

Stuart B. Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World*, New York and London, Yale University Press, 2008, 336 p. + xiv pp., ISBN 9780300158540

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I agree with a colleague who stated in a recent congress in Madrid: “The book by Stuart Schwartz demonstrates how secularization and modernity can be found where they are not expected.” Indeed, *All Can Be Saved* is an in-depth study of popular ideas about salvation and religious tolerance in a broad region that is usually identified with intolerance and Inquisition: the early modern Iberian World. While the first impulse that drove Schwartz to write this book was the reading of the classic *The Cheese and the Worms* (1976) by Carlo Ginzburg, the choice of the area of Portugal, Spain and their colonial dependencies in America is not just a provocation, but the consequence of the author’s long familiarity with Iberian history. A major scholar of Latin American studies, Schwartz is well known for his innovative studies about early modern Brazil, its administrative institutions, the social history of sugar cane economy and slavery. His passage to cultural and religious history fits in a pattern of neoliberal interpretation of the Western civilization between the discovery of America and the French Revolution. Written in a pleasant narrative style, rich in captivating stories and details, the book deals with a wide range of propositions concerning religion, beliefs and justice, recorded by the Inquisition: even if expressed by common people, assertions like “each person can be saved in his or her religion,” claims for tolerance towards the victims of inquisitors or popular violence, as well as other generic statements that indicated thoughts which dissented from orthodoxy and the unquestionable authority of the Catholic Church, would be “the key to understand how the formalized theories of toleration, the great texts of Bayle, Locke, Voltaire, and others, eventually became part of the general intellectual and political life of modern Europe” (243). Therefore, those obscure men would have been “precursors of our world.”

Schwartz’s conclusion crowns a book which challenges our knowledge of the history of Western civilization and general convictions about the genesis of the present world at least in three ways: first, it shows the relevance of folk culture in the shaping of religious tolerance by comparison with the attitudes of the elites, ideas diffused by print and the changes provoked by international trade; second, it stresses that the Iberian World had a very special place in this story, even if cases like those analysed by Schwartz were not limited to that region; and finally, the Atlantic area emerges as an ocean of tolerance, contrasting its traditional representation as hell itself, conveyed by missionaries worried about the difficulty of evangelization, as well as by ancient and modern detractors of colonialism and slavery.

The book is divided into three parts of diverse lengths. The first section (*Iberian Doubts*) is composed of four chapters on the societies of the Iberian Peninsula, reflecting on the similarities and differences between Spain and Portugal, as well as focusing on the religious sensibility of the Old Christian majority, ethnic minorities (Conversos and Moriscos) and foreigners. The second section (*American Liberties*) devotes three chapters to the aspects that would have made the New World a special breeding ground for religious tolerance, freedom of conscience and coexistence among different peoples and cultures. The third section (*Toward Toleration*) deals with the relationship between popular tolerance and the values of toleration and equality professed by thinkers and philosophers during the age of Enlightenment. This final part is shorter than the previous, and includes only two chapters, the second of which is a sort of general conclusion of the book.

In the trials of Portuguese and Spanish Inquisitions Schwartz found several stories of artisans, millers, farmers, sailors, soldiers and other popular workers (mainly men), who made claims for an old dream—the possibility of salvation for each one—criticizing forced conversions and punishments meted out by ecclesiastical courts. Limited by a certain incoherence, these statements would have been evidence of what a part of common people thought. Schwartz does not hide his fondness for what he considers a subculture of tolerance shared by relativists, universalists, sceptics, atheists and dissidents in general, who reveal that there were opportunities for tolerance even in an intransigent and fanatic society as the early modern Iberian was. References to other

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permissive contexts like seventeenth-century Amsterdam, or to the major representatives of French and English culture between the seventeenth and eighteenth century (but not to the Socinians) are not missing in the book. In spite of a recurrent insistence on the notion of circularity of ideas among different cultural levels, however, Schwartz dismisses these crucial passages exalted by traditional historiography dominated by intellectual approach, as a sphere that ended up by obliterating attitudes and sentiments of the common folk.

The experiment is undoubtedly intriguing, but the weak spot of the book is to be found exactly in the claim of autonomy of this tolerant popular culture or, more properly, in the lack of an explication about its relationship with more elaborated positions of humanists, clerics (Franciscans, chiefly) and learned men in general, who supported religious tolerance and rejected the Church's authority. Therefore, the outcome of this promising return to matters that had been almost forgotten for Iberian Peninsula after the pioneering book on Spanish local religion by William Christian (1981) is prejudiced to some extent by the refusal to attempt a global interpretation of such a complex phenomenon. Schwartz clearly says so: "the origins of these ideas remain obscure" (138). This admission goes together with a trouble-free use of controversial categories as "popular culture" or "syncretism" but also a positivistic reading of inquisitorial sources. The author claims to apply micro-historical methodology. However, even if Schwartz focuses the lens on many secondary trials, the few lines dedicated to each story and the absence of concrete historical connections among them make the model followed by the author quite different from the book by Ginzburg on the Friulan miller Menocchio.

The light shed on the unknown dimension of popular thought about religion and salvation in the early modern Iberian World is darkened by a vague chronology (not devoid of errors about relevant dates in the history of Portuguese Inquisition) and by a not completely persuasive reconstruction of the genealogy and movement of the ideas of tolerance. According to Schwartz, relativism and universalism were not a prerogative of specific groups, and became more and more common among people who lived in the Iberian World from the second half of the sixteenth-century onwards. Roughly one century later, while in the rest of Europe theories of toleration were flourishing, recurrence of this kind of propositions before Portuguese and Spanish Inquisitions decreased, perhaps because dissidents would have become prudent. But this periodization is suspect since it derives from statistics of inquisitorial repression that could not correspond to a real diffusion of these ideas.

I also doubt whether the question of the eternal destiny of the Amerindians who had lived without the gospel before Columbus really troubled common folk and implemented religious tolerance. Nor did the melting pot of colonial society seem to have promoted a new development among Africans or Indians, whose cultural reaction to Iberian invasion and occupation should have been profitably studied drawing on Serge Gruzinski's exemplar book about the "colonization of the imaginary" (1988). However, as Schwartz admits, in inquisitorial sources "the content of the propositions in the Indies closely resembled that of Spain" (129). A case from New Spain quoted in the book confirms this: Pedro de Azuaga, a Franciscan friar, was denounced to the Inquisition in 1573 for preaching in the principal church of Guadalajara that "each person can save himself in his own law, the Moor in his, the Jew in his" (135). Even if such a proposition could have alluded to the matter of the salvation of the Indians, first of all it continued a tradition that had originated and grew in Portugal and Spain.

Schwartz does not mention trials against Portuguese humanists like the royal chronicler Fernão da Pina, or the former Dominican Fernando Oliveira, who were charged with heresy by the Lisbon Inquisition in the 1540s. Both maintained that pagans would have been saved without baptism. In addition, Pina stressed the validity of the religious openness of the Roman Empire, making a significant parallel with "the Turk who lets each one live in his own law, Christians being Christians, Jews being Jews" (Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Inquisição de Lisboa, proc. 12.091). Schwartz places all this into a sort of dialectic of Catholicism, in which a tradition that excluded non-Christian people from salvation was opposed by a more open position, which defended the possibility to avoid damnation even for the non-baptized. Signs of this dialectic could still be detected in contemporary culture, considering the tensions between Vatican Council II and the restrictive theology supported by Pope Benedict XVI. On the contrary, I think that if there was an Iberian contribution to the history of religious tolerance it should be recognized in the special relationship existing among the three monotheistic religions after the age of forced conversion that, from the end of the fifteenth century, brought about uniformity in the peninsula in terms of religious faith.

Schwartz's representation of Portuguese and Spanish religious history suffers from a rigidity that prevents him from appreciating how much Jews and Muslims were shocked by the transition towards Christianity. The radical change of the horizon was followed by various reactions which helped to create bridges between the religiosity of new converts and the faith of the Old Christian majority: the quest for a common ground of beliefs by means of reinterpretation and selection of specific religious aspects on both sides had great importance in the policy of assimilation. Recent studies like Felipe Pereda's book about the catechistic strategy of

Moriscos in Granada based on devotional images (2007), as well as the research by Stefania Pastore stressing the contribution of “Converso spirituality” to the alumbrados’ universalism and indifference toward exterior religion (2004), could have supplied Schwartz with more than a simple hypothesis about the genesis of religious tolerance in the Iberian World. It was precisely in those contexts that strong criticism and alternatives to the Spanish Inquisition emerged, being not a generic refusal of religious coercion, but a claim for a not discriminated inclusion of the converted minorities according to the Pauline teaching.

The underestimation of the concrete religious origins of the concept of universal salvation in the Iberian Peninsula complicates also a correct setting of the study about the more general relationship between popular tolerance and the formal theories of toleration, which, as pointed out by David Sorkin (2008), were influenced also by the religious currents of the Enlightenment. Nor have fanaticism and intolerance disappeared from the world since then. From this point of view, though the contribution of such propositions detectable among common folk in Portugal, Spain and Latin America may be emphasized, I am not sure that attitudes and sentiments of those men prefigured our world: they will probably be outsiders in contemporary Western society, just as they were in the world they lived in.

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