

# *The Historiography of Science and Religion in Europe*

with Jaume Navarro and Kostas Tampakis, “Science and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Non-Anglo-American Perspectives”; M. Alper Yalçinkaya, “‘Science,’ ‘Religion,’ and ‘Science-and-Religion’ in the Late Ottoman Empire”; Kostas Tampakis, “High Science and Natural Science: Greek Theologians and the Science and Religion Interactions (1832–1910)”; Agustín Ceba Herrero and Joan March Noguera, “Serving God, Fatherland, and Language: Alcover, Catalan, and Science”; Jaume Navarro, “Draper in Spain: The Conflicting Circulation of the Conflict Thesis”; and Neil Tarrant, “Science, Religion, and Italy’s Seventeenth Century Decline: From Francesco de Sanctis to Benedetto Croce.”

## “SERVING GOD, FATHERLAND, AND LANGUAGE”: ALCOVER, CATALAN, AND SCIENCE

by Agustín Ceba Herrero  and Joan March Noguera 

*Abstract.* This article intends to contribute to the science–religion historiography with two topics—philology and the construction of national identities—that can help provide a more complex picture of the relations between science and religion. We use the life and work of the Mallorcan Catholic priest Antoni Maria Alcover (1862–1932) as a case study that puts language, linguistics, and nationalism on the board of science and religion studies. Alcover was the main driving force of the Catalan Dictionary, a collective enterprise that set out to inventory the complete oral and literary lexicon of this language, and which mobilized thousands of people, many of which were clergymen, from all over the Catalan-speaking territories. In the article, we will explore Alcover’s education; the way he established a link between language, religion, and fatherland; the shaping of his identity as a philologist in the image mainly of new German notions and practices; as well as his role in the institutionalization process of the Catalan language as a scientific language, as a language for science and for religion.

*Keywords:* Catalan; Catalonia; Catholicism; language; linguistics; Mallorca; nationalism; philology; Spain

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In 1879, a seventeen-year-old Mallorcan seminarian wrote a lengthy poem dedicated to his mathematics and science teacher, where he expressed his love for the sciences, as long as they were in harmony with “The creation of the World by God our Lord” (March Noguera 1996, 78).<sup>1</sup> This typically concordist sentiment had been put forward by Antoni Maria Alcover i Sureda (1862–1932), who would later become a multifaceted priest, widely known as *Mossèn Alcover*. A man of many parts (priest, seminary teacher, historian, journalist, song compiler, architect), he is known first and foremost by his work as a folklorist, since he recreated more than 400 folk tales in the volumes of *Aplec de Les Rondalles Mallorquines de Jordi d’Es Recó*, a collection that would eventually become the best-selling literary work ever written in Mallorca (Veny i Clar 2000, 5–6). Additionally, he was the main driving force behind the *Diccionari de la Llengua Catalana* (Catalan language dictionary), a collective project that set out to inventory the complete oral and literary lexicon of this language. The project mobilized thousands of people, many of whom were clergymen, from all over the Catalan-speaking territories, tasked with collecting every dialectal variant of the written and spoken language (Alcover 1902d, 142).

In the nineteenth century, both collecting folk tales and producing a dictionary were activities that belonged to philology, a new academic discipline that had been institutionalized initially in the German territories during the first third of the nineteenth century, and later in other European countries. Thus, philology, comprising the study of language and literature, mainly used a historic and comparative method. Not only that, but it was also considered a science, at a time when this term was not associated mainly, as it is today, with the physical and natural sciences (Knight 2009, 239). Alcover himself referred to philology in one of his writings as the “science of language,” which had the main goal of “mathematically explaining the formation of languages” (Alcover 1902d, 142).

The nineteenth century is also the century of nationalisms. In the case of Spain, we find not only Spanish (Alvárez Junco 2001) but also Basque and Catalan nationalisms, emerging at the turn of the twentieth century. As recently suggested by Michiel Leezenberg (2016, 253), the role of philology as a science in the construction of national languages and identities in the nineteenth century needs to be explored, keeping in mind that Michel Foucault ([1970] 2002, 282) already regretted that the birth of this discipline had attracted less interest than that of biology or economy, despite the fact that our culture had been more influenced by philology.

Building on those elements, it could be said that religion, language, and science are the central issues in Alcover’s biography. Taking into account that the content and meaning of those terms did not stay constant over the course of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, the aim of this article is to explore the relationship established by Alcover between them, and the extent to which the reconfiguration of the identity of these concepts

became intermingled with the construction of a Catalan national identity. Unlike other valuable contributions centered on his life (Moll 1962; Massot i Muntaner 1985; Janer Manila 1996; Veny i Clar 2000; Moll Marquès 2009; Valriu Llinàs 2018), his relationship with science (March Noguera 2001), his philological work (Julià i Muné 2000, 2005; Colón Domènech 2003; Perea 2005; Corbera Pou 2006), and his folktales (Grimalt and Guiscafrè 1996–2017; Valriu Llinàs 2018; Gelabert i Miró 2019), we will complete this panorama by claiming that Alcover's philological projects are grounded on a worldview whereby religion, language, nation, and science have to be jointly analyzed. As a matter of fact, Alcover, for instance, organized and presided over the First International Conference on the Catalan Language in 1906, and was henceforth dubbed the Apostle of Catalan Language. Therefore, and along the lines of the other articles in this monograph, we intend to contribute to the science–religion historiography with two topics—the history of philology and the construction of national identities—that can help provide a more complex picture of the relations between science and religion.

This article presents a figure that is virtually unknown on an international level. However, it is not our intention to write a vindication or a eulogy of a philologist that has been rendered invisible by historians of science. Our goal is to use his life and work as a case study that puts language, linguistics, and nationalism on the board of science and religion studies. That being said, the ambitions, passions, or disappointments in Alcover's life have a presence in our narrative, inasmuch as they are elements that characterize him as a scientist (Nye 2006, 322).

In the first part of this article, we will offer a view into the education of Alcover in the midst of a changing political and religious context, into how neo-Thomism influenced him at the seminary, and how he established a link between language and religion. In the second section, we will explain the origin of his interest in philology and how he modeled his identity as a philologist. The third and fourth sections will deal with two complementary aspects, namely, Alcover's role in the institutionalization process of the Catalan language as a scientific language and as a language for science.

#### AN EDUCATION WITHIN A POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS, AND THOMISTIC RESTORATION

Alcover was born in Manacor (Mallorca) on February 2, 1862, to a family of well-to-do peasants. His early years as a seminarian coincided with Pope Leo XIII's issuing of the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879), reinstating the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, and encouraging Catholic clergymen to study the sciences. The effects of this appeal by Leo XIII were soon to be felt in Alcover and the group of young seminarians with whom

he socialized, most notably Pere Joan Campins (1859–1915), the future Bishop of Mallorca, and Josep Miralles Sbert (1860–1947), future Bishop of Lleida, Barcelona, and Mallorca. Following Leo XIII, they all went on to study in other institutions after being ordained, and ended up holding chairs in the Seminary. In the case of Alcover, he was ordained a priest in 1886 and, after two years of ministry in his home town, he went back to the Seminary of Mallorca to teach Church History and Discipline.

This group of young priests attended conferences such as the *I Congreso Católico Nacional*, held in Madrid in 1889, as part of a Mallorcan delegation including more than 170 people, both clergy and laymen. These meetings—five in little more than ten years in Spain—were a formula used by the Catholic European movement to unify political, economic, social, and scientific criteria in the face of an increasingly secularized society. Another avenue for participation in the neo-Thomistic movement was through the academies created to that end. Campins, for instance, was appointed corresponding member of the *Academia Filosófico-Científica Santo Tomás de Aquino de Barcelona* in 1887, and Josep Miralles, perhaps the most cultivated member of the three, inaugurated the 1889–1890 course with an unmistakably neo-Thomistic address, in which he listed different “sages” who “had successfully applied scholastic theories to different branches of human knowledge,” and recalled how the famous *Abbé Moigno* had shown the concordance of modern sciences with the doctrine of Saint Thomas, following Leo XIII (Miralles y Sbert 1891). Along those lines, by means of a letter written three years later, Josep Miralles famously conveyed to Alcover the apologetic purpose of the study of sciences in the Seminary: “By studying more they would become better priests, because science is the sister of virtue, and he who does not know much cannot be a good propagandist” (Miralles to Alcover 25/12/1892 in March Noguera 2001, 149).

From a political point of view, the Alcover family were active Carlists, Carlism being a political movement originated in 1833 that wanted to reclaim the Spanish throne for a different branch of the Bourbon dynasty. This dispute, which caused three civil wars in Spain, the last one spanning from 1872 to 1876, was not merely dynastic but fundamentally ideological, because Carlism was opposed in general terms to liberalism, centralism, and freedom of worship, advocating instead for traditional monarchy. Carlist ideology was dominant among the students and lecturers in the Seminary, but not all Catholics were Carlists. Others, like Joan Maura, also a lecturer in the Seminary and later Bishop of Oriola, were members of *Unión Católica*, a party supported by the Catholic hierarchy that intended to accept the liberal regime. Carlism launched furious campaigns against the “mixed-bloods,” their disparaging term for liberal-conservative Catholics (Martí 1992, 9). Active in politics and a writer since 1884, Alcover started to antagonize liberals and “half-bloods” in the pages of the local traditionalist

press, in magazines and newspapers such as *El Centinela*, *El Ancora*, and *El Tambor*, being a founding member of the latter.

It was during this period of intense political and religious militancy in the local press that Alcover's obsession with Catalan language also emerged. In 1880, when he was only 18, Alcover decided to adopt Catalan as his literary language following the advice of future Bishop Miralles. This decision was influenced by the fact that Catalan was crucial for his pastoral duties, since it was the language the popular classes in Mallorca used to communicate and, as such, Alcover considered its study indispensable. Some months earlier, this link between language and religion established by Alcover had been also enthusiastically embraced by the man he considered his master in Catalan philology, Tomàs Forteza (1838–1898), one of the intellectuals that influenced him most. This outstanding Mallorcan figure had contact with many of the Catalan authors of the *Renaixença*, a cultural rebirth movement that promoted the literary use of the Catalan language.

It was also Tomàs Forteza who recommended him *La Tradició Catalana*, by the priest and future Bishop of Vic Josep Torras i Bages (1846–1916), in August 1892. This book claimed that Christianity and regionalism were compatible from the point of view of Christian ethics, and Forteza was convinced that Alcover would become a regionalist just like he had himself (Forteza to Alcover 8/8/1892 in March Noguera 2001, 144). As a matter of fact, this political stance had been recently legitimized by Pope Leo XIII through the encyclical *Libertas Praestantissimum* (1888), where no objections were raised against regionalist and nationalist movements. Therefore, Alcover found in regionalism the political expression best suited for the development of his ideal: ennobling the Catalan language to make God's message more accessible for the Mallorcan people.

Alcover's correspondence shows that, from 1892 onward, he and his close friends were convinced that fundamentalism was a political failure and they became progressively disenchanted with their youthful political belligerence. Therefore, he—together with a group of Catholic priests and laypersons—joined a movement for the renovation of the Mallorcan Church, inspired by Leo XIII's encyclicals and the regionalist tenets of Torras i Bages. This culminated in the appointment of Pere Joan Campins as Bishop of Mallorca in 1898, who in turn selected Antoni Maria Alcover as his vicar general. From that office, Alcover played a decisive role in the renovation of the Seminary syllabus.

The new *Ratio Studiorum* introduced many changes, both in contents and methodology (Bauçà Ochogavía 1981; Rosselló Lliteras 1987; March Noguera 2001). We want to emphasize here one of its most innovative aspects: a regionalist turn. The syllabus being written not only in Latin but also in Catalan was a novelty to begin with. Furthermore, Mallorcan History and Mallorcan Language and Literature were introduced as subjects. Those innovations echoed the regionalism advocated by Torras i Bages,

and Catalan was taught for the first time in a secondary or university-level teaching institution in the Catalan-speaking territories (March Noguera 2001, 221). Thus, Alcover became the first chair of Mallorcan Language and Literature in the Seminary of Mallorca. This subject had an enormous impact and generated such a demand that the lectures had to be opened to the public (March Noguera 2001, 221–22). Alcover also took part in the revision into Catalan of the Catechism of the Catholic Church in Mallorca (March Noguera 2001, 307). This was a controversial task since a decree of the Spanish Ministry in 1902 established that the Catholic faith should be taught only in Spanish. Not surprisingly, Alcover, bishop Campins, and many local clergymen opposed that decision, arguing that this bill was against “the supreme interests in the dioceses where the Spanish language is not that of the people” (Campins to Prime Minister, in Fullana Puigserver 2015, 457–58).

Finally, we should briefly mention that under his leadership, Bishop Campins articulated the identity of Catholic regionalism in Mallorca around a number of centenaries relative to the conquest and creation of the kingdom of Mallorca in the thirteenth century, such as the seventh centenary of the birth of King Jaume I (in 1908) and the sixth centenary of the death of Jaume II (in 1905), the recovery of the remains of King Jaume III (also in 1905), and the restoration of the largely symbolic churches of Lluc and the cathedral of Mallorca. Prior among these commemorations were the celebrations for the sixth centenary of the death of Ramon Llull in 1915, a key figure in the configuration of modern Mallorcan Catholic nationalism, as we shall later see (Fullana Puigserver 2015, 573; Horrach i Labrés 2017, 168–70, 179–81).

#### FROM RONDALLES MALLORQUINES TO THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE CATALAN LANGUAGE

Alcover showed an interest in writing from a very young age, using only Spanish at first and, after 1880, mainly in Catalan. Influenced by his reading of the Basque-born traditionalist *costumbrista* writer Antonio Trueba (1819–1889), very popular at the time due to his collections of tales, Alcover tried to imitate his style when he was only sixteen by writing about Mallorcan scenes (March Noguera 2001, 48). Following Trueba and others, he soon began to collect lexical findings and folk songs in several notebooks (Perea 2012, 8). But it was his close friendship with Tomàs Forteza, probably the only person in Mallorca familiar with modern philology (Corbera Pou 2006, 4), and whom Alcover considered his master, that set off his career as a linguist.

In 1885, due to the support of his acquaintances in the local literary scene, he published the *Contarelles*, his first book, with a foreword by Tomàs Forteza. Five folktales were recreated, together with eight sketches

or “scenes of customs” depicting popular culture. In 1889, when he was already teaching at the Seminary, he conceived the project of collecting folk tales (*rondalles*) by interviewing relatives, friends, and acquaintances. His goal was to compile those folktales that were known to the people through oral tradition, those told by illiterate narrators, those that, therefore, were not to be found in any books (Alcover 1931, 97). In order to recreate them, Alcover opted for a popular vocabulary and phraseology, so that the common folk could understand them and identify the language in them as their own (Alcover 1931, 98–99). The first volume of the *Rondalles* was published in 1895, and two more were released between that time and 1898, when he was appointed vicar general. The folktales, as Alcover explained in the prologue to the first volume, were part of the link he had established between “language and religion.” They were intended as a tribute both to language and tradition, and he made it clear that they were addressed to the Mallorcan people and the “propaganda of the saintly cause that bears ‘God and Fatherland’ as a motto” (Alcover [1895] 1925, XII). In the process of putting them in writing, he had “deleted any salacious passages” (Alcover 1931, 100).

Tomàs Forteza died in 1898. The lengthy—12-page—obituary that Alcover wrote for the occasion in the *Boletín de la Sociedad Arqueológica Luliana* was not merely a tribute to the man he considered his master, but first and foremost a vindication of philology, characterized by him as the “new and lively science of language.” The article offers a glimpse into his future projects, but it could also be considered the first manifestation of his public identity as a philologist. Alcover portrayed Forteza as a “consummate philologist” (Alcover 1898, 344), albeit that discipline was unfortunately “scarcely known and celebrated in Spain” (346). He likewise recalled that Tomàs Forteza had worked with Marian Aguiló collecting, “from the mouth of the people, songs, words, phrases, idioms, adages” with a view to produce a popular song book and a “dictionary of the language of our country” (*dicionari de la llengua patria*), adding that, after some years, he had sent him “about eight thousand songs and thousands of cards” for that dictionary (Alcover 1898, 345). Alcover linked the consolidation of the literary rebirth (*Renaixença*) of the Catalan language with the completion of those two initiatives, but he regretted above all else that Tomàs Forteza had not been able to finish a scientific—as opposed to empirical—grammar. This was the task that Alcover would set out to tackle.

After Forteza’s demise, Alcover’s first wish was to improve his own philological education, and for that purpose he wrote to Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo (1856–1912), chair of Literature at the University of Madrid and a member of the *Real Academia de la Lengua Española*. Alcover informed him that Tomàs Forteza’s Catalan grammar was missing a syntax and asked for his advice, appealing to the “affection you professed for *don* Tomàs.” Additionally, Alcover announced his intention of visiting every region where

Catalan was spoken with a view to study syntax from “live monuments,” even though he would also take into account “written monuments old and modern” (March Noguera 2001, 236–37).

Most significantly, the letter is a testimony that, by then, Alcover was already orienting his philological readings and his education toward Germany. He remarked, in particular, that he had recently purchased the *Grammaire des Langues Romanes*, by Friedrich Diez, and he mentioned that an American had recommended him W. Meyer-Lübke’s grammar. He also bought other philology treatises such as the *Histoire de la langue française* by Emile Littré, the complete works of historian, philologist, and literary critic Manuel Milá i Fontanals (8 volumes), considered to be one of Menéndez y Pelayo’s masters, and also *Anàlisis Fonològic-Ortogràfic de la Llengua Catalana antiga i moderna*, by the Jesuit Jaume Nonell (March Noguera 2001, 249).

In the next year, 1900, Alcover started his most ambitious enterprise: writing the *Diccionari General de la Llengua Catalana*, a task he defined as collective from the very beginning. The intended goal was to collect, on index cards, every Catalan word, classifying them in sections and subsections. Indeed, on May 6, more than 60 people—priests, seminarians, and laypersons as well—gathered in the Library of the Bishop’s Palace (March Noguera 2001, 253). More meetings were held during the following weeks, at the Bishop’s Palace and also in rectories all over the many villages in Mallorca. It soon became clear that the instructions for the project needed to be in writing in order to make the work of the cooperators easier and to enable a proper organization of the assignments. These guidelines were approved on November 5, after Alcover did his first tour of the Catalan regions with the dual goal of starting with the collection effort and advertising the project while recruiting collaborators (Moll 1962, 57–58). Finally, on July 3, 1901, the feast day of blessed Ramon Llull, Alcover “solemnly” published the guidelines, under the name of *Lletra de Convit* (Invitation Letter) “to all friends of this language” (Alcover [1901] 1902a). He stressed that Catalan, through Llull, was “the first modern language spoken by philosophy, by science” (Alcover [1901] 1902a, 9). Additionally, Alcover deplored the fact that Catalan had not been used for the sciences in more than 200 years, while simultaneously claiming that it was a language suited for that purpose.

The reference to Ramon Llull was not haphazard, since the resurgence of Thomism was accompanied in Mallorca by a Lullian movement (Trias Mercant 1985, 317) in which Alcover played a crucial role as president of the Lullian Publishing Commission (Comissió Editora Lulliana), devoted to printing the complete works of Ramon Llull. These books, in keeping with Alcover’s philological interests, include word compilations and linguistic commentary. One more initiative aimed to increase the public status of Ramon Llull in which Alcover was involved was the public statue that the Town Council erected at the Institut Balear, very close to the Seminary



(March Noguera 2001, 306–07). As we mentioned earlier, the promotion of the figure and the work of Ramon Llull was crucial for bishop Campins's regionalist project. Indeed, he hoped for his canonization that would have created a symbol in which to merge modern and medieval Christianity in Mallorca (Fullana Puigserver 2015, 596).

Alcover claimed he could rely on four basic elements to carry out the Dictionary project, two of which are religious in nature. First, “the Providence of our Lord God and with the assistance of His Most Holy Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the guardian Angels and Patron saints” of Catalonia (Alcover [1901] 1902a, 42–43). The second element attests to the fact that the appeal to religion was not merely rhetoric. The blessing, approval, and encouragement from most of the bishops in the Catalan-speaking territories was doubtlessly a key factor for the priests in those dioceses to take an interest in the project and become correspondents and collaborators in the endeavor to create the dictionary. The remaining two elements that, according to him, supported his project were the mobilization of people feeling “sympathy, affection, and inclination” toward the mother tongue, and the materials produced by Tomàs Forteza as part of his effort to create an etymological dictionary. On top of that, the position of Alcover as vicar general obviously worked in his favor when promoting the Dictionary project: on the one hand, the post granted him influence and status in the eyes of the affluent and educated classes on the island, to which he could request support for his work (Moll 1962, 56); on the other hand, being a hierarchical superior of every clergyman on the island, he could ask for their active collaboration. Thus, a staggering number of clergymen participated in the *Obra del Diccionari*: only in the period up to 1905 alone there were 610 of them all over the Catalan-speaking territories, which amounts to 57.76 percent of the total number of collaborators; 361 of them lived in Mallorca (Dols Salas 2013, 169–70).

The collection of words was divided between written sources (documents, books, and dictionaries, called written monuments) and oral sources (living language), organized in 16 sections and 584 subsections. Theology, needless to say, was the first section, and philosophy the second. As far as organization is concerned, the guidelines in the *Lletra de Convit* listed three kinds of actors for the tasks related to the dictionary. First there were the secretaries, who had to be residents in Palma de Mallorca and who were basically tasked with distributing and organizing the cards, taking care of the correspondence, and drafting the minutes of the meetings. Second were the correspondents, who were the representatives of the Dictionary enterprise in the major regions and cities of the Catalan-speaking territories. In a way, they acted as local secretaries, spreading the idea of the dictionary, organizing the lexicon-collection efforts, and looking for collaborators. This was a crucial assignment, since the dictionary, unlike previous efforts, aimed to reunite every variant in the Catalan language.

Finally, the collaborators spread throughout the territories who wrote the index cards with the written and spoken language.

Alcover did a second tour of the Catalan-language territories in the Spring of 1901, with the intention of further spreading the *Lletra de Convit*, finding new correspondents and collaborators, and advancing his study of the living language. These research journeys to collect grammatical and lexicographic material—*eixides filològiques* (philological outings), in Alcover's words—had an explicit propagandistic purpose as well, and they were repeated over the years and across the different Catalan-speaking territories. His chronicles of these journeys offer a window into the effort he put into conveying the idea that the Catholic Church was genuinely interested in knowledge and science (Alcover 1902b). In 1902 he founded the *Bolletí del Diccionari de la Llengua Catalana* (BDLC, the Bulletin of the Dictionary of Catalan Language) in order to link the correspondents and the collaborators with the Dictionary office based in Palma de Mallorca.

He also decided to organize a Catalan Syntax Conference with the idea of finishing the grammar started by his master, Tomàs Forteza, and “restoring the language.” The notion of syntax, to Alcover, was intimately connected to the idea of a people. In that regard, studying syntax was important not only to formulate sentences but also because it “makes it possible to understand the way a people thinks and feels, being the true heart of language” (Alcover 1904a, 22). Eventually, the scope of the conference would be widened under the name of Catalan Language Conference. In February 1905, the organizing committee sent a circular calling for participation in the Conference, where the main goals of the congress were declared to be “refining, ennobling, and extolling the Catalan language,” and 25 possible topics for debate were proposed. The invitation contains, once more, the identification established by Alcover between religion and language, since it appealed for participation “for God, for Fatherland, and for our beloved language” (Alcover 1905a, 221–24). Similarly, the next year he would urge Valencian Catholics to support their mother tongue, because he strongly believed in a close link between popular languages and religion (Alcover 1906b, 126).

By then Alcover was already in contact with Bernhard Schädel (1878–1926), a young *Privatdozent* in Romance Philology at the University of Halle (Alcover 1908c, 80) he had met the previous year, when the German scholar was studying Mallorcan dialectal variation, a research he would later publish under the title *Mundartliches aus Mallorca* (Alcover 1905c, 310). This friendship played a crucial role in Alcover's evolution as a philologist, since Schädel not only took a direct part in the fieldwork of some of his philological outings, but also became his linguistic and cultural policy advisor (Moll 1962, 72). With all that in mind, the main objective of the conference, according to Alcover, would be turning the Catalan language into an object of scientific study:

to make people see and understand, touch with their very own hands, the urgent, imperative need of undertaking its fundamental study, of studying it in written monuments from every century and in every region, nook and cranny where it is spoken; with the goal of clarifying what it once had, and what is left of it, so as to formulate the laws that govern and inform it, and to determine every feature and tonality of its august visage. (Alcover 1905b, 295)

He also considered that registration for the conference was a “token of our faith” and “patriotic solidarity” (Alcover 1906a, 82–83). Additionally, with the participation of foreign philologists in the conference, the promotion of the study of Catalan would acquire an international profile (Moll 1962, 76).

Finally, the First International Conference of the Catalan Language took place in Barcelona during October 13–18, 1906. The event was a success, since it had more than 3,000 registered participants. Clergymen played a very significant role, especially those coming from the Catalan-speaking territories outside Catalonia (CILC1 1908). Alcover presided over the Conference and, in his opening address, he emphasized the urgency of producing a dictionary and a grammar in a collective fashion, and called all “children of the fatherland” to collaborate with whatever means each one of them could contribute, for a cause he characterized as sacred, scientific, and patriotic. His address was emotional and affective, stressing that the authority of the participants was based on their love for language, while using a religious tone by personifying language as mother, beloved, queen, and even Mother of God (Bastardas i Rufat and Schmid 2006, 74): “sublime, splendidly attired and majestically seated on her throne, queen and lady, reigning and ruling as such over the complete domain of divine Providence” (Alcover 1908a, 73).

In the end, Alcover concluded that the Conference was merely a first step toward the promotion of the study of Catalan: “we want [the language] . . . extolled by philological science like no other in the world” (Alcover 1908a, 71). In his closing address, Alcover re-emphasized the need to persevere with the work because, with the increase in literary production in the previous decades—what is known as the literary *renaixença* or rebirth, which had spurred “the whole Catalan scientific and national movement”—there were many open questions that were still impossible to resolve given “the present situation of philological studies in Catalonia and the other territories of the language” (Alcover 1908b, 679). Next, we will see how the institutionalization of Catalan philology was achieved in the following years.

#### THE SCIENCE OF LANGUAGE . . .

It is interesting to refer back to the *Lletra de Convit* to see that Alcover stressed the need to produce a Dictionary that reflected the advances in

philology, a science that, when applied to the study of languages, had achieved revolutionary results and which he again characterized as new (Alcover [1901] 1902a, 2). Alcover's philological writings show him as a follower of the linguistic doctrine of the neogrammarians (Julia i Muné 2005, 157; Perea 2005, 134; Dols Salas 2013). This movement, which emerged in Germany during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, was opposed to the romantic view of language as a living organism. Therefore, neogrammarians had introduced the study of the oral component, and not only written texts, as a methodological change in the study of language. Hence, they prioritized phonetic and dialectal studies. Although the neogrammarian approach to language study was also historic and comparative, their wish was to create an exact science and to formulate universal laws, taking geology and physics as a model (Robins 2000, 254–58).

Thus, the “refining” of language that Alcover had in mind not only involved the compilation of words found in books and archives, but required—according to the new methodology—the phonetic study of language, thus establishing a link between phonetics, language, and the identity of a people: “Popular pronunciation has originated, has shaped languages. Languages are not the work of scholars or academies. For scholars, academies regulate a language, formulate its grammar. However, shaping the language, producing it—only the people can do that” (Alcover 1902d, 139–40). Along the same lines, Alcover re-emphasized the value of studying pronunciation, because the people only mispronounces imposed, “exotic words.” The different forms in which a word could be found were alterations effected in accordance to phonetic laws (Alcover 1902c, 149).

Finally, Alcover pointed out that the collection of “all the words the way they are pronounced by the people” and “with all their forms” and in all the territories could prove that the Catalan language had an identity of its own, “that it is no bastard and no mongrel, but as legitimate, as clean-blooded, generous and august as the best to be found in all the nations of the earth” (Alcover 1902c, 149). It could also prove “the present unity of the language spoken in Catalonia, Roussillon, the Balearic Islands, and Valencia, and the fact that what is taken to be exclusive and characteristic of every one of those regions can be found in many points of any of the others” (Alcover 1902b, 20). Consequently, Alcover exhorted to have “a religious respect, as for a sacred thing,” toward popular pronunciation (Alcover 1908e, 185).

The importance accorded to phonetics was also a result of the influence Schädel's theories had on Alcover. In 1908, the German philologist, with Alcover's collaboration, published the *Manual de Fonètica Catalana*, identifying 63 sounds—22 corresponding to vowels and 41 to consonants—in this language. Alcover praised this work as the “catechism of our philology” at a time when there were no Catalan dictionaries or grammars with phonetic transcriptions (Alcover 1908e, 153–60). Most importantly, however, Schädel considered the institutionalization—and

hence professionalization—of philological tasks to be indispensable, through the creation of an “Institut por l’*étude de la langue catalane et ses dialectes*” and a journal to publish the research of that institute, the *Revue Catalane* (Julià i Muné 2005, 172). He also offered to provide philological lessons for the collaborators of that institute, as well as any “Catalan youth, from Catalan universities and with scientific motivation . . . to receive a solid philological education” (Julià i Muné 2005, 173).

Alcover’s linguistic project was given fresh impetus when Enric Prat de la Riba (1870–1917), one of the ideologues of conservative Catalan nationalism, who demanded more political autonomy for Catalonia, won the Spanish election of 1907 in the Catalan districts. One of Prat de la Riba’s first measures as president of the *Diputació* of Barcelona was the creation of the *Institut d’Estudis Catalans* (IEC, Institute for Catalan Studies), an institute devoted to “high scientific research on all aspects of Catalan culture” (Balcells and Pujol 2002). One of the purposes of the new institute was to encourage the use of Catalan in scientific publications and activities, and soon, in 1911, a philology section was also created, with Alcover presiding over it. It was the culmination of the scientific project for the Catalan language that Schädcl and Alcover had designed (Alcover 1911, 234–43). This increased Alcover’s prestige and the number of his international contacts, because he travelled outside of Spain on several occasions to further his philological education and contact the most distinguished philologists in other countries. This is how Alcover got involved in the international networks of philologists that were coming into existence and becoming, for instance, editor of the Catalan domain at the *Société Internationale de Dialectologie Romane* founded in 1907 (Alcover 1907, 394–98).

#### . . . AND THE LANGUAGE OF SCIENCE

A key aspect in Alcover’s self-training was learning the languages that dominated science at the time: German, French, English, and also Italian. This allowed him to read texts by foreign philologists, keeping up to date with their publications and reviewing them in the BDLC. Alcover, however, not only wished to acquire philological knowledge through different languages. From the very beginning, an essential aspect of his project was for the sciences to speak Catalan, since the choice of a language for communicating science was a fundamental question in every process to construct a national identity (Gordin and Tampakis 2015). Late in 1904, Alcover congratulated himself on the publication of the Catalan-language book *Noves Científiques* (Scientific News) and reiterated the idea that the literary rebirth had to include all branches of science: “This is what we are missing: to enrich our reemergent literature with works from all branches of Science” (Alcover 1904b, 191).

As a matter of fact, most actors responsible for the creation of new scientific institutions in the Catalan-speaking territories<sup>2</sup> were collaborators in the Dictionary and participants in the International Conference (Roca-Rosell and Salavert Fabiani 2009). Many of them had a role in associations and journals that had just started to use Catalan as a language for oral and written communication (March Noguera 2006). As part of his defense of Catalan as a proper language for the sciences, he felt the need to vindicate the figure of Ramon Llull when compiling the scientific language from the “written monuments,” because the medieval philosopher had written numerous works “on theology, philosophy, the natural sciences” in Catalan (Alcover [1901] 1902a, 9). Early on, for the compilation endeavor, he managed to place esteemed Mallorcan professionals in the sciences, most of them senior officials in the administration and presidents of professional associations, at the head of the seven sections: Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Natural History (Anatomy and General Physiology, Zoology, Botany, Mineralogy, Geology, Meteorology), Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, and Pharmacy, along with the Engineering subsection, the latter viewed as the application of the exact and physical sciences.

The methodology for creating scientific language involved adapting technical words from the different sciences following the same procedure observed in other Neo-Latin languages, “taking the Greek and Latin elements of those words and giving them a desinence according to the genius of our language” (Alcover [1901] 1902a, 9). Alcover was aware of the obvious difficulty inherent in scientific vocabulary, and thus he warned collaborators that scientists use numerous words that are unknown to laymen (Alcover [1901] 1902a, 34).

Concurrently, those clergymen who were taking part in the scientific institutions that the Church was creating around this time also became collaborators for the Dictionary (Camarasa et al. 2009; Bohigas i Maynegre 2011): in 1905, the Society of Jesus founded the Observatori de l’Ebre and the Institut Químic, and in 1909 the Institut Biològic, led by Ricard Cirera, Eduard Vitòria, and Jaume Pijiula, world-renowned figures in the fields of terrestrial magnetism, chemistry, and biology, respectively. In Valencia, Antoni Vincent, also a Jesuit, had founded a Microbiology Laboratory after furthering his education for two years at the University of Leuven. The BDLC was also a platform for advertising his scientific activities, such as his participation in the first conference of Spanish natural scientists held in Saragossa in 1908, where controversy erupted over the presentation of papers in Catalan (Alcover 1908d, 131–32). The Bulletin also contributed to the remembrance of these figures through the publication of obituaries, as in the case of Norbert Font (Alcover 1910, 75–77) and Josep Rullan (Alcover 1912, 152), both of them priests and natural scientists.

This importance of natural sciences in shaping Alcover’s dictionary also garnered support from the political spheres of conservative Catholic

Catalan nationalism. The most relevant leader of this movement, Enric Prat de la Ribera, considered science to be one of the constitutive elements of his political project. Thus, an article published on the eve of the opening of the CILC attests to the identification between science and fatherland, and to his Germanophile disposition: “We act like the Germans do: we never separate science from fatherland. It is not true—say the Germans—it is not true that science has no fatherland and hovers over borders; science does not have to be cosmopolitan. It must be national, it must be German.” Then he went on:

The same thing has happened in Catalonia, with the same intensity, albeit with a humble extension. History, archeology, sciences, arts, everything has felt, has received the encouragement of patriotism. Patriotic devotion has nurtured scientific curiosity. Every creator in modern Catalan culture has been a fervent Catalan patriot, deeply in love with his country . . . thus, for the common folk, picking up rocks, copying monuments, gathering herbs in the mountains, or perusing archives became synonyms for being a Catalanist. In the mind of our people it was the same, to work for culture was to love Catalonia. (Alcover 1906c, 242)

In his concluding remarks, Prat de la Ribera praised Alcover as “the apostle full of love” that had managed to appeal to a whole people and not just to “a classroom . . . an academy . . . a small circle of grammarians.”

As a last example, the foreword Alcover wrote for the book *Higiene Popular* by Dr. Francesc Montanyà offers a good illustration of the way his notions of religion and fatherland merged with the concept of language, and his conviction that Catalan was an adequate vehicle both to do science and to popularize the “teachings of science.” Leaving aside the great importance Alcover accorded to hygienics as “the science devoted to the conservation of health and life,” to the extent that he considered that book only second to the Christian Doctrine Catechism, Alcover established, once more, an intrinsic relationship between language, fatherland, religion, and sciences: “Just as the activity of the Catalan people reaches every variety and every location of religious, scientific, business, industrial, literary, and artistic life, in every one of those varieties and locations there need to be books in Catalan, and not just any books, but works that are well thought out, well digested, well organized, books anyone would want to read, books that honor and exalt the sacred name of the Fatherland” (Montanyà 1912).

## CONCLUSIONS

The prestigious German philologist Leo Spitzer (1887–1960) visited Mallorca during the Easter holiday of 1929, and his testimony offers an exceptional demonstration of the interconnectedness of religion, language, and science that we aimed to portray in this article, while

simultaneously featuring an academic fascinated by how a clergyman was the foremost actor in the emergence of philology in the Catalan-speaking territories:

Unlike our enterprises in Germany, he cannot rely on the support of the State, or a strong scientific tradition, nor on the interest of a scholarly public or the moral force of a university, nor on an organization covering the economic aspect; I felt how moving it is, this science carried out as part of the patriarchal life of a community, under the sign of the cross, on an island, far from this Europe of great movement; I felt the full poetry of this meeting of popular science, popular art, and popular religion. (Spitzer 1931, 95)

Over the course of this article, we have tried to identify the relationships between religion, language, nation, and science Alcover establishes in his discourse and practices. Therefore, our main goal was not to put forward a defense of Alcover and his philological efforts but to contribute to the science–religion historiography with a case study from the history of philology and linguistics, and in that way provide a more complex picture of the relationship between science and religion. What we have presented here is the beginning of a project by which more than three million index cards were finally compiled and which was finished by his only disciple, Francesc de Borja Moll, in 1962, when Alcover had been dead for 30 years, and after the publication of 10 volumes over a period of 36 years.

Next to that, there is another episode in the history of Catalan philology where Alcover had a leading role, concerning the irreconcilable differences he had with the Philological Section of the IEC on the matter of the standardization of the Catalan language after the death of Prat de la Riba in 1917. This public institution published another Dictionary in 1932, popularly known as the “Pompeu Fabra,” after the engineer and philologist who was its main architect and is widely regarded as the founding father of Catalan philology. The differences between both dictionaries are apparent: 10 volumes in the case of the Alcover-Moll Dictionary, while the other is a one-volume product.

Finally, in this article we have seen how Alcover, who had established a link between language and religion, believed as well that through the scientific study of language, that is, through syntax, phonetics, and lexicology, it was possible to create a scientific foundation for a nation. This assumption was not limited to a theoretical discourse; it informed the work of a lifetime, developed by Alcover on a practical basis that was also articulated on the public sphere. Therefore, this case study suggests that, as Foucault glimpsed many years ago, philology as a science has a role not only in the assignment of meanings to objects (material or not) and ritual practices, but also in the construction of national identities.



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## NOTES

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1. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations in this article are our own translation of the Catalan original. For the sake of readability, the original quotation has only been included in those cases where it was felt to have a particular interest.

2. Some examples are the Institució Catalana d’Història Natural (1899), which published a Catalan-language bulletin starting in 1901, and other publications such as *Informació Mèdica. Revista Científica i Professional* (1902) and *Anals de Medicina i Farmàcia Catalana* (1907). There were also associations that Catalanized their name and, thus, their activities, such as the Acadèmia i Laboratori de Ciències Mèdiques de Catalunya (1903), and the Acadèmia d’Higiene de Catalunya (1904), which two years later would organize the First Catalan Conference on Hygiene (*Primer Congrés d’Higiene de Catalunya*). In 1911, the IEC created a Science Section and a journal: *Arxiu de l’Institut de Ciències*. Two years later, a new milestone for the standardization of Catalan as a scientific language was reached with the First Conference of Catalan-Speaking Doctors, attended by more than 500 participants. The creation of the Associació General de Metges de Llengua Catalana in 1915 guaranteed its continuity.

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