

Pedro Calderón de la Barca.

La exaltación de la cruz.

Edición de Ignacio Arellano.

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MANY READERS OF THIS JOURNAL will by now be familiar with the *Comedias completas de Calderón* series of which this edition of *La exaltación de la cruz* constitutes volume 27. Fewer will know this particular *comedia religiosa*, which perhaps stands out for the extension and detail of its didactic treatment of several of the great mysteries of the Christian faith and also for the splendor of several set-piece scenes described in its stage directions. The final scene, for instance, involves the cracking open of a mountain to reveal the city of Jerusalem with, at its center, a shining altar upon which the True Cross is to be deposited. Arellano's edition of *La exaltación* provides a very clean, readable play text accompanied by the standard scholarly apparatus of bibliography, list of variants, and index of footnotes (the latter, in the main, drawing on the *Diccionario de Autoridades*, Covarrubias's *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*, *Corpus Diacrónico del Español* [CORDE], the Bible, Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*, and Arellano's own excellent *Repertorio de motivos de los autos sacramentales de Calderón* [U de Navarra 2011]). The edition is available electronically to those whose libraries have the relevant subscription. Professor Arellano's work here and more generally as the director of Iberoamericana / Vervuert's Biblioteca Áurea Hispánica, to which the Calderón series belongs, is of very substantial importance for the study of this playwright, bringing as it does reliable and readily accessible versions of many lesser-known plays to a wide audience, a task crucial to the expansion of the Calderonian canon and the continuing refinement of our appreciation of his oeuvre.

Notionally set in the seventh-century Middle East, the principal action of *La exaltación de la cruz* traces the capture of the True Cross by the pagan horde led by Persian king Cosdroas and its eventual recovery by Emperor Heraclio of Byzantium, who—having learned the pious lessons many of Calderón's kings learn during the course of his plays—triumphantly restores the Cross to its proper place in Jerusalem. At the heart of the *comedia*, then, we have the clash between paganism and Christianity and, as Arellano observes, this is one of several binaries upon which Calderón constructs his plot and characters. Cosdroas has two sons, upstanding Siroes and his

scheming brother, Menardes. Heraclio's soul is torn between two women, beautiful Eudocia, for whom he pines at the start of the play, and Clodomira, Queen of Gaza, who teaches him to prioritize his duty as a Christian prince over the romantic desires of a private individual. Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, Calderón brings together the two sages whose debates would have offered the Golden Age spectator the intellectual meat of *La exaltación*: Zacarías, Christian priest of the Jerusalem temple, and pagan sorcerer Anastasio, who, in the manner of Cipriano of Calderón's better-known *El mágico prodigioso* (1637), is seeking enlightenment, searching for the True God. By way of a series of scholastic-style debates on topics ranging from redemption from original sin to the nature of the hypostatic union, Zacarías convinces his interlocutor of the truth of the Christian religion. This may not be one of Calderón's most stirring, thought-provoking, or entertaining comedias, but it is a decent example of the playwright's religious dramaturgy (note, for instance, his weaving into the dramatic verse scriptural quotation and paraphrase), and it illustrates once again just how perennial many of Calderón's thematic concerns are: kingship, the love-honor dichotomy, and strained relationships between fathers and sons and among brothers are all examined here.

Arellano's fifty-one-page introduction to *La exaltación* is divided into sections that cover the controversy relating to the play's title, the play's possible sources, its doctrinal content, and some thoughts on staging. There is also a helpfully detailed overview of the play's action (including identification of the verse forms used) that breaks this down into some core structural components. Finally, there is an explanation and justification of the base text Arellano has selected. If parts of this introduction seem a little sparse or routine, and something approaching a panoptic vision is not ultimately achieved, the breadth and depth of Arellano's expertise in the religious culture of early modern Spain ensures that what discussion exists is persuasive and insightful. The deft resolution of the doubts pertaining to the play's title is a good example.

La exaltación de la cruz does not appear in the various lists of Calderón's comedias that date from the seventeenth century, but the title *El triunfo de la cruz* is present. Scholars have wondered if this might be an alternative title to the same play. Arellano dismisses the possibility, arguing convincingly that these two titles correspond to two clearly distinct Church celebrations whose substance Calderón's contemporaries would not have confused (the Triumph of the Cross relating not to Heraclius's recovery of the True Cross but to the Christian victory at Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212). The most likely explanation, then, Arellano holds, is a scribal lapsus.

The section on the play's possible sources considers two of the best-known hagiographies of the period, Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea* (1265) and Pedro de Ribadeneira's *Flos sanctorum* (1599); Arellano explains that the account the play gives of its core subject matter follows these sources closely, especially the second of two versions of the legend found in the *Legenda*. The most pertinent sections from these texts are reproduced, but Arellano holds back from identifying a definitive source, since he argues that "los detalles básicos [Calderón] pudo extraerlos de cualquiera de las [fuentes] que tenía a

su disposición, como la citada de Ribadeneira, u otras muchas posibles,” going on to assert that “la adaptación de los datos recogidos a los objetivos de su drama es el trabajo poético que más nos puede interesar” (16). True enough, but this latter task can be most effectively undertaken only when exact sources are identified, and some readers might think it a pity that this edition leaves—to a large degree—the work of identifying and analyzing Calderón’s adaptations to other scholars.

The final substantial matter discussed in the introductory materials is the choice of base text for the edition. Arellano rejects the various printed editions deriving from the 1652 princeps in favor of MS 19597 of the Biblioteca Nacional de España, which, he is confident, presents a text that is earlier than that of the first printed edition. Arellano justifies his decision on the ground that the manuscript play text is “[el] más completo y coherente” (56), the printed editions (almost certainly without Calderón’s involvement) reducing the length of the play (as found in the manuscript) by some 370 lines that mostly develop the doctrinal debates between Anastasio and Zacarías. The manuscript text is corrected with reference to the princeps and to Vera Tasis’s 1683 edition, where their readings are deemed superior. Arellano’s choice of base text is a good one for a critical edition likely to be of interest to scholars more than theater practitioners. Though it is perhaps an acquired taste, the doctrinal content is certainly one of *La exaltación*’s more distinctive elements, so it makes sense to choose the version that plays best to that strength.

In short, as is typical of the *Comedias completas de Calderón* series, Arellano’s edition of *La exaltación de la cruz* provides the reader with an excellent play text, with sound apparatus, and a useful introduction. The latter, whilst relatively brief and eschewing matters of literary interpretation, nonetheless offers a number of insights that will no doubt serve to whet the appetites of future scholars keen to devote time to this play and make their mark on what constitutes almost unexplored Calderonian territory. This edition begins to map it out, and that is to be warmly welcomed.