "invites us to lay our foreheads, crushed with the weight of a multitude of tempestuous griefs, upon the pillow of thy pallid breast, naked and quiet with the quietude of death, which is eternal life; Thou dost summon to repose the anxiety with which the soul doth live, kindling itself to hope".<sup>1</sup>

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1. Miguel de Unamuno, (translated by E.L. Turnbull), The Christ of Velazquez, p. 14.

Unamuno speaks of Christ as the Spanish look upon him. Most Spanish painters portrayed Christ in a so-called harsh, raw manner; thus does Velazquez compare life to a bull fight—a spectacle of blood and fury. So, the Christ is pictured as such because of the suffering He endured in life and death. In describing the analogy of Christ and Life, Unamuno said, "...Here and now in this bull ring of the world, in this life which is nothing but tragic bull-fighting, is the other Christ, the livid, the purple, the bleeding and exsanguious".<sup>2</sup> In the foregoing lines one is clearly able to discern the feeling that Unamuno had for his Christ, and at the same time his poetry is characterized by the use of rich, descriptive words.

The description of El Cristo de Velázquez was divided by Don Miguel into several categories. He describes Christ as the King of Life, The Door through which men pass seeking salvation, and the Tree of Life.

The Bible was frequently quoted by Unamuno, showing his knowledge of the Great Book. In speaking of Christ as The Door, Unamuno said, "Thou art the white door of the empyrean that is ever open to him that knocketh,..."<sup>3</sup> This compares to John 10:9 in the Holy Bible which reads, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture". Again Don Miguel said, "Thou art an opening to God, and he who through Thee looks on Him, dies

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2. Miguel de Unamuno (translated by J.E.C. Fritch), Essays and Soliloquies, pp. 80-81.

3. Turnbull, op. cit., p. 38.

for seeing Thee, at last, dies for love, and by dying for love recovers life, life that never dies".<sup>4</sup>

In the two passages quoted from Unamuno one has the first inkling of the relationship between the religion of Unamuno and the Christian religion.

Unamuno turned the pages of Biblical history farther back in the poem From Sinai To Calvary. In this piece of poetry he tells the Biblical story of the leading of the children of Israel by Moses: "The fear of the Lord, of the darkness is the beginning of wisdom, but to trust in Thee, Jesus, Light of Life, is the height of that wisdom".<sup>5</sup>

Don Miguel de Unamuno indicated in this work that man had to come to Christ, accept Him as such, and believe in Him before he could inherit eternal life. The Door opens a life to man that never dies. Thus do we know that Unamuno believed in an eternal life.

In his poem, "Final Prayer", Unamuno beseeches God by saying, "...We ask of Thee Lamb of God that dost take away the sins of the world,...mayst weave our lives on the loom of life eternal into the heavenly tunic of God".<sup>6</sup>

Thus does the reader have a clear insight to the great Spanish author's conception of God. His Creator and Heavenly Father was one to whom he could speak and ask favors.

Unamuno, in working out his own religion, had seen people

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4. Ibid., p. 38.

5. Ibid., p. 78.

6. Ibid., p. 130.



attain wealth and power and consequently had freed themselves from any form of religion. Of this he warned, "We shall never have a powerful and splendid and glorious and strong external life until we have kindled in the hearts of our people the fire of the eternal disquietudes. We cannot be rich so long as our life is nothing but deceit, and deceit is our spirit's daily bread".<sup>7</sup>

The renowned Spanish scholar, Unamuno, at one time compared the religion of Quixotism with that of his own. He did not believe that the doctrines of Don Quixote would triumph in this world because they were not of it. Don Miguel again makes a comparison between Don Quixote and Christ. He thought that if the world were to make a king of Don Quixote, then he (Quixote) would retire to a mountain to flee from the crowds, much as did Christ when, after the miracle of the loaves and fishes, the crowd sought to proclaim Him king.

Throughout his works, Unamuno had a tendency to create a feeling of unrest on the part of his readers, as this quotation in his own words bears out: "God, friend, did not send me into the world to be an apostle of peace, or to reap sympathy, but to be a sower of disquietude and irritation and to endure antipathy. Antipathy is the price of my redemption".<sup>8</sup> The unrest was created due to the restless conflict that raged within Unamuno's soul and heart. These were the thoughts which he constantly strove to record into the richest words,

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7. Flitch, Essays and Soliloquies, p. 107.

8. Ibid., p. 140.



which in turn became marvelous works of poetry, essays and novels. This brings to light a characteristic dislike of Unamuno: that of becoming a prisoner of his reading public. That is to say, he did not wish to submit himself to any course marked out for him by his readers. From Unamuno's Ensayos y Sentencias one can glean several good thoughts:

"¿ Por qué se habla?"

Se ha dicho y repetido muchas veces que el lenguaje se ha hecho para velar el pensamiento, para mentir; pero, entre nosotros por lo menos—y digo entre nosotros, porque entre los otros no he vivido—, el lenguaje sirve para ahorrarse el pensamiento; se habla cuando no se quiere pensar.<sup>9</sup>

"¡ No lea usted a Unamuno para matar el tiempo!"

Si me lees como mero lector X, para matar el tiempo, o porque no tienes otra cosa mejor que hacer o por divertirte con cosas que te parezcan—así me han dicho muchos que les parecen—un poco extrañas, entonces, te lo he de decir claramente, no me mereces ni respeto ni consideración alguna.<sup>10</sup>

"Unamuno quiere que se le pise"

No, yo no protesto nunca cuando alguien se declara superior a mí; espero tranquilamente que me lo pruebe con hechos; espero y deseo que trate de gobernarme y de pisarme; y si lo consigue, se lo agradezco, porque me ha probado que es mi superior y ha venido en ayuda de mi inferioridad.<sup>11</sup>

Of his religion, Unamuno said, "My religion is to seek truth in life and life in truth, even though knowing full well that I shall never find them so long as I live; my religion is to wrestle unceasingly and unwearyingly with mystery; my religion is to wrestle with God from nightfall until the breaking of the day, as Jacob is said to have wrestled with

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9. Beardsley, Ensayos y Sentencias de Unamuno, p. 39.

10. Ibid., p. 21.

11. Ibid., p. 11.

Him, 'Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect,' Christ said to us, and such an ideal of perfection is, without doubt, unattainable. But He put the unattainable before us as the goal and term of our endeavors....I wish to fight my fight careless of victory....this, then is my religion".<sup>12</sup> In seeking to define his religion he quotes Schleiermacher as saying, "...De que es el sencillo sentimiento de una relación de dependencia con algo superior a nosotros y el deseo de entablar relaciones con esa misteriosa potencia".<sup>13</sup>

Among other comments of religion are these:

"El sentimiento de divinidad y de Dios, y la fe, la esperanza y la caridad en él fundadas, fundan a su vez la religión".<sup>14</sup>

"Y a la relación con Dios, a la unión más o menos íntima con El, es a lo que llamamos religión".<sup>15</sup>

His religion or theory of religion was, as is here given, self-explanatory. He sought a perfect way of life, yet knowing that his goal was unattainable.

In the "Psalms" of Unamuno, perhaps more than in any other of his works, does one find his religion expressed. These are written in the Poesías, which, together with other various pieces, contain his religion that is sung or written, rather than expressed in logic and reasoning.

Another indication that Don Miguel de Unamuno was well-versed in the Bible, is evident in the fact that he was able

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12. Fitch, Essays and Soliloquies, p. 156.

13. Miguel de Unamuno, Del Sentimiento Trágico de la Vida, p. 218.

14. Ibid., p. 217.

15. Ibid., p. 217.

to depict the suffering of Christ in "El Cristo de Cabrera," much as he did in "El Cristo de Velázquez". Unamuno parallels the Bible story of St. Matthew where is recorded the aftermath to the Lord's Supper, as Jesus went into the Mount of Olives to pray and ask His Heavenly Father, "if it be possible let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt".

"La noche de la cena  
 con el alma del hombre  
 henchida hasta la muerte de tristeza,  
 se retiró Jesús como á oratorio  
 del olivar al monte,  
 y allí puesto de hinojos  
 y en él el Hombre y Dios en recia lucha  
 pidió a su Padre le apartara el vaso  
 de la amargura,  
 hasta que al fin sumiso  
 vencedor del combate soberano,  
 manso cordero dijo:  
 'mi voluntad no se haga, mas la tuga!'  
 Bajó entonces del cielo  
 á confortarle un ángel  
 y en las angustias del dolor supremo  
 sudó gotas de sangre,..."<sup>16</sup>

At the outset of his quest for a worthwhile, practical religion, Unamuno had doubts in his mind about the existence of a Supreme Being. He wanted to know God personally; to see Him in His entirety, and to know that He does exist. But, later after much meditation and study, Unamuno came to realize that man cannot know everything about God; that no one has seen God, and that man knows his Creator through His spirit which envelops one as he places his trust in Him. Unamuno felt God's spirit, and he wanted to believe and trust in Him; that is why he called on God for help in his unbelief:

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16. Unamuno, Poesías, p. 57.



"Yo te siento, Señor, no te conozco,  
 tu espíritu me envuelve,...  
 creo, confío en Tí, Señor; ayuda  
 mi desconfianza".<sup>17</sup>

In the poem, "En El Desierto", Unamuno wants to be alone with God so that he might have private conversation with Him and spread his soul out before Him, in order that God might be of greater help to him. Unamuno might be pictured in a lonely desert land on his knees as he begs and implores his Heavenly Father to make his life count for that which is good. In a voice that is almost audible one can sense that Unamuno is asking God to cleanse his life from all sin, and give him strength and courage for every task that life has for him.

Unamuno spoke of many subjects in his Poesías. In the poem, "Al Niño Enfermo", he tells the child not to be afraid of death, if it should come, because it is sweet and comforting.

Throughout Don Miguel's life he was constantly plagued with the problem of life itself. In his, "Nubes de Misterio", he told of imagining so many different things, so many different worlds. He spoke of life as being, "...Vida de eternidad y de misterio que jamás empezó y que nunca acaba".<sup>18</sup>

Again, in "La Vida es Limosna" one finds these words:

"Su señal dejó en ella algún ángel  
 antes de dormirse...  
 ha de despertarse...  
 cuando tú te duermas,  
 duermas para siempre..."

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17. Ibid., pp. 114-115.

18. Ibid., p. 173.

la vida es limosna.  
limosna la muerte".<sup>19</sup>

Some bits of sound advice were also spoken by Unamuno in the various poems contained in Poesías. For example, in "Perdon", he tells his readers that peace comes from within one's own heart. It is a divine treasure that God puts in man—the treasure of love. He warns that if one does not pardon himself, neither will God pardon us; and if man does not have peace within his soul, then surely God will not be able to give peace to that individual.

Another inspirational piece of literary art containing sound advice is, "Vencido". Unamuno advises the reader never to give up life:

"Es más dulce  
descanso, más sereno,  
vivir en el seguro  
firme del vencimiento  
que no en la incertidumbre  
del que dice: no quiero!"<sup>20</sup>

These examples clearly indicate the conception of Unamuno's religion. One also sees in his writings the Biblical knowledge, from which Unamuno freely drew in framing his religious thoughts. His concept of religion now clear, one sees that at the same time there dwelt within him the central theme of his life—that man was destined to be, as he himself was, a tragedian of religion.

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19. Ibid., p. 175.

20. Ibid., p. 235.

## CHAPTER V

## THE TRAGEDIAN OF RELIGION

One of the tenets in the religion of Unamuno was that of a belief in an eternal life. His one problem in that respect was the human destiny of man and the impossibility of solving it rationally because of the conflict between reason and faith.

Thus confronted with the problem of man's nature and destiny, in addition to the longing for a rational faith in the future life, the writer would like to enlighten the reader how that tragic sense of life resides in man's existence.

The subject, the tragic sense of life, is the theme for one of the better known works of Unamuno. He spoke of the great enterprise of culture that benefits man only in the sense that it makes one forget that he has been born and that he has to die. Unamuno himself confessed that he had the tragic sense of life: "...I confess that I have the tragic sense of life. I confess it without petulance or pedantry, and I know that you (the readers) will not doubt my sincerity."<sup>1</sup>

Religion fitted into Unamuno's view of the universe; not a systematic or dogmatic religion, but the religion of the individual man striving through an individual ideal to arrive at an individual Deity.

Unamuno refused to let himself be labelled as one believing in any one particular faith. That is, he did not consider

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1. Flicht, Essays and Soliloquies, p. 140.



himself a Lutheran, a Catholic or an atheist. His heart and feelings, however, bent toward an all embracing Christianity. He said of himself, "...I do not wish to have myself labelled, for I, Miguel de Unamuno, like every other man who aspires to full consciousness, am a unique species".<sup>2</sup> He continues, "...I count every man a Christian who invokes the name of Christ with respect and love, and I am repelled by the orthodox...who deny the Christianity of those who interpret the Gospel differently from themselves".<sup>3</sup>

Don Miguel was not in full accord with the Catholic religion at any time in his life. In fact he ventured so far as to make light of a Catholic funeral service which is depicted in his, Paz en la Guerra. He told how many young girls laughed and made fun of the sorrow visibly shown by the parents of the deceased. He believed that the tragic sense of life was essentially the Catholic sense of it, "...for Catholicism, and above all popular Catholicism, is tragic".<sup>4</sup> Again he is quoted in saying, "Porque lo específico religioso católico es la inmortalización y no la justificación al modo protestante...la religión depende de la moral, y no ésta de aquélla como en el catolicismo".<sup>5</sup>

In the art of living a useful life on earth, Unamuno told

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2. Ibid., p. 156.

3. Ibid., p. 157.

4. Flitch, The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and in Peoples, p. 295.

5. Unamuno, Del Sentimiento Trágico de la Vida, p. 70.

his readers that the belief in a life after death was not the reason for a person living a good life, but rather it was for being good that the individual had the belief of a never-ending life. He was also of the opinion that the belief in another life after man's earthly existence, was necessary in order that man might be able to live a more wholesome life on earth and give that life sustenance and finality.

Regarding one's vocation or life's work, Unamuno said, "Lo religioso es, sin duda, tratar de hacer que sea nuestra vocación el puesto en que nos encontramos, y, en último caso, cambiarlo por otro".<sup>6</sup>

Unamuno was of the opinion that each individual has his own cross to bear just as did Jesus Christ. Whatever one's task in life may be, he can strive for perfection just as his Heavenly Father is perfect. God did not condemn man to work, but that labor was meant to be the only practical consolation for having been born into this world.

This revealed that, according to Unamuno, every individual was put on earth for a certain reason, therefore, he should find his place in life and society and try to make his life count for the utmost good to humanity.

Unamuno's Niebla will give the reader an interpretation to man's destiny and nature, on the level of one man's life.

Augusto Perez was a man who did not know at times whether he really existed or not. Often he would question himself, "Do I really exist in this world, or is this merely a dream

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6. Ibid., pp. 268-269.



through which I am passing? All this that happens to me and to those that are around me, is it reality or fiction? Is this life perhaps not a dream of God, which will vanish when He awakens?" All these questions and doubts were a source of constant worry to Augusto.

When his mother passed away he had remembered her advice given him on her death-bed, that he should never marry any girl until he was absolutely positive that she would prove to be a woman of good character, and that she had the attributes of making a good mate for him.

One day, by chance, Augusto saw a lovely young lady passing by on the streets of his home town. He was immediately attracted to her physical beauty and the air of simplicity which seemed to surround her. He longed to gain an introduction to the young lass, but was unable to do so immediately. It was through the girl's aunt that he finally succeeded in obtaining the introduction.

It so happened that Mauricio was also a suitor for the hand of Eugenia——Augusto's newly-found friend. At the time that Augusto fell in love with Eugenia, she was on the point of marrying Mauricio; so it was that Augusto turned his attentions to another girl, Rosario. He again fell in love with Rosario, just as he had, and still loved, Eugenia. Augusto now is pictured as a totally confused individual in his love affairs, just as he was disturbed about his very existence.

The author now had him in a quandary. His total life was but a deep, dark mystery; as though he were living in a mist, as the title of the novel implies.

Augusto sought the solution to his problem by obtaining the advice of his friends who were, or had been married. Each turned Augusto's thoughts against marriage to either of the girls, by recounting their experiences to him, such as the story offered by Domingo, Augusto's male servant.

The servant told how after having lived with his first wife for such a number of years, she was unable to bear him any children. She later ran away with another man, leaving poor Domingo alone and in despair. Domingo then hit upon the idea that perhaps the wife of the man with whom his wife had run away, would also feel lonely, just as did Domingo. He proceeded to seek out the woman, fell in love with her, and they eventually married. The woman bore children to Domingo, but at the same time he heard that his former wife had now also borne children to her husband! This strange chain of events tended to confuse and harass poor Domingo, but, as he told Augusto, he had endured the heartbreak and agony, and now as a friend and servant of Augusto, he was warning his master against the pitfalls of marriage. He did not want Augusto to have to endure the mental agony through which he himself had lived.

Augusto had just about decided to marry Eugenia when the latter ran away to marry Mauricio. She left a note for Augusto telling him that she was leaving Rosario and they could be married if he so desired.

Augusto was now definitely turned against marriage, so he gave up his matrimonial ideas, and turned now to Unamuno, who supposedly was able to talk to his own created character.

Unamuno foretold Augusto's death, but the latter, now wanted to live. After he had endured so much in learning about life in such a short time, he now wanted more than ever to live, but Unamuno wanted to end his story with the passing of Augusto and also the death of his faithful dog, Orfeo. Thus when Augusto had learned what "life was all about", he met death and through its erratic ways, the capriciousness which was his life.

In another of Unamuno's renowned works, Paz en la Guerra, one is treated to an accurate portrayal of the Carlist Movement in Spain in 1874. The Carlist troops, once having been expelled from Spain, re-entered the country in 1873 and laid siege to Bilbao——Unamuno's native city.

The story concerns Pedro Antonio Iturriondo, who was the owner of a confectionary in Bilbao, and his family. Ignacio, the son, was practically reared on the street that passed in front of his father's store. The parents were much too busy in their business establishment to tend to the needs of Ignacio, therefore he grew up as best he could and with little attention from his parents.

As a young boy, Ignacio went to mass and listened to the Catholic rituals in Latin, but he understood very little of it. After he became a soldier, in the army organized to resist the Carlists, he often heard this song pertaining to religion:

"A mí que me importa  
De paz ni de guerra  
Pirata de tierra  
Yo tengo de ser.

.....



Cuento las monedas de oro  
y viva la religión!"<sup>7</sup>

During the siege of Bilbao, the women did not understand the meaning of the war. They could see materialistic structures being destroyed and lives being lost, but why? "¡ Cosas de hombres! Y decían defender la religión. ¿ Qué entenderán por religión los hombres? ¡ La religión! ¡ El reino dulce de la paz!"<sup>8</sup>

Ignacio fought in many battles always coming out unscathed, until one day his parents received the news of his death in combat. They were so stunned they at first were skeptical of the facts; but in time they resigned themselves to the tragic truth. Again Unamuno makes light of the Catholic religion by indicating to the reader that Ignacio's mother said her prayers without the least meditation on the words or their meaning. She did not show the least hesitation on the words, "hagase tu voluntad".

At Ignacio's funeral services a friend of Don Pedro told him, "Dios pone a prueba nuestra paciencia y nos da tribulaciones...los que tenemos la inmerecida dicha de poder disponer de los inefables consuelos de la fe..."<sup>9</sup> and he did not finish the quotation, but the friend was merely pointing out this fact to the worried father.

After the funeral the father felt a strange calmness

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7. Miguel de Unamuno, Paz en la Guerra, p. 147.

8. Ibid., p. 218.

9. Ibid., p. 296.

come over his soul. Such a calmness as he had never experienced since before his son's death. It was due to the fact that he prayed as he had never prayed before, and reproached himself for feeling as he did, when he should be renewing his vows to God that he would live for the sheer joy that would come to him upon being reunited with his son in the world beyond death.

Later Don Pedro Antonio had a second chance to reaffirm his intentions when his wife passed away due to grief for her dead son. The husband went to church every day to pray and as he did his thoughts were: "Vive en la verdadera paz de la vida....Espera que esta vida profunda se le prolongue más allá de la muerte, para gozar, en un día sin noche, de luz perpetua, de claridad infinita, de descanso seguro, en firme paz, en paz imperturable y segura, paz por dentro y por fuera, paz del todo permanente".<sup>10</sup>

Pachio, another character in the story, also profited from the war. He had now had less fear of death, and he also realized just how short this life on earth really is, compared to the life after death.

In the final analysis it took war to bring peace to hearts of many. Unamuno philosophizes that everyone should search for peace, even in war itself: "Hay que buscar la paz; paz en la guerra misma".<sup>11</sup>

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10. Ibid., p. 330.

11. Ibid., p. 336.

Unamuno wanted to make it clear that the Catholic solution, of the problem of immortality and eternal salvation of the individual soul, satisfies the longing of man, but the attempt to rationalize it by means of a dogmatic theology fails to satisfy the reason.

His idea of religion was not in full accord with the belief of the Roman Catholic Church, which is governed by a hierarchy, the supreme authority being the Pope of Rome.

Unamuno is to be considered a believer of Protestantism, as one who "protested" against customs and practices of the of the Catholic Church which were contrary to the teachings of the New Testament.

Don Miguel de Unamuno had a concept of what he desired in a religion, and this belief resulted in what man today recognizes as true Christianity. As has been reiterated, Unamuno believed in the Bible, particularly the New Testament. His reading and belief were so great that he often quoted from it in his novels and poems. Unamuno also believed in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; such is also the belief of modern day Protestants. This great Spanish author also believed in the life everlasting. Protestantism exalts the greatest words ever spoken to men, found in the Holy Bible, verse sixteen of the Gospel according to St. John: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life".

Unamuno's beliefs closely paralleled the Christian creed; thus it is that we call the religion of Don Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo, the modern version of Protestantism.



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VITA

Manuel Ramirez  
candidate for the degree of  
Master of Arts

Thesis: RELIGION IN THE WORKS OF UNAMUNO

Major: Spanish

Biographical and Other Items:

Born: March 26, 1923 at Billings, Oklahoma

Undergraduate Study: Oklahoma Baptist University,  
1941-1949

Graduate Study: O.A.M.C., 1949-1952

Experiences: Army, 78th Infantry Division in Germany  
and Belgium, 1943-1946; employed by Muskogee  
Board of Education since 1949.

Member of Kappa Delta Pi, Oklahoma Education Association,  
National Education Association, and Muskogee Education  
Association.

Date of Final Examination:



THESIS TITLE: RELIGION IN THE WORKS OF  
UNAMUNO

AUTHOR: MANUEL RAMIREZ

THESIS ADVISER: PROFESSOR A. A. ARNOLD

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TYPIST: JEANNE M. ODEN