

The Politics of Devotion: Militant Catholicism and the Fight for the Spanish Empire in Cuba and  
Puerto Rico

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## **Abstract**

The Politics of Devotion: Militant Catholicism and the Fight for the Spanish Empire in Cuba and Puerto Rico

Fabiola María Enríquez Flores

“The Politics of Devotion” is a social, political, and intellectual history of Catholicism in the Spanish colonies of Cuba and Puerto Rico during the last third of the nineteenth century. Against the backdrop of persistent quarrels about freedom of religion and political independence in which Liberals and Freemasons played a central role, the project argues that the twin threats of secularism and separatism pushed Catholicism to become a militant political stance in the island colonies. Faced with debates about would-be independent nations where Catholicism would be dethroned as the State religion, it became clear to both common Catholics and ecclesiastics that for Catholicism to survive, it was imperative that the Spanish Empire prevail. The dissertation therefore details how Catholics confronted and engaged novel ideas that called their faith into question and shows how Catholicism, traditionally espoused as a matter of private belief, transformed into a political and public position. It explores how the faithful organized themselves around Catholicism to safeguard both their fate and the fate of their islands, and made religion a key element in civic life, whereby one was either a patriot and a good Catholic or a separatist and a godless individual. The project also reevaluates the development of civil societies in Cuba and Puerto Rico, reinserting Catholicism into a narrative of political struggle that eschews religion in favor of political philosophies and intellectual movements understood as modern at the time, and proposes that the expansion of these civil societies was achieved alongside, rather than in spite of, discussions about the centrality of Catholicism and its practices.

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## Introduction

In 1859, Pablo Benigno Carrión, the Bishop of Puerto Rico, set out on a pastoral visit of his new diocese. Awarded the position after having served as parish priest of Vieques, a small, island town outside the mainland of the Puerto Rican archipelago, the bishop had firsthand knowledge of the necessities facing parishioners outside the immediate environs of the bishopric in San Juan.<sup>1</sup> A year into his tenure, he stepped out of the capital to call on the parishes scattered across his diocese and preach among the common faithful. Pastoral visitation, as a form of evangelizing, was meant to propagate Catholic doctrine, fight back against the spread of heresies, and imbue the faithful with good, Christian values.<sup>2</sup> It also brought the Catholic Church into being in places that often lacked a chapel or a priest, providing access to the sacraments for those living furthest from institutional reach. This was the case in colonial Puerto Rico, where, given the insufficient funding and deficient infrastructure of the Church, pastoral visitation acted as a palliative for the spiritual neglect that beset its congregants.

Following his pastoral visit, in 1861, Bishop Carrión wrote to the Queen of Spain, Isabella II, with a special report on the diocese under his charge. Pleading her favor for his impoverished episcopate, the bishop was careful to reassure the queen that her subjects throughout Puerto Rico remained loving and faithful, pointing out that a resilient “Catholic sentiment” sustained their affection. In the same breath in which he alluded to their devotion, however, he also saw fit to remind her that this exact Catholic sentiment had become

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<sup>1</sup> On Carrión’s career trajectory, see: Álvaro Huerga, *Los obispos de Puerto Rico en el siglo XIX* (Ponce: Pontificia Universidad Católica de Puerto Rico, 1994), 154-156.

<sup>2</sup> Valentina Garza Martínez, Juan Manuel Pérez Zevallos, *Las visitas pastorales de Mazapil, 1572-1856* (México, DF: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2007), 24-26.

“indispensable for the conservation of these Antilles.” In a nod towards Cuba, his ultimate message brought together the island colonies, and contained a clear warning: should the Church not receive reinforcements in its pursuit for consistent evangelization, the Spanish Empire ran the risk of losing its surviving American colonies.<sup>3</sup>

The Spanish monarch would not have been immune to the dangers posed in the report. Having signed a concordat with the Vatican in 1851, Queen Isabella stood as one of the central allies of the Pope at a time of political and religious upheaval throughout Europe and the Americas. Among other concessions, the concordat recognized Catholicism as the State religion, guaranteed religious instruction in private and public teaching institutions, and pledged that prelates would not be impeded in the completion of their duties.<sup>4</sup> Yet her hands were tied. Beholden to ministers that were bent on slashing funds for the Church and secularizing its holdings, there was little she could do about the destitute colonial dioceses and their parishioners.<sup>5</sup>

In September 1868, Queen Isabella would be toppled in a liberal coup. Weeks later, Cuba and Puerto Rico experienced near simultaneous cries for independence. In Cuba, the pursuit of self-governance resulted in intermittent separatist warfare—the Ten Years’ War (1868-1878), the Little War (1879-1880), and the Final Cuban War of Independence (1895-1898)—that would

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<sup>3</sup> Original document cited in: Huerga, *Los obispos de Puerto Rico*, 162.

<sup>4</sup> See: José Luis Comellas, *Los moderados en el poder, 1844-1854* (Madrid: Escuela de Historia Moderna, 1970), 297-301.

<sup>5</sup> *Desamortización*, as this process was called in Spain and its colonial holdings, was a constant throughout Spain’s nineteenth-century, and was subject to both frenzied impulses and sudden stops per the comings and goings of liberal, conservative, and moderate Spanish ministers. The latest *desamortización* had gone into effect in 1855. For information on how this was implemented in Puerto Rico and Spain, see: Almudena Hernández Ruigómez, *La desamortización en Puerto Rico* (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1987). See also: Lisa Abend, “Subversive Devotions: Popular Religion and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Andalusia,” PhD diss., (Harvard University, 1998), 156-158.

determine the course of the next three decades. In Puerto Rico, the initial rebellion proved easier to suppress, but colonial authorities remained ever vigilant for the contagion of independence from neighboring Cuba. In both cases, the intellectual authors of the uprisings had been avowed liberals and admitted Freemasons, whose pleadings with Spain for greater freedoms had been left unanswered.<sup>6</sup> For the separatists, cutting ties with Spain would entail declaring freedom of religion, putting an end to the long-established government protection afforded to the Catholic Church and to Catholicism as the State religion. For common Catholics and ecclesiastics across Cuba and Puerto Rico, the separatists' intentions further complicated the difficult scenario besetting the Catholic Church throughout the Western world, with the concurrent rise of secularism, alternative religious doctrines, and modernizing governments that aimed to weaken the hold of the Church over public life. Now, the shared unease of Catholics and the Church alike over the imminent demise of Catholicism became much more tangible for both the faithful and ecclesiastics in the Spanish colonies, who realized that to save Catholicism, it was imperative that the Spanish Empire endure.

This dissertation is a social, political and intellectual history of Catholicism in Cuba and Puerto Rico during the latter half of the nineteenth century. It shows that, against the backdrop of separatist political conflict and a global Catholicism under threat, Spain and the Catholic Church found themselves waging war against the same enemies. It argues that the twin threats of separatism and secularism refashioned Catholicism into a militant political stance. In the process, Catholicism went from being a matter of private belief to a political and public position. The

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<sup>6</sup> Carlos Manuel de Céspedes and Ramón Emeterio Betances, the intellectual authors of the Grito de Yara (Cuba) and the Grito de Lares (Puerto Rico), were both Freemasons and leaders in their respective lodges. See: Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, *Guerra de los diez años, 1868-1878* (La Habana: Cultural, SA, 1950), 61. See also: Francisco Moscoso, *La revolución puertorriqueña de 1868: El grito de Lares* (San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 2003), 48.

political struggle to save the Spanish Empire had taken on the form of a spiritual war to save the souls of the Catholic faithful.

This was a failed project. In 1898, the conclusion to the Final Cuban War of Independence made Catholics' fears manifest, with the United States taking over Cuba and Puerto Rico under new forms of neocolonial and colonial administration, and the ultimate dissolution of the Spanish Empire. Originating from the urban middle and upper classes that felt closer affinities to Spain, through birth, kin, or financial interests, and affection for the Church that was present in their urban locales and the Catholicism that signaled to a shared cultural inheritance with the metropole, this embattled Catholicism struggled to take hold among the peasants living far from the centers of colonial and ecclesiastical power in San Juan, Havana, and Santiago de Cuba. Examining the contents and reach of this urban upper and middle discourse around Catholicism and empire, this dissertation likewise explores its limits. To do so, it delves into the experiences of the faithful scattered throughout poor and rural parishes, their speech and their actions regarding the preservation of their faith and their spiritual nurture. Their anxieties, revolving around the material realities of their faith and their access to the Church, point us towards the obstacles that the militant upper class faithful faced in gaining adherents to their cause.

This is a historical account about faith and how faith turns into action—from maintaining the political union that would guarantee the survival of Catholicism and the Church, to holding on to and defending Catholic teaching amidst spreading secularism and expanding political ideas that called those beliefs into question. This dissertation examines how both clergymen and laypeople worked to confront the encroachment of competing beliefs—such as Freemasonry and Spiritism—and the separatist inclinations that seemed to go hand in hand with them. It explores

how the faithful organized themselves around Catholicism to safeguard both their fate, and the fate of the Spanish colonies, giving shape to public discussion and making religion a key element in civic life, whereby one was either a patriot and a good Catholic, or a separatist and a godless individual. Amidst this context of institutional scarcity, it further showcases how the faithful, whether rural or urban, rich or poor, were responsible for upholding the Church and the continuance of Catholicism at a time when the institution could not provide for itself or its congregants.

### **A Poor and Desperate Church**

Just as Bishop Carrión attested in his report, official figures and testimonies for both Cuba and Puerto Rico speak of a Church whose coffers and infrastructure were in bad need of repair. Just as the population of Puerto Rico began to expand in the 1840s, its number of priests began to decrease. In 1852, there were 5,990 inhabitants per clergyman on the island.<sup>7</sup> In 1856, the Governor of the Puerto Rico diocese pleaded with the Governor General to ask the metropolitan authorities to send more priests from Spain. While the Ministerio de Ultramar agreed to cover the cost of passage to Puerto Rico for incoming priests, the number of priests on the island had grown from 84 in 1852 to a mere 90 in 1861.<sup>8</sup> That year, there were 6,481 inhabitants per clergyman on the island, with many parishes across Puerto Rico seating vacant.<sup>9</sup> The Cuban Church, commensurate with the sugar boom that served to attract a higher number of priests, fared a little better than its

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<sup>7</sup> José Manuel García Leduc, *¡La pesada carga! Iglesia, clero y sociedad en Puerto Rico (S.XIX) Aspectos de su historia* (San Juan: Ediciones Puerto, 2009), 46.

<sup>8</sup> García Leduc, *La pesada carga*, 49.

<sup>9</sup> According to García Leduc, the vacant parishes for 1861 totaled 29 percent. I do not have numbers for the total of parishes across Puerto Rico at the time. See: *Ibid.*

counterpart in poorer and smaller Puerto Rico.<sup>10</sup> Yet it was likewise unable to keep up with demand. In 1862, Cuba boasted a total of 540 priests, with 2,517 inhabitants per clergyman spread out across the archdiocese in Santiago and the diocese in Havana.<sup>11</sup> Though much lower a number of charges per priest, this was also not enough to take care of an expanding population that called for priests who would meet its basic spiritual needs, which included blessing matrimones, performing baptisms, hearing confessions, and presiding over burials, but also maintaining their parish churches in good standing, and fostering religious devotion to their patron saints.

To make matters worse, a great number of the available priests in Puerto Rico were advanced in age and too afflicted to see to their duties in an efficient manner, meaning that the number of priests on the ground was still lower than those reflected in official numbers.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, subsidies for training new priests were almost nonexistent, and the islands' seminaries provided little hope in terms of institutional renewal.<sup>13</sup> The Seminario Conciliar de San Ildefonso in San Juan, founded in 1832, had once been lauded as the solution to the problem of chronic understaffing, but it graduated too few new priests to equip the diocese with enough recruits to fix the problem.<sup>14</sup> The same was true in Cuba, whose seminaries, San Carlos and San Ambrosio in Havana, founded in 1689, and San Basilio el Magno in Santiago de Cuba, founded in 1722,

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<sup>10</sup> García Leduc asserts that many Spanish clergymen accepting posts overseas preferred Cuba over Puerto Rico. See: *Ibid*, 69.

<sup>11</sup> Leví Marrero, *Cuba: economía y sociedad*, Vol. 13 (Madrid: Editorial Playor, 1986), 85.

<sup>12</sup> See: García Leduc, *La pesada carga*, 63.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 56.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 54-55.

graduated a higher number of priests, but likewise failed to provide the island with sufficient ecclesiastics.<sup>15</sup>

It was not uncommon for parishioners in unattended parishes to go years and sometimes decades without going to Church or receiving instruction on Catholic doctrine. Although pastoral visits set out to correct this, contact with the bishop or archbishop was likewise scarce. Bishop Carrión's 1859 visit had been the first practiced in the Puerto Rico Diocese since 1852, after the preceding bishop departed the island for Spain and the bishopric sat vacant for the next five years.<sup>16</sup> Over in the Havana Diocese, before Bishop Francisco Fleix Soláns undertook his first pastoral visit in 1848, the population of Pinar del Río had not seen a bishop in 20 years.<sup>17</sup>

The numbers to result from their pastoral visits further illustrate the situation in these poor, often rural parishes. In his 1859 visit throughout Puerto Rico, Bishop Carrión sought out unwed couples in the towns of Dorado, Toa Baja, Toa Alta, Corozal, and Vega Alta, and presided over 80 marriages. Across Bayamón, Toa Baja, Toa Alta, Dorado, Naranjito, and Corozal, the bishop performed a total of 4,720 confirmations. Across Toa Baja, Toa Alta, Vega Alta, Corozal, and Morovis the communions totaled another 1,934.<sup>18</sup> That same year, a visit from Bishop Fleix Soláns, to the towns of Sagua La Grande, Cárdenas, Cifuentes, Macuriges,

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Huerga, *Los obispos de Puerto Rico*, 130.

<sup>17</sup> Monseñor Ramón Suárez Polcari, *Historia de la Iglesia Católica en Cuba, Vol. 1* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 2003), 397.

<sup>18</sup> Bishop Carrión's secretary published a celebratory account of the 1859 pastoral visit in the diocese's official publication. See: "Visita Pastoral," *Boletín Eclesiástico de la Diócesis de Puerto Rico*, August 1, 1859, 171-173.

Bolondrón, and Matanzas, in the Diocese of Havana, resulted in a total of 12,720 confirmations.<sup>19</sup>

To be sure, this situation was not particular to Cuba or Puerto Rico. Circumstances in the islands mirrored that of the postcolonial Church throughout much of the neighboring Latin American republics. In 1870, for example, the Cathedral of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic had only two priests to its name. In the 1880s, there were 3,000 parishioners per priest in Costa Rica. In Guatemala, there were 10,000 parishioners per priest.<sup>20</sup> As Spanish colonies, however, Cuba and Puerto Rico could still turn towards their Catholic monarch for aid. When Bishop Carrión wrote to Queen Isabella, he did so with the expectation that his entreaties would result in support from the Spanish government. His words were an attempt to stave off the problems that plagued his Latin American counterparts, who also had to contend with the liberal and anticlerical measures that the new republics had largely adopted.

Implied in his words, then, was also a plea for better priests. When several Cuban priests blessed, and went on to join the initial separatist insurrection, authorities imprisoned, and on occasion exiled, the rebel clergymen.<sup>21</sup> In the Diocese of Havana, loyal, Spanish priests would go on to surveil native-born priests, and those who figured as suspect in their reports would be suspended from their charges.<sup>22</sup> Cuban priests' turnout in favor of independence ratified the colonial authorities' and senior ecclesiastics' long-held preoccupation that native-born priests in

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<sup>19</sup> Suárez Polcari, *Historia de la Iglesia Católica en Cuba*, Vol. 1, 398.

<sup>20</sup> Antón Pazos, *La Iglesia en la América del IV Centenario*, (Madrid: Editorial MAPFRE, 1992), 230-232.

<sup>21</sup> Maza Miquel, *El clero cubano y la independencia*, 125-127.

<sup>22</sup> Maza, *El clero cubano y la independencia*, 132-138.

Puerto Rico might harbor pro-independence inclinations.<sup>23</sup> Coupled with ongoing efforts to increase the overall number of clergymen on the island, the bishopric in San Juan answered with a campaign to import Spanish priests, who would be favored to occupy higher ranking positions within the diocese.<sup>24</sup> The efforts yielded disappointing results. It was clear to colonial prelates that to guide their parishioners, defend Catholicism and safeguard the colonies' ties to Spain, better priests—faithful and impervious to the advances of liberalism—were essential. Yet with precious few resources at their disposal, there was little that bishops and archbishops across Cuba and Puerto Rico could do.

### **Catholicism and Empire at a Crossroads**

Further complicating this situation was the presence of Protestants, Spiritists, and Freemasons among the population. Around this time, European and North American migrants who had first converted to the requisite Catholicism, but who later recanted, began setting up small, illicit congregations throughout the islands, and gaining converts among the populace.<sup>25</sup> It was Freemasonry and Spiritism, however, loose ideologies whose principles and practices Catholics considered godless that inspired the most fear and opposition.<sup>26</sup> Perceived to be working in tandem for the destruction of the Church and the toppling of the colonial order, Spiritists and Freemasons in Cuba and Puerto Rico were subject to state surveillance and

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<sup>23</sup> García Leduc, *La pesada carga*, 82, 95, 103.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 88.

<sup>25</sup> On Protestantism, see: Luis Martínez-Fernández, *Protestantism and Political Conflict in the Nineteenth-Century Hispanic Caribbean*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 59.

<sup>26</sup> On Spiritism and Freemasonry, see: José Manuel García Leduc, *Intolerancia y heterodoxias en Puerto Rico (Siglo XIX): Protestantes, masones y espiritistas-kardecianos reclaman su espacio social* (San Juan: Isla Negra Editores, 2009), 107, 126.

denunciations from ecclesiastics and devoted Catholics. Before 1888, when a new law of associations first adopted in the Peninsula and later extended to Cuba and Puerto Rico granted them official recognition and upheld their right to congregate, Spiritists and Freemasons faced numerous attempts at suppression, their lawfulness dependent on the whims of colonial authorities and the ebb and flow of Spanish politics.<sup>27</sup> Catholic belief that Spiritists and Freemasons represented a violent threat to the Church and the Spanish Empire, however, remained unchanged.

Freemasonry, having had its start in England, had expanded into a global movement during the 1700s, with the first recorded Spanish lodge, or local association, recorded in 1728.<sup>28</sup> In 1798, the first lodges were reported in Cuba.<sup>29</sup> In the 1860s, several lodges were active in Puerto Rico.<sup>30</sup> While its name was a reference to the medieval professional guilds of stonemasons from which their modern counterparts took their symbols, in the words of historian Andreas Önnarfors, eighteenth-century practitioners followed in “the scientific and associational culture of the early Enlightenment.”<sup>31</sup> And while some Freemasons did engage in esoteric practices lifted from ancient and world religions, Freemasonry nonetheless functioned as a set of

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<sup>27</sup> On the 1888 law, see: García Leduc, *Intolerancia y heterodoxias*, 108. See also: Reinaldo Román, “Governing Man Gods: Spiritism and the Struggle for Progress in Republican Cuba,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* no. 37 (2007): 214. Before the 1888 law, whether new lodges or Spiritist associations were instituted was up to the governors’ own policies, who ruled according to emergency powers. On these powers, see: Javier Alvarado, “Preámbulo a una singularidad,” in *La administración de Cuba en los siglos XVIII y XIX*, ed. Javier Alvarado Planas (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2017), 19.

<sup>28</sup> Jan A.M. Snoek and Henrik Bogdan, “The History of Freemasonry: An Overview,” in *Handbook of Freemasonry*, eds. Jan A.M. Snoek and Henrik Bogdan (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 18.

<sup>29</sup> Dominique Soucy, *Masonería y nación: redes masónicas y políticas en la construcción identitaria cubana (1811-1902)* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Ediciones Idea, 2006), 37.

<sup>30</sup> García Leduc, *Intolerancia y heterodoxias*, 107-108.

<sup>31</sup> Andreas Önnarfors, *Freemasonry: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 66.

national and local associations whose members—all men—saw themselves and their participation within it as taking part in the enlightened and modern values of tolerance, reason, and moral self-improvement, while helping to issue forth societal progress.

These progressive values and associative life came to be seen as a threat after the French Revolution. As Önnersfors puts it, this was a time when “governments started to view all political self-organization and proto-democratic activism among their citizens with increasing suspicion.”<sup>32</sup> As in the 1868 separatist uprisings in Cuba and Puerto Rico, Freemasons were involved in numerous nationalist movements throughout the 1800s, their Enlightenment ideals coinciding “with ideas of national independence and self-assertion.”<sup>33</sup> Though membership was not incompatible with either Christian or Catholic belief, aversion for the Catholic Church likewise followed, with Freemasons espousing liberal and anticlerical views that would see the institution stripped of its traditional powers. The Vatican, as did ecclesiastics in Spain, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, did not hesitate to condemn Freemasons via numerous papal bulls, pastoral letters, and writings that appeared in the allied Catholic press.

Spiritism, for its part, had much more recent roots, finding its origins in the Spiritualism that spread throughout the United States in the 1840s.<sup>34</sup> Spiritualism, which made a religion out of communicating with the dead, proved both a form of massive entertainment and a source of comfort for those wishing to convene with deceased loved ones. Its popular séances traveled to Europe, and it was in France where Spiritualism was reshaped according to the principles and

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<sup>32</sup> Önnersfors, *Freemasonry*, 85.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 87.

<sup>34</sup> The Fox Sisters, for example, rose to fame in the late 1840s and inspired the spread of spiritualist societies in the United States. See: Lisa Abend, “Specters of the Secular: Spiritism in Nineteenth-century Spain,” *European History Quarterly*, no.4 (2004), 508.

practices that formed Spiritism.<sup>35</sup> From there, Spiritism expanded into the rest of Europe, making it to Spain, and from there, to Cuba and Puerto Rico.<sup>36</sup>

At its core, Spiritism professed the evolving nature and ultimate perfectibility of the human spirit. In turn, Spiritists believed in reincarnation, with each return to corporeal life offering an opportunity for improvement upon their past selves. As the Spiritualists before them, practitioners also believed in communication with the spirit world and would gather to hold séances whereby mediums would impart messages from other, more perfect spirits. Spiritists, who described their practice as a science, rather than a religion, were also interested in different branches of knowledge, and would hold lectures and conferences from their meeting places. In accordance with this, they were likewise fascinated with the cosmos and believed that Earth was just one of various inhabited planets, their writings and speeches often being peppered with references to astronomy and celestial bodies—planets and stars—where other humans existed.<sup>37</sup> While Spiritists were Christian and indeed, one of the aspects that most seemed to bother Catholics about it was the fact that much of their ideas were rooted in Christianity—believing, for example, that the human soul was immortal and that communicating with these souls was an act of God—the practice, also associated with the idea of societal progress, was nonetheless

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<sup>35</sup> The Frenchman Allan Kardec is credited as the intellectual father of Spiritism. See: Abend, “Specters of the Secular,” 509.

<sup>36</sup> The first Spiritist writings appeared in Spain in 1857. See: Ibid. The first Spiritist associations were recorded in Cuba that same year. See: Víctor Almanza, Ramón Pérez, and Isidro Marín, *La práctica del espiritismo en una región histórica de Cuba: La sociedad espiritista en la provincia de Villa Clara* (Madrid: Editorial Académica Española, 2012), 6. There is debate about when Spiritism made its first appearance in Puerto Rico, but it is safe to say that similar practices were already observed in the island during the 1850s. See: Gerardo Alberto Hernández Aponte, *El espiritismo en Puerto Rico, 1860-1907* (San Juan: Academia Puertorriqueña de la Historia, 2015), 117-122.

<sup>37</sup> This aspect of Spiritism would become a running joke for the Cuban Catholic publication, *El Observador*. See, for example: Pedro Cavaller, “Rebencazos,” *El Observador*, February 12, 1888, where he jokes that the Universe, “los otros planetas y los otros satélites que los acompañan, las estrellas fijas, los cometas y las nebulosas, y todo cuanto tiene movimiento y vida en el seno de los espacios,” had been saved through the efforts of local Spiritists.

anticlerical in that it presented its practitioners with an alternative to the rigid structures of the Catholic Church.<sup>38</sup> In accordance with this vision of progress, Spiritists likewise yearned for political reform, and though not involved in the outbreak of separatist strife, would later voice their support for independence.<sup>39</sup>

Following in the Freemasons' footsteps, Spiritists garnered the scorn of ecclesiastics and devoted Catholics. In 1856, the Bishop of Cádiz banned all Spiritists texts in his diocese. In 1861, the Bishop of Barcelona held a public burning of Spiritists books and pamphlets.<sup>40</sup> As their growth continued unabated, ecclesiastics in Spain would take to the press to battle Spiritism, a practice that would likewise resonate with Cuban priests.<sup>41</sup>

Spiritists and Freemasons shared in the same derision, and paranoid suspicions about them working in tandem were not unwarranted. Though a concerted Freemason and Spiritist plot to overthrow both the Catholic Church and conservative governments across the globe did not exist, its practitioners professed similar values and political views, belonging to the same urban middle classes who were disaffected with the status quo and encouraging of liberal reforms.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Spiritism did not negate Christian thought. In fact, when its founder, Allan Kardec, set out to explain the practice, he indicated that Spiritism intended to interpret the teachings of the Gospel—oftentimes written in difficult and imprecise language—and offer in its stead a more approachable, universal moral blueprint for humankind. The layman interpretation of the Gospel that Spiritism offered was made possible through communications with enlightened spirits, who were creatures of God. See: Allan Kardec, *El evangelio según el espiritismo* (Barcelona: Establecimiento Tipográfico de L. Domenech, 1875), IV-V. That Spiritists referred to God at all greatly bothered Catholic writers of the time, who often made a point to rebuke their assertions of faith. See, for example: Eduardo Llanas, “El Espiritismo V,” *Revista Católica*, February 22, 1874, 1-4, which begins: “Tan ridícula nos parece la pretensión de los espiritistas en presentarse como cristianos...”

<sup>39</sup> Many of its practitioners understood their engagement with Spiritism as an anticolonial stance. See: Andrés Bermúdez, “Notas para la historia del espiritismo en Cuba,” *Revista Etnología y Folklore* (1967): 7.

<sup>40</sup> Abend, “Specters of the Secular,” 518.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 519. Debates between Cuban Catholic publications and Spiritist periodicals are covered in Chapter 2.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 513

Talking about the overlap between Freemasons and Spiritists in Spain, historian Lisa Abend observes: “The fluidity of boundaries between different groups and ideologies gradually gave supporters a sense that they belonged to a large network of dissidents, all working under the rubric of Freethinkers.”<sup>43</sup> Mutual support between the groups was not uncommon. In Santiago de Cuba, for example, Spiritists would hold séances in the local masonic lodge.<sup>44</sup> Collaborations like this one influenced much of how ecclesiastics and devoted Catholics regarded the groups, and were a great source of their paranoia. Both separate and together, Spiritists and Freemasons made for powerful enemies that needed to be resisted, lest Catholicism cease to exist.

Events in Rome did little to quell their fears over the imminent demise of Catholicism at home. Throughout the 1850s, the Pope had been battling in vain against the movement for a unified Italian kingdom, and later republic, that aimed to take land and power away from the Church. In 1864, cornered in the Vatican, the Pope issued a bull where he condemned what he and his cardinals deemed to be the varied “modern errors” that had led to the Italian attempt against the Church and to broader revolution in the places where Catholicism and monarchical rule had once prevailed.<sup>45</sup> Among the most conspicuous errors listed in the Syllabus, as the document came to be called, were rebellion against lawful governments, freedom of worship, “progress, liberalism, and modern civilization.”<sup>46</sup> In 1869, the Pope called on his bishops and archbishops to attend what would become known as the First Vatican Council, formulated as a

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 514.

<sup>44</sup> In May 1888, Sagua La Grande priest, Pedro Cavaller, denounced that a big meeting of Spiritists was held at the local lodge. See: Cavaller, “Rebencazos,” *El Observador*, May 31, 1888.

<sup>45</sup> This bull came to be known as the Syllabus of Errors. For a more thorough discussion of the document, see: Owen Chadwick, *A History of the Popes, 1830-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 169-181.

<sup>46</sup> Chadwick, *A History of the Popes*, 177.

response that would strengthen Catholicism and safeguard the Church against these errors. In 1870, when Italian troops entered Rome, ransacked his remaining estates, and completed the unification of their kingdom, the Pope shut himself in the Vatican and refused to leave it for the remainder of his life.<sup>47</sup> From there, he continued to denounce what he saw as the manifold attacks on Catholicism and liberal attempts at destabilizing governments across much of Europe, receiving donations from concerned laymen and women, and a multitude of pilgrims intent on paying tribute to their besieged Pope.<sup>48</sup>

Chief among the doctrines adopted during the First Vatican Council had been the concept of papal infallibility. Declaring that the Pope was incapable of erring on matters of faith, the new dogma was meant to squash dissent that would further threaten Rome and the Catholic Church.<sup>49</sup> Along with public shows of suffering coming from the Vatican, the inscription of this dogma made for the spread of an ultramontane version of Catholicism that owed its “allegiance [...] to the person of the pontiff.”<sup>50</sup> This colored the intransigence of high-ranking ecclesiastics and devout Catholics throughout Europe and the Americas, much as it did for those in Cuba and Puerto Rico, where clergymen and lay writers often lamented the loss of a “principle of authority” in reference to a lack of respect for the Church and the questioning of its precepts.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Albeit self-imposed, Pope Pius IX took to calling himself the “prisoner in the Vatican.” See: Ibid, 227. The phrase went on to denote a phase in Vatican and Italian relations that would only end with the signing of the Lateran Treaty of 1929, which recognized the Vatican as an independent city-state within Italy. See: “Pope Pius XI,” in *A Dictionary of Popes (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)*, eds. J. N. D. Kelly and Michael Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>48</sup> Christopher Clark, “The New Catholicism and the European Culture Wars,” in *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, eds. Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 21-22.

<sup>49</sup> Chadwick, *A History of the Popes*, 186-187.

<sup>50</sup> Clark, “The New Catholicism,” 21.

<sup>51</sup> See Chapter 2.

All the while, the Spanish Crown, which had long supported the Pope and claimed Catholicism as its official and exclusive religion, faced its own set of problems. Before Isabella II was deposed in 1868, liberal-minded members of the Spanish Parliament had on-and-off sponsored secularization programs that slashed salaries for the Church and put its properties on the market. After 1868, Spanish politics became unstable. Radical liberals took over the government, declared freedom of religion, and further implemented secularization decrees upon marriage, cemeteries, and education, which had until then been monopolies of the Church. While the decrees went on, monarchist factions waged war to reinstitute the Spanish Crown, with one side fighting for the enthronement of would-be King Carlos VII, an ultramontane figurehead that was popular with hardline Catholics, and the other side fighting for Alfonso XII, under the promise of a more moderate constitutional monarchy. When the latter faction succeeded in 1874, the Church was able to breathe a sigh of relief, with some of the more radical, earlier decrees, like freedom of religion, being abolished. The oscillation between liberal and conservative governments that characterized Spanish politics thereafter, however, meant that the Church never regained its privileged standing and protection.<sup>52</sup>

These decrees and their implementation in the colonies would suffer from the inconsistencies of successive conservative and liberal governors, who applied them at will, and in accordance to their own politics.<sup>53</sup> Yet one thing was clear: the Church, in Spain and in the colonies, was alone. The outbreak of separatist conflict in Cuba had made long-simmering tensions regarding the honors and privileges of churchmen over colonial officials come to the

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<sup>52</sup> As Lisa Abend puts it, "...the question of ecclesiastical power [was kept] in the national spotlight for the remainder of the century." See: Abend, "Specters of the Secular," 522.

<sup>53</sup> For the decrees coming from the Spanish Cortes and their implementation in the colonies, see: Martínez-Fernández, *Protestantism and Political Conflict*, 77-79.

fore. Before rebellion broke out, the Bishop of Havana, Fray Jacinto María Martínez y Sáez, had been a stalwart critic of the colonial administration, denouncing what he saw as “bad government,” and running afoul of the Governor General when he ordered his priests to stop the ringing of church bells upon his visits to their parishes. Once Cuba became enmeshed in the separatist conflict, Fray Jacinto called for peace and sought to intervene on behalf of insurrect priests. Interpreted as an act of treason, he would go on to be exiled from his post. Having departed Havana to participate in the First Vatican Council in 1869, the *cuero de voluntarios*, a militia-like group of Spanish loyalists with ample political influence, denied him entry upon his attempted return in 1871.<sup>54</sup> Under the strained circumstances, where respect for the Church from colonial authorities was not guaranteed, the devout would seek to convince them and the larger public that Catholicism was a vital tool with which to restore social order.

As avenues for political debate opened across Cuba and Puerto Rico, this became even more urgent. Following the 1868 liberal coup against Isabella II, the new Spanish government allowed for the creation of political parties in Puerto Rico. Opposing parties quickly formed: the Partido Liberal Reformista (afterward the Partido Autonomista) in support of further liberalizing reforms and the Partido Liberal Conservador (afterward Partido Incondicionalmente Español) in support of the colonial status quo.<sup>55</sup> Members of the opposing parties were elected to local office,

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<sup>54</sup> For a detailed recount of the dispute, see: Rigoberto Segre Ricardo, *Iglesia y nación en Cuba (1868-1898)* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 2010), 65-116.

<sup>55</sup> See: “Liberal Reformist Party,” in *Encyclopedia of Latin America: Amerindians through the Age of Globalization*, eds. John C. Fredriksen, J. Michael Francis, and Monica Rankin (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010), 187. See also: José Luis Maldonado Vivas, *Historia de Puerto Rico* (New York: Las Américas Publishing Co., 1962), 159-

where issues pertaining to municipal government would be debated, and matters like whether and how much support to provide the Church became a hot button issue.<sup>56</sup> Comparable political organization would not be permitted in Cuba until 1878, as part of the peace agreement that brought an end to the Ten Years' War. This led to the formation of the Partido Liberal (afterward Partido Liberal Autonomista), whose members shied away from the question of independence, but who advocated home rule, representation in the Spanish Parliament, and overall looser restrictions on the island. This was soon countered with the creation of the pro-Spanish Partido Unión Constitucional, contributing to a political scene where tensions ran high.<sup>57</sup>

The expansion of the colonies' public spheres accompanied this political liberalization. Although censorship laws remained in place and held fast to the long-established prohibition to speak ill against the Church and government, changing regulations led to an increase in publications across the islands, with Cuba experiencing the largest growth in its print market. Most notable among the new publications were those belonging to Spiritist associations and masonic lodges, and those with explicit political leanings, whose writers often expressed anticlerical stances—the threat of censorship notwithstanding. Poorer and less of an Atlantic entrepôt than Cuba, Puerto Rico did not experience a similar explosion of new publications, yet periodicals and magazines espousing liberal and anticlerical views likewise abounded. Both the

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160; Antonio S. Pedreira, *El año terrible de 1887: Sus antecedentes y consecuencias* (San Juan: Editorial Biblioteca de Autores Puertorriqueños, 1937).

<sup>56</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>57</sup> On the new Cuban political parties, see: Pérez, *Cuba Between Reform and Revolution*, 108-110.

Church and devout Catholics would launch their own publications to fight their spread and defend their claim upon public life.

Developments in the island colonies, Spain, and the Vatican, contributed to a feeling of persecution shared among the ecclesiastical hierarchy and devout members of the middle and upper classes, giving way for the construction of a speech where Catholicism and loyalty to Spain were inextricable.

### **Afro-Cuban Religious Practices and Militant Catholicism**

Less worrisome for Cuban Catholics and ecclesiastics than Spiritism and Freemasonry, it should be noted, was the popular, African influenced, *espiritismo de cordón*, which proliferated among the lower classes and stood out for its reliance on song and dance, and objects like incense and water.<sup>58</sup> Lack of interest in this practice was on par with that for other Afro-Cuban religions, like Santería or Regla de Ocha, and Palo Monte. Syncretic religions blending African and Catholic traditions practiced among enslaved and free Black people throughout Cuba, both belief systems “borrowed from Catholic discourse and reinterpreted it in terms of African religions,” with figures in the Catholic pantheon standing in for African gods and ancestors, who extended protection to their practitioners.<sup>59</sup> Santería centers on the worship of these African gods, or *orishas*, and includes practices like divination, animal sacrifice, and possession.<sup>60</sup> Palo Monte, while sharing in many of the practices that make up Santería, is best differentiated

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<sup>58</sup> Bermúdez, “Notas para la historia del espiritismo,” 12-13.

<sup>59</sup> Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, *Creole Religions of the Caribbean: An Introduction from Vodou and Santería to Obeah and Espiritismo* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 38.

<sup>60</sup> Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, *Creole Religions of the Caribbean*, 40.

through its use of magic, with practitioners entering into a pact with a spirit that works on their behalf.<sup>61</sup>

The survival of these cultural practices represented a form of resistance against enslavement, which was not abolished in Cuba until 1886. It was also reflective of the “sporadic indoctrination” of enslaved people into Catholicism, in part due to enslavers’ unwillingness to grant them time for religious instruction, but also due to the general lack of resources that affected the Church across rural parishes.<sup>62</sup> Yet neither the survival of African religious practices, nor a lack of evangelization among rural parishioners, formed a part of the militant Catholic discourse coming from ecclesiastics and the middle and upper class faithful. The absence of these talking points appears as a stark contrast to the popular loyalist discourse that used the fear of abolition and subsequent “Africanization” of Cuba in an attempt to invoke images of racial warfare that would suppress and discredit separatist sentiments.<sup>63</sup>

That militant Catholics and ecclesiastics, for all their pro-Spanish proclamations, did not reference syncretism in their disquisitions about godlessness and irreligion speaks to a pervasive indifference to the realities of Black people, whether free or enslaved. Priests in urban settings like Havana were attentive to the needs of the laymen and women who supplied their salaries, made donations to the Church, and echoed their ideas. These same middle and upper class Catholics, and the priests who served them, were likewise poised to be more concerned with the

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 89-90.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>63</sup> Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 8.

practices and beliefs of those they considered their peers. In this sense, unlike Santería and Palo Monte, Spiritism and Freemasonry were seen as imminent threats that demanded action.

Yet, its omission from Catholic periodicals and sermons notwithstanding, the threat of Africanization resulting from abolition and independence from Spain was an ever-present part of the Cuban public sphere throughout this period, and should not be taken as a sign that Catholics did not share in such fears. Rather, it should be taken as an invitation to question what their speech obscured. The persistent denunciations of flawed morals and societal collapse that undergirded Catholic speech about the breaking of ties with Spain served as façade for a host of conservative issues into which racial fears were also codified. Catholicism, and the ties with Spain it could guarantee, would protect the colonies from falling into the disorder that religious freedom would bring about, but also from the threat that abolition and miscegenation represented for traditional authority and the structuring of society that militant Catholicism aimed to uphold.

### **Historiography: Contributions and Interventions**

This dissertation brings together two sets of literatures that have developed independently: that of the nineteenth century Church in Cuba and Puerto Rico and that of the colonies' political struggles in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The literature concerning the Catholic Church encompasses, for the most part, a set of institutional histories that present a weakened Church. These works tend to focus on the number of parishes per congregant and center on the lack of priests available to serve their growing populations. Examples include the work of priests and historians, Ramón Suárez Polcari and Manuel Maza Miquel, who have documented the history of the Cuban Church and its struggles, as well as its place within the

wider social milieu of the late nineteenth century.<sup>64</sup> In the case of Puerto Rico, examples likewise include that of priest and historian Álvaro Huerga, and José Manuel García Leduc, an invaluable resource, who has written extensively on the life of the Church throughout the long nineteenth century.<sup>65</sup> In terms of the Church's involvement in politics, Rigoberto Segreo Ricardo and Samuel Silva Gotay have both tackled the topic, the first covering Cuba and the second Puerto Rico.<sup>66</sup> Both richer than, and building upon the abovementioned works, altogether they form a faithful picture of the colonial Church: its administration, internal struggles, relationship with the civil government, and stance against perceived threats. Its rejection of the ills of liberalism, for example, is well-documented in the work of Silva Gotay. Yet for all its detail, this literature does not delve into the lived experiences of common parish priests nor their congregations, nor does it examine the role of faith in public life. It tells you that the parishioners were in want of priests, but does not give them voice. It tells you that the Church was afraid of liberalism and its attendant doctrines, but does not go beyond the sermons and pastoral letters meant to fight them.

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<sup>64</sup> Polcari has written a two-volume history of the Cuban Church that's an invaluable reference for anyone wishing to study the Church and Catholicism on the island. See: Ramón Suárez Polcari, *Historia de la Iglesia Católica en Cuba* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 2003). Maza Miquel was a prolific writer. Works referenced here include: Manuel P. Maza Miquel, *El clero cubano y la independencia: Las investigaciones de Francisco González del Valle (1881-1942)* (Santo Domingo: Centro de Estudios Sociales Padre Juan Montalvo, 1993). Manuel Maza Miquel, *Entre la ideología y la compasión: Guerra y paz en Cuba, 1895-1903* (Santo Domingo: Instituto Pedro Francisco Bono, 1997).

<sup>65</sup> See: Álvaro Huerga, *Los obispos de Puerto Rico en el siglo XIX* (Ponce: Universidad Católica de Puerto Rico, 1994). José Manuel García Leduc, *¡La pesada carga! Iglesia, clero y sociedad en Puerto Rico (siglo XIX): Aspectos de su historia* (San Juan: Ediciones Puerto, 2009). José Manuel García Leduc, *Intolerancia y heterodoxias en Puerto Rico (Siglo XIX): Protestantes, masones y espiritistas-kardecianos reclaman su espacio social (cc. 1869-1898)* (San Juan: Isla Negra Editores, 2009). José Manuel García Leduc, *¡Ministros del altar y empresarios...! El activismo económico de algunos eclesiásticos en Puerto Rico en el siglo XIX (cc. 1800-1858)* (San Juan: Ediciones Puerto, 2013).

<sup>66</sup> Rigoberto Segreo Ricardo examines how the Cuban Church reacted to the fluctuations between liberal and conservative governments in Madrid and turmoil at home across the period this dissertation studies. His book on this topic is largely a political account of appointments, discharges, and defiance in the Havana and Santiago archdioceses, that centers on institutional problems. See: Rigoberto Segreo Ricardo, *Iglesia y nación en Cuba, 1868-1898* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 2010).

The second group of histories include those on the struggle for secession and the consequences of broader political participation across the colonies. Work about the separatist conflict is much more abundant in the case of Cuba, as it fought for its freedom much longer than Puerto Rico. Recent literature on the topic includes studies on the different groups involved in the fighting, as well as accounts that center on the construction of nationalism and on the role of race within the conflict. These accounts represent the work being produced in the United States, with scholars like Ada Ferrer writing on the abolitionist character of the Cuban independence struggle, and others, like David Sartorius, examining the role of colored Cuban militias in defense of the Spanish Empire.<sup>67</sup> Other texts from Cuban academics recount the different episodes in its protracted independence struggle, covering the three uprisings that erupted between 1868 and 1898.<sup>68</sup> Yet another corpus of work focuses on the endeavors and accomplishments of the men who fought in these campaigns.<sup>69</sup> The existent literature for the short-lived Puerto Rican independence attempt—the 1868 Grito de Lares—replicates these approaches.<sup>70</sup> A broader literature on the demands for autonomism, political reforms, and representation, that coincided with the Cuban struggle exists for Puerto Rico. Classic works

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<sup>67</sup> See: Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*. See also: David Sartorius, *Ever Faithful: Race, Loyalty, and the Ends of Empire in Spanish Cuba* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

<sup>68</sup> See, for example: Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, *Guerra de los diez años, 1868-1878* (La Habana: Cultural, SA, 1950). Miguel Ángel Varona Guerrero, *La Guerra de Independencia de Cuba, 1895-1898* (La Habana: Editorial Lex, 1946).

<sup>69</sup> It is easy to find biographies and accounts of the conflict that revolve around one of its various celebrated leaders, such as José Martí or Antonio Maceo. Among other examples in this literature, see: Eduardo Torres Cuevas, *Antonio Maceo: las ideas que sostienen el arma* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1995). María Luisa Laviana Cuetos, *José Martí: la libertad de Cuba* (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal para la Ejecución de Programas del Quinto Centenario, 1988).

<sup>70</sup> See: Olga Jiménez de Wagenheim, *El Grito de Lares: sus causas y sus hombres* (San Juan: Ediciones Huracán, 1985). Francisco Moscoso, *La revolución puertorriqueña de 1868: El grito de Lares* (San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 2003).

include that of Puerto Rican historians, Ángel Quintero Rivera and Antonio S. Pedreira, who examine the character of political conflict between liberals and conservatives and the political persecution of advocates for autonomy.<sup>71</sup> Luis Martínez-Fernández has also examined the reach and rhetoric of reformist ideals throughout the Spanish Caribbean during the same period.<sup>72</sup> These varied inquiries notwithstanding, the question of how the Catholic Church and its faithful responded to the question of independence and advancing liberalism has not been adequately addressed. While certain Church historians have studied its involvement against Cuban independence in the past, such as Roger Fernández Callejas in 1952 and Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring in 1958, their works are limited to showcasing the pro-Spanish discourse adopted by most of its ecclesiastics.<sup>73</sup> In the case of Puerto Rico, Silva Gotay likewise stops at rhetoric. While a number of works address how popular devotions like the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre in Cuba acted as a rallying figure for the insurgents, no similar work showcases the Catholic militancy that grew as a response to such developments.<sup>74</sup>

This dissertation looks to the literature on militant Catholicism around the globe and seeks to place Cuba and Puerto Rico within the wide-ranging vision of this embattled Catholic

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<sup>71</sup> Albeit a reference on the topic, Quintero Rivera devotes half of his classic study to Puerto Rican politics post-1898. See: Ángel Quintero Rivera, *Conflictos de clase y política en Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1976). Antonio S. Pedreira, *El año terrible del 87: Sus antecedentes y sus consecuencias* (San Juan: Editorial Biblioteca de Autores Puertorriqueños, 1945).

<sup>72</sup> Luis Martínez-Fernández, *Torn Between Empires: Economy, Society, and Patterns of Political Thought in the Hispanic Caribbean, 1840-1878* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994).

<sup>73</sup> Roig de Leuchsenring documents the prelates' fears about the "irreligious" insurgents and their anxieties over revolution, but digs no deeper than this. Fernández Callejas' work also documents the Church's uncompromising stance against independence, but does not explain what it did to counteract the insurrection. See: Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, *La Iglesia Católica y la independencia de Cuba* (La Habana: Gran Logia de Cuba, 1958). Roger Fernández Callejas, *El clero y la independencia de Cuba* (La Habana: Editorial Habana, 1952).

<sup>74</sup> See: Olga Portuondo Zúñiga, *La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre: Símbolo de la cubanía* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 1995). Jalane D. Schmidt, *Cachita's Streets: The Virgin of Charity, Race, and Revolution in Cuba* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

world. As Spanish colonial possessions at a time when most of the Western world was enmeshed in religious-secular conflict over the rights and privileges of the Church vis-à-vis the State, Cuba and Puerto Rico do not often enter this field of discussion. Prevalent in case studies across Western Europe and Latin America, such as France and Mexico, this literature studies how Catholicism was used as a tool of the Counter Enlightenment and as support for monarchical rule in the face of advancing political modernization. It also shows how parish priests and the rural faithful stood their ground against aggressive, liberal and secularizing governments during the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.<sup>75</sup> Seeking answers as to how political conflict affected the life of the Church and its parishioners in Cuba and Puerto Rico, and exploring the measures adopted to counteract the effects of secularism and political liberalization upon Catholicism, this dissertation underlines the role of religion in the struggle to preserve the Spanish Empire. Doing so, it likewise stands as challenge to the literature on the late nineteenth century political scene across the colonies that pays scarce attention to Catholicism and fails to account for genuine religious belief as a motivating factor behind conservative politics.

Inserting Catholicism into a narrative of political struggle that typically eschews discussions of religion in favor of other political philosophies understood as modern at the time, like liberalism, autonomism, and independence, this dissertation further reevaluates the development of civil societies in Cuba and Puerto Rico. Studies on the development of civil societies tend to be approached from a Habermasian perspective that links the formation of civil societies to the expansion of a public sphere that allowed for more secular forms of association—

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<sup>75</sup> For examples from France, see: Raymond Anthony Jonas, *France and the Cult of the Sacred Heart: An Epic Tale for Modern Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). For Mexico, see: Edward Wright-Ríos, *Revolutions in Mexican Catholicism: Reform and Revelation in Oaxaca, 1887-1934* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

vis-à-vis the old confraternities and religious brotherhoods ascribed to the Church—and topics of discussion, with publications dedicated to subjects like commerce, agriculture, politics, and literature.<sup>76</sup> In this dominant view, modernization, with its according surge in more democratic forms of politics and rational discussion, is linked to the growth of civil societies. This is in great part represented as a triumph against the hegemonic presence of the Church. While this political modernization had not been achieved in either Cuba or Puerto Rico at the time that studies like Habermas' point to for the development of this democratized public sphere in places like Western Europe, Cuban and Puerto Rican scholars nevertheless agree that the colonies also underwent coincident and similar transformations. In the case of Cuba, preeminent scholar Louis A. Pérez has explored the expansion of this public sphere in terms of a rising secularism and modern consciousness among the populace, which translated into a surge in consumer culture and recreational societies, as well as in an expansion in the number of publications that favored non-religious themes.<sup>77</sup> Joan Casanovas has studied it in terms of the labor associations that began to spread in urban centers across Cuba, along with its mid-nineteenth century economic expansion.<sup>78</sup> In the case of Puerto Rico, Silvia Álvarez Curbelo likewise emphasizes the prevalence of secular topics in public discussion—in the speech of its intellectuals and aspiring politicians—and new periodicals, as well as its increasing connection to the world of commerce

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<sup>76</sup> For a discussion on the birth of this public sphere, see: Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into A Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989). For a general discussion of the process in Latin America, see: Víctor Uribe Urán, "The Birth of a Public Sphere in Latin America during the Age of Revolution," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42.2 (2000): 425-57.

<sup>77</sup> For the most recent publication on the topic, see: Louis A Pérez Jr., *Intimations of Modernity: Civil Culture in Nineteenth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

<sup>78</sup> Joan Casanovas, *Bread or Bullets: Urban Labor and Spanish Colonialism in Cuba, 1850-1898* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998).

outside the sphere of the Spanish Empire.<sup>79</sup> The similar concurrent rise of religious publications around the time that secular ones exploded across the islands is not examined in the literature.<sup>80</sup>

Considering the laity's push to insert Catholicism into this new public sphere, this dissertation proposes that the development of civil societies across Cuba and Puerto Rico was achieved, rather than despite the Church, along with it. It posits that this practice of civic life was propelled not just because of discontent among the working classes or because of liberal and separatist sentiments, but also because of the simultaneous Catholic revival in defense of the Church and the Spanish Empire. Positing this, it fills a gap in the literature described above, and proposes that the late nineteenth century changes experienced in Cuba and Puerto Rico cannot be understood without acknowledging the simultaneous spread of religious politicization therein. In this sense, it agrees with propositions like that of sociologist Carlos Forment, who has studied similar phenomena in countries like Mexico and Peru, and who poses that the formation of their civil societies was first made possible with the language and tools found in Catholicism: in the organizational structure of brotherhoods and confraternities, and in the democratic principles practiced within them.<sup>81</sup> In the same vein, it follows the example of Silvia Arrom, who explores the mid-nineteenth century proliferation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul across Mexico, and shows how this Catholic action contributed to the formation of civil society in the nascent

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<sup>79</sup> For an example of this, see: Silvia Álvarez Curbelo, *Un país del porvenir: el afán de la modernidad en Puerto Rico (Siglo XIX)* (San Juan: Ediciones Callejón, 2001).

<sup>80</sup> Neither is it examined in histories of the press and print culture for the islands. See: Antonio S Pedreira, *El periodismo en Puerto Rico: bosquejo histórico desde su iniciación hasta 1930* (La Habana: Imprenta Úcar, García y cía, 1941). Ambrosio Forment, *El libro en Cuba: Siglos XVII y XIX* (La Habana: Letras Cubanas, 2014).

<sup>81</sup> Carlos Forment, *Democracy in Latin America, 1760-1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

republic.<sup>82</sup> Hand in hand with an examination of the Catholic press, this approach also serves to highlight how the Catholic Church in Cuba and Puerto Rico joined the world of print as a fighting stance against the rapid multiplication of secular newspapers and thought.<sup>83</sup> This recovers a history of religious publications that isn't present in studies of print and print culture in the island colonies, a body of work that is particularly abundant in the case of Cuba.<sup>84</sup>

In further examining how the faithful responded, not just to secularization and political upheaval, but also to a Church that did not have enough resources to tend to them, this dissertation highlights how the laity worked to sustain their faith and the Church. This is evident in the case of the upper and middle class laymen and women, who shared the ecclesiastical authorities' fears and anxieties over the fate of Catholicism and the colonies' relationship with Spain, and took it upon themselves to defend Catholicism and the Church against its detractors. Examining their counterparts in poor and rural parishes, who often did not have the capacity to establish militant, Catholic publications, nor enmesh themselves in imperial politics, however, goes beyond the historiographical contributions that the latter case makes regarding the evolution of the colonies' public spheres, to fill a gap in the literature on popular religious practices in Cuba and Puerto Rico.

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<sup>82</sup> Silvia Arrom, *Volunteering for a Cause: Gender, Faith, and Charity in Mexico from Reform to Revolution* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016), 6.

<sup>83</sup> This trend was prevalent in countries where liberal governments had succeeded in weakening the Church, but which the colonial churches in Cuba and Puerto Rico also took part in. Sol Serrano explores the phenomenon for mid-nineteenth century Chile. See: Sol Serrano *¿Qué hacer con Dios en la República? Política y secularización en Chile, 1845-1885* (Santiago: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2008).

<sup>84</sup> For Puerto Rico, see: Antonio S. Pedreira, *El periodismo en Puerto Rico: Bosquejo histórico desde su iniciación hasta el 1930, Vol. I* (La Habana: Imprenta Úcar, García y Compañía, 1941). For Cuba, see: Ambrosio Fornet, *El libro en Cuba* (La Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1994). Juan José Sánchez Baena, *El terror de los tiranos: La imprenta en la centuria que cambió Cuba (1763-1868)* (Castelló de la Plana: Publicacions de la Universitat Jaume I, 2009.) Alain Basail Rodríguez, *El lápiz rojo: Prensa, censura e identidad cubana (1878-1895)* (La Habana: Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Cultura Juan Marinello, 2004). Pamela Maria Smorkaloff, *Readers and Writers in Cuba: A Social History of Print Culture, 1830s-1990s* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997).

This also sheds light on the experiences of common laymen and women, a group whose races and occupations often went unremarked upon in the sources, but that we can surmise were coming from communities made up of white, mixed race, and free Black individuals. In the case of Puerto Rico, these communities included workers in coffee plantations throughout the mountainous interior and in the sugar cane fields that lined the coast. In and around the outskirts of Havana, this group included workers in tobacco manufacturing and other artisanal and urban trades, like construction, domestic service, and stevedoring.

In the case of Puerto Rico, the scant literature on the topic admits to the development of unsanctioned cults in private homes as a widespread phenomenon that proliferated in response to institutional neglect, but offers little in terms of just how these practices developed and what these cults looked like.<sup>85</sup> The cases analyzed here do not challenge the contention that the faithful set out on their own given the scarce presence of the Church among them, but rather, illustrate this using the parishioners' own words in their attempts at securing better spiritual care or getting their homegrown devotions recognized.

In the case of Cuba, the overwhelming focus of this literature has been on African religious practices, such as Santería or Regla de Ocha, and Palo Monte.<sup>86</sup> A similar corpus studies Afro-Cuban *cabildos de nación* as sites where syncretism flourished and community formed, and likewise depicts Afro-Cuban Catholic confraternities as decoy spaces from which to

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<sup>85</sup> See: Fernando Picó, "El catolicismo popular en el Puerto Rico del siglo 19," en *Virgenes, magos y escapularios: Imaginería, etnicidad y religiosidad popular en Puerto Rico*, ed. Ángel G. Quintero Rivera (Río Piedras: Centro de Investigaciones Sociales, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1998), 153-157. See also: García Leduc, *La pesada carga*, 262-264. An exception can be found in studies of the material culture that stemmed from these unsupervised practices. See: Teodoro Vidal, *La Monserrate con el niño blanco: una modalidad iconográfica puertorriqueña* (San Juan: Alba, 2003).

<sup>86</sup> This literature encompasses now classic studies on Afro-Cuban culture. See, for example: Lydia Cabrera, *La sociedad secreta Abakuá* (Havana: Ediciones CR, 1959). See also: Fernando Ortiz, *Los negros brujos* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1995).

engage in syncretic practices.<sup>87</sup> The cases presented here, however, take Afro-Cuban confraternities as their members and proponents envisaged them in their letters and petitions to institute them: as spaces to engage in Catholic practice and contemplate their devotions, as well as a sign of parishioners' resilience before an absent Church. Their associations, while often operating at the margins of the institution, attempted to replicate the form and religious observance practiced in otherwise sanctioned religious congregations. This stands in contrast to the literature that approaches these spaces in terms of resistance and heterodoxy.

On the role of Catholicism within the islands' political upheavals, that this has not been examined in greater detail is symptomatic of historical narratives concerning Cuba and Puerto Rico continuing to rely on the once prevalent secularization paradigm that highlighted the decline of religious fervor and displacement of the Church.<sup>88</sup> The literature that focuses on colonial Cuba and Puerto Rico's political struggles represents the yearning for reform and discussions around independence as a tangible sign of modernity. It also depicts the people that espoused these reformist ideas, along with their insertion into the public sphere, as setting the terms of a debate—and ultimate course of action—where talk of religion and religious values did not and could not have a place. Yet liberal reformers were not speaking into a void, and found themselves in dialogue with conservatives whose love of Spain placed Catholicism and its defense at the forefront of their campaign. Asking the reader to take their spousal of these beliefs

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<sup>87</sup> This is, in many ways, the intellectual offspring of the studies cited above. See: Rafael López Valdés, *Pardos y morenos, esclavos y libres: sus instituciones en el Caribe hispano* (San Juan: Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, 2007). See also: Philip Howard, *Changing History: Afro-Cuban Cabildos and Societies of Color in the Nineteenth-Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998).

<sup>88</sup> Until recently, this thesis had gone largely unchallenged in the field of Latin American history. For a thorough discussion on the secularization debate, see: Reinaldo Román and Pamela Voekel, "Popular Religion in Latin American Historiography," in *The Oxford Handbook of Latin American History*, ed. José Moya (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

as more than mere rhetoric, this dissertation further pushes back against this widespread vision of secularization and presents religious belief as a constitutive part of political debate in late nineteenth century Cuba and Puerto Rico.

## Sources

To document this, I trace conversations that spanned what was then the Diocese of Havana, the Diocese of Puerto Rico, the Archdiocese of Santiago de Cuba, the Ministerio de Ultramar in Madrid, the Spanish Papal Nunciature, and the Vatican.<sup>89</sup> As such, I make use of geographically disparate and historically overlooked documents in the Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Spanish National Archives, the Archbishopric Archives in Cuba and Puerto Rico, the Vatican Archives in Rome, and both public and private libraries across Cuba and Puerto Rico. The documents found in these repositories can be divided into three kinds of sources: internal documentation regarding Church and State, such as correspondence between bishops, priests, and government officials; print publications, encompassing the abundance of Catholic and Catholic-influenced newspapers that proliferated at the time; and letters—petitions and complaints—from simple parishioners to their local priest that would get forwarded to their respective bishoprics and archbishoprics for consideration. The correspondence that makes up this archive contains, for example, exchanges between the faithful and government officials that intended to enlist the latter in the promotion of their latest cause, entreaties from high-ranking ecclesiastical authorities to their superiors in Rome concerning their material circumstances, and messages originating at the parish level that provide rich details about local devotions and the

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<sup>89</sup> The Diocese of Havana was elevated to the status of archdiocese in 1925. The Diocese of Puerto Rico was elevated to the status of archdiocese in 1960.

quotidian experience of religion. Print sources contain examples of both institutional publications, via which the sponsoring prelate would communicate with his parishioners and priests, and lay-driven journals that either identified as Catholic or made it a point to defend Catholicism as part of its guiding principles, both offering a window into the reactionary rhetoric that characterized Catholicism at the time.

Making use of these sources, this dissertation is also a work of historical reconstruction. Beyond the deep-seated belief in secularization that has dictated much of historical writing and research on the late nineteenth and twentieth century in Cuba and Puerto Rico, this significant lack of historiographical attention to Catholicism and the Catholic Church is concomitant with a lack of documentation. This is principally due to insufficient centralization and organization, meaning that documents pertaining to the Church are not only found across different archives, but that they are also erroneously, or haphazardly, labeled. In Puerto Rico, where the Church has a centralized archive in the archbishopric at San Juan, late attempts at recompilation meant that by the time this archive opened, many of its would-be documents had already been either thrown out or pilfered for personal collections. In the case of Cuba, while the archbishoprics in Havana and Santiago de Cuba have their own archives, documentation is less centralized, with many individual parishes still in charge of their own archival collections. Available documentation for investigating the experience of Catholicism is thus not only scarce, but also scattered.

Those documents that are available to the public, whether in Church archives or in public institutions, are also at risk of being lost, not only to time, but also to a lack of funding and adequate infrastructure. In the fall of 2018, air conditioning in the archbishopric archive at Havana—necessary to control the damaging humidity to which its documents are otherwise exposed—was often broken. In 2021, the indebted Archbishopric of Puerto Rico announced it

was selling the colonial palace where it sat in the heart of Old San Juan, involving a relocation of its archive that will make it less accessible to future researchers. Many periodical collections, while in the case of Puerto Rico now digitized and safe from the elements, are likewise incomplete. In the spring of 2019, librarians at the Biblioteca Provincial Elvira Cape in Santiago de Cuba—once the holder of numerous nineteenth century periodicals from the Santiago region—told me that most of their records from the period had just been taken out of circulation. Mold and water damage had gotten into the collection. The vast periodical holdings at the Biblioteca Nacional José Martí in Havana, while still operable, likewise lack the proper temperature control that would prevent this from happening.

To bring Cuba and Puerto Rico together follows their comparable circumstances under this turbulent period for the Church and colonial politics, and their similar historiographical lacunae regarding the experience of religion and its uses. It is also a conscious effort to gather a larger sample of documents than the individual archives and libraries listed here would allow, in an attempt to consolidate their endangered stories into a narrative of Catholicism and Catholic militancy across the Spanish colonies.

## **Dissertation Outline**

This dissertation is structured around the laity and the Catholic hierarchy's different responses to the prospect of losing their religion. It is organized thematically and alternates between ecclesiastical and lay perspectives to showcase their efforts in confronting the new realities plaguing the Church. The narrative begins in the 1850s, as parishioners suffering the consequences that an expanding population brought for their spiritual care complained before their respective bishoprics and archbishoprics, and as urban faithful attuned to the news coming

out of Europe began airing their Catholic politics in print. The latter serves as the backdrop for the reaction that was to come after the events of 1868, when Cuba and Puerto Rico became enmeshed in war and rumors of war, and the surrounding debates over would-be reforms like freedom of religion and ultimate independence that the rebellions spearheaded. The narrative ends in the late 1880s, in the lull between the Ten Years' War and the beginning of the Final Cuban War of Independence, when it seemed like separatist aspirations and irreligious aspirations would yet be conquered.

The first chapter sets the scene of an impoverished Church across Cuba and Puerto Rico, lacking in sufficient capital and ecclesiastics to tend to its flock in an efficient manner, above all, in poor and rural parishes. Against this backdrop, the chapter depicts parishioners who sought to sustain their beliefs amidst institutional neglect, recurring to initiatives like building their own chapels, petitions for appointing a priest to their forgotten parishes, the formation of devotional associations, and the development of unsanctioned cults and practices in lieu of Sunday mass. The chapter points to a resilient Catholic sentiment that highlights religion as a vital part of daily life among the poor white peasants and free Black communities that made up these parishes, and argues for the work of the common faithful as a crucial component for the survival of Catholicism across Cuba and Puerto Rico at a time when its respective churches could do little to sustain themselves.

The second chapter traces the Church's attempt to extend its presence and propagate its message via the press. Seeking to counter the proliferation of an aggressive secular press, the Vatican directed its prelates to celebrate the work of Catholic writers and their publications, favoring the expansion of the Catholic press. Following these dictates, prelates across Cuba and Puerto Rico entered the fray with their own dioceses' official periodicals. In richer and more

cosmopolitan Cuba, the laity likewise responded to this call with numerous Catholic journals, going to bat with publications they considered irreverent and anticlerical. Examining these publications, the chapter analyses how the Church, with the help of its devoted lay writers and publishers, inserted itself into the islands' growing public spheres, as Catholics sought to keep Catholicism a vital component of civic life, amidst the surge of new ideas and a changing political discourse.

The third chapter further explores the Catholic stance against this new secular press, examining the belligerent stance taken by the higher members of the Church hierarchy when it became evident that the discursive battle that Catholic publications had thus far been waging would be insufficient in countering the effects of the secular press upon the public. It follows the efforts of the Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba to resolve the persistent problem of a press that—in his mind—endeavored to create havoc for the Catholic Church and disunion with Spain. It analyses the archbishop's use of censorship as a tool to intimidate detractors, alongside remonstrations meant to recruit their recipients in his fight against pernicious writers and their publications. In this manner, the chapter showcases both the fears and anxieties that characterized the period, and the ways in which the Church sought to place limitations on the colonies' growing public spheres.

The fourth and final chapter traces the initiatives of Havana and Puerto Rico Catholics to raise and defend monuments of pro-Spanish Catholicism before the public and claim a space for their faith in the heated political landscape of late nineteenth-century Cuba and Puerto Rico. The chapter concentrates on the efforts of the urban middle and upper class laity, who had the most riding on the vision of a unified Spanish Empire, and who had the financial, social and cultural capital to enter electoral politics, donate funds and organize for their collection, and appeal

directly to high-ranking civil and religious authorities for intervention on local matters. Informed by their faith, they sought to influence political decisions that would be favorable to the survival of a Spanish, Catholic Cuba and Puerto Rico, organizing around causes that would exalt Catholicism as a crucial element in maintaining a peaceful, lasting relationship between the metropole and its colonies. In showcasing these actions, the chapter posits that this organized and active faithful acted as unofficial missionaries for the Church and served as a bolster for its weakened infrastructure, whose priests and prelates alone were not enough to sustain the faith across the colonies and advocate for it as a deterrent to revolution. In examining the different ways in which the middle and upper class faithful approached this problem, in contrast with the faithful depicted in the first chapter, this chapter likewise highlights how the experience of Catholicism and the Church differed across social classes.

Putting forward the Catholic hierarchy and its laity as influential actors in the islands' late nineteenth century political, social, and civic trajectories, this dissertation ultimately demonstrates the influence of religion upon politics and public life, and restores Catholicism back into the narrative of ideological and political currents within the late Spanish Empire. It presents a Church that fought for its prerogatives, and a laity that organized around its beliefs, and proposes religion and its uses as a useful lens with which to understand political conflict in Cuba and Puerto Rico, as the colonies fought to defend their relationship with the metropole.

## Chapter 1

### To Elevate their Prayers:

#### Cultivating Devotion and Catholic Sentiment

In 1865, the Bishop of Puerto Rico received a letter undersigned by a group of parishioners from the mountainous, interior town of Lares. Written on behalf of the five thousand residents of the Bartolo, Pezuela, Mirasol, and Río Prieto communities, plus the “two or three thousand that reside in the adjacent *barrios*, belonging to the towns of Adjuntas, Yauco, and San Germán,” the letter expressed their intentions to build a chapel and have a priest come take care of it and live among them. The chapel in barrio Bartolo would be located twelve miles (*cuatro leguas*) from the parish church in the center of town. Cutting the distance between them and their nearest priest, the letter writers explained, would allow them to receive much needed spiritual care. To underline their need, they recounted how this distance, comprising “ten or twelve hours” of travel, had interfered with the observance of their faith. The twelve miles between them and the parish church included the Río Grande and portions of the Río Prieto.<sup>90</sup> Both rivers lacked bridges and were too dangerous to cross during the rainy season, their currents blocking passage for days at a time. As a consequence, most residents had visited the parish church “only on the days of their baptism and their marriage,” and young people did not know how to cross themselves. Women were further impeded from traveling to the parish church, as they could not undertake the journey on foot and were too poor to hire a carriage.

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<sup>90</sup> There are several rivers known as Río Grande in Puerto Rico. The letter writers would have been referring to the Río Grande de Añasco.

More dire, however, were the particular tragedies that had befallen them for want of a priest. Because the parish priest could not travel to them, residents often died without having received the last rites. To top this, the risk of putrefaction setting in before the pallbearers could get their bodies to the parish church meant they often had to bind and drag them with ropes across the river, running the risk of drowning. Bodies were sometimes left on the road, as had happened some months before near a home in Pezuela, “doubtless because the pallbearers could not go on.” There had also been instances of babies born during the rainy season, who after being taken to the parish church to be baptized, died before making it back home, their parties prevented from crossing the river before the babies succumbed to “hunger, the rains, or heat stroke.”<sup>91</sup>

Yet for all their difficulties, the parishioners had amassed the funds required for a new chapel and to provide for a permanent priest. They had communicated all this to the parish priest, who saw fit that they should have their own pastor and place of worship, but could do nothing without approval from the bishopric. Their heartfelt letter had the intent of eliciting sympathy from the bishop, and it is likely to have done so. Bishop for eight years at the time he received their letter, and having labored as a parish priest before that, Pablo Benigno Carrión had seen all that parishioners had to endure in the absence of institutional resources. He made it a mission of his tenure to conduct pastoral visits throughout his diocese, laboring to end this spiritual abandonment among the most affected, far-flung parishes, where access to the sacraments, the

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<sup>91</sup> Archivo Histórico Arquidiocesano de San Juan (AHA), *Correspondencia de Parroquias*, Caja G-24, Legajo “Lares.”

presence of a priest, and a sanctioned place of worship at which to gather, were scarce resources.<sup>92</sup>

Sending a priest to settle in *barrio* Bartolo, however, was not so simple. Puerto Rico, as did neighboring Cuba at the time, had too few priests to care for its expanding population.<sup>93</sup> For all the letter writers' ability to provide for a priest, pastoral visits would have had to suffice.

This chapter is about what happened in between the sporadic pastoral visits that aimed to bless unsanctioned unions, dole out confirmations, and preach to the suffering faithful. It examines parishioners' actions before a Church that was ill-equipped to tend to their needs, and shows them taking the matter of their spiritual care and salvation into their own hands. It is built around cases in which parishioners sought to sustain their beliefs amidst institutional neglect, recurring to initiatives like building their own chapels, petitions for appointing a priest to their forgotten parishes, the formation of devotional associations in the form of confraternities and *hermandades*, and the development of unsanctioned cults and practices in lieu of Sunday mass. The chapter points to a strong Catholic sentiment that highlights religion as a vital part of daily life among the poor white peasants and free Black communities that made up these poor, often rural parishes, and argues for the work of the common faithful as a crucial component for the survival of Catholicism across Cuba and Puerto Rico at a time when their respective churches could do little to sustain themselves. In so doing, it likewise points to religious observance as an essential component of quotidian life and a vehicle for communal association.

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<sup>92</sup> Bishop Carrión spent half his tenure on the road, initiating pastoral visits in 1859, 1863, and 1871. He died on the road in 1871, the result of a carriage accident while visiting the town of Fajardo. See: Huerga, *Los obispos de Puerto Rico*, 161-171.

<sup>93</sup> See Introduction.

Because it describes a problem that was systemic throughout the latter half of the nineteenth-century, the chapter has a long temporal scope. Examined cases range from the 1850s to the 1890s, with some examples tracing parishioners' experiences in contending with the ecclesiastical authorities or formulating their own cults and practices for over a decade. The bulk of the cases come from the correspondence records between parish priests and their prelates found at the archdiocesan archives in Havana and San Juan, and represent previously untapped sources for the study of religion, as well as the social and material realities of the many rural towns and parishes scattered across Puerto Rico and the province of Havana.

In doing so, this chapter aims to fill in the gaps of a scant literature on Catholicism and “popular religion” in Cuba and Puerto Rico. For Puerto Rico, this literature readily admits to the development of unsanctioned cults in private homes as a widespread phenomenon and the result of institutional neglect, but offers little in terms of just how these practices developed and what these cults looked like.<sup>94</sup> I do not challenge the contention that the faithful set out on their own given the scarce institutional representation of Catholicism among them, rather, I aim to illustrate this using the parishioners' own words: to the Bishop, to the Diocesan Secretary, and to their nearest parish priest, in their attempts at securing better spiritual care or getting their devotions recognized.

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<sup>94</sup> See: Fernando Picó, “El catolicismo popular en el Puerto Rico del siglo 19,” en *Virgenes, magos y escapularios: Imaginería, etnicidad y religiosidad popular en Puerto Rico*, ed. Ángel G. Quintero Rivera (Río Piedras: Centro de Investigaciones Sociales, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1998), 153-157. See also: García Leduc, *La pesada carga*, 262-264. An exception can be found in studies of the material culture that stemmed from these unsupervised practices. See: Teodoro Vidal, *La Monserrate con el niño blanco: una modalidad iconográfica puertorriqueña* (San Juan: Alba, 2003).

In the case of Cuba, the overwhelming focus of this literature has been on African religious practices, such as Santería or Regla de Ocha, and Palo Monte.<sup>95</sup> A similar corpus studies Afro-Cuban cabildos as sites where syncretism flourished and community formed, and likewise depicts Afro-Cuban confraternities as decoy spaces from which to engage in syncretic practices.<sup>96</sup> The cases presented here, however, take Afro-Cuban confraternities as their members and proponents envisaged them in their letters and petitions to institute them: as spaces to engage in Catholic practice and contemplate their devotions, as well as a sign of parishioners' resilience before an absent Church. In this sense, the cases are also a challenge to the abovementioned scholarship, which insists upon heterodoxy as the only avenue for empowerment and community-formation.

## 1.1 The Search for Spiritual Guidance

Parishioners were well-aware that their needs were not being met. A lack of sufficient and able-bodied priests was not the only problem facing the Church across Cuba and Puerto Rico. A dearth of “good” priests to turn to likewise exacerbated its predicament. This shortage of trusted figures with which to entrust their spiritual care and instruction was a constant issue for the faithful, and one that they took great care to let the higher civil and ecclesiastical authorities know about.

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<sup>95</sup> This literature encompasses now classic studies on Afro-Cuban culture. See, for example: Lydia Cabrera, *La sociedad secreta Abakuá* (Havana: Ediciones CR, 1959). See also: Fernando Ortiz, *Los negros brujos* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1995).

<sup>96</sup> This is, in many ways, the intellectual offspring of the studies cited above. See: Rafael López Valdés, *Pardos y morenos, esclavos y libres: sus instituciones en el Caribe hispano* (San Juan: Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, 2007). See also: Philip Howard, *Changing History: Afro-Cuban Cabildos and Societies of Color in the Nineteenth-Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998).

In 1856, the mayor of Hatillo, Puerto Rico, wrote to the Bishop on behalf of his townspeople, who denounced that their priest was often away from the church, engaged in illicit gambling, organized dances in his home, pursued women in town, and got into frequent brawls. His parishioners often found themselves needing to seek their sacraments in the next town over, as even when the Hatillo priest was present in the parish church, he would often decline to perform his duties, claiming that the building was in disrepair and did not allow for more people to enter it.<sup>97</sup>

Such scenes of neglect were a recurring scenario across parishes in Puerto Rico. In 1871, a concerned churchgoer wrote to the Vicar Capitular—the ecclesiastic tasked with administering a diocese under a vacant episcopal seat—to speak out against the way that her parish priest was treating her nephew, then an altar boy under his charge. The priest, she protested, was physically abusive towards the boy, repeatedly hitting him during Mass for failing to perform his duties to perfection.<sup>98</sup> In 1877, a group of concerned faithful in Vieques took advantage of a pastoral visit to tell the Bishop in person about their misbehaving priest, who maintained a relationship with a local woman and was in constant conflict with both his own parishioners and the town mayor.<sup>99</sup> In 1881, the mayor of Rincón wrote to the Bishop in representation of himself and his charges, lodging a complaint against their new parish priest, who, after first appearing to them as a benevolent and pious minister, had soon revealed himself to be covetous and ill-tempered. The priest had made death into a business, haggling over burial prices with bereaved parishioners. He had likewise neglected his other sacramental responsibilities, refusing to baptize children during

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<sup>97</sup> AHA, *Correspondencia al Obispo*, Caja G-2, Sin Legajo.

<sup>98</sup> AHA, *Correspondencia al Gobernador Eclesiástico*, Caja G-38, Legajo 1871.

<sup>99</sup> AHA, *Correspondencia al Obispo*, Caja G-5, Legajo 20.

weekdays (*días de trabajo*), as well as those of unwed parents. He used his time at the pulpit during Sunday mass to hurl insults and public shame upon the townspeople he disliked, rather than preach a sermon. In a similar vein, the priest also tended to attack the local civil authorities, such as himself, and the municipal judge, whenever he disagreed with their decisions.<sup>100</sup> That same year, the mayor of Orocovis addressed the Bishop in a letter, both as a civil official concerned about public life, and as a concerned father to young sons and daughters, declaring that the parish sacristan exhibited “immoral and scandalous” behavior that set a “bad example” for those that beheld it. The sacristan was in the habit of sleeping in different women’s houses, causing scandals during the night, and disregarding the cleaning of church buildings around town. The parish priest, as superior to the sacristan, was aware of his behavior and had done nothing to stop it.<sup>101</sup>

Given the lack of available bodies with which to replace the errant clergymen, there was little the authorities at the bishopric could do to halt their misbehavior, and habitual offenders were common. The abovementioned complaints regarding the priest who hit his altar server, as well as that concerning the irritable parish priest of Vieques, were not the first accusations to be made against them. Another letter had been sent from Vieques in 1874, already protesting the parish priest’s demands for sums exceeding official figures for sacraments performed, and denouncing his “irregular and reckless behavior” as one that devalued the faith and “repelled the faithful.”<sup>102</sup> And in his response to the concerned aunt who had written to condemn her nephew’s treatment, the Vicar Capitular made it clear that the priest in question was habitually accused of

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<sup>100</sup> AHA, *Correspondencia al Obispo*, Caja G-6, Legajo 25.

<sup>101</sup> AHA, *Correspondencia de Parroquias*, Caja G-22, Legajo “Barros.”

<sup>102</sup> AHA, *Correspondencia al Gobernador Eclesiástico*, Caja G-39, Legajo “Vieques.”

bad behavior, and had become a headache for the Vicar himself, who seemed all too conscious about the lack of clergymen at his disposal, simply telling the woman to give the abusive priest another chance before deciding to remove the boy from his supervision.

While Puerto Rico's seminary—the Seminario Conciliar de San Ildefonso in San Juan—was then in operation and had once been lauded as the solution to the problem of chronic understaffing, it graduated too few new priests to be considered a real source of institutional renewal and reform that could supply an answer in such cases.<sup>103</sup> The same was true in Cuba, whose seminaries—San Carlos and San Ambrosio in Havana and San Basilio el Magno in Santiago de Cuba—graduated a higher number of priests, but likewise failed to provide the island with sufficient ecclesiastics.<sup>104</sup> Unsatisfactory responses from the top, however, would not stop the affected parishioners from trying to take hold of the situation.

Complaints and investigations concerning disorderly priests likewise proliferated in Cuba. In an 1879 inquiry conducted in the Diocese of Havana regarding one of its clergymen, parishioners sat for an interview and accused their priest of exhibiting a quarrelsome nature, of living with a woman and having had a son with her, and of consuming meat and fish during traditional fast days.<sup>105</sup> As in Puerto Rico, parishioners often wrote to the Bishopric in complaint of the unusual and exorbitant prices requested for burials and other sacraments, and denouncing their priests, as one bereaved parishioner put it, of “treating the sacred rites as mere merchandise.”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> García Leduc, *La pesada carga*, 54-55.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> “Expediente para averiguar la conducta que observa el Pbro. D. Arturo Cornejo,” Archivo Histórico del Arzobispado de La Habana (AHAH), *Comunicaciones*, Legajo 52, Expediente 35.

<sup>106</sup> “Expediente relativo a la demanda de Juan P. San Pelayo al presbítero Buenaventura Recamarán por el cobro en demasía de unas honras fúnebres,” AHAH, *Comunicaciones*, Legajo 55, Expediente 121. For other examples, see:

Parishioners were cognizant of the character traits that a good priest should possess, and they did not often find them in their own. Animosity towards priests—due to the quarrelsome nature, pursuit of local women, and seeming greediness exhibited by numerous priests—was not uncommon. This did not mean, however, that parishioners as a whole disdained the figure of the priest, nor that they hated the Church, for religion, and the importance of proper spiritual guidance was ever-present. As the mayor of Orocovis put it to the Bishop in his 1881 letter in denunciation of both sacristan and priest, “there is always something to be gained in inhibiting the bad examples tolerated by a minister of God.” The object of his and all other complaints filed before the Puerto Rico and Havana bishoprics was to have another priest—and in this case, sacristan, as well—replace the bad specimens in their midst.

In this sense, the other side of the coin to parishioners’ demands consisted of pleas to retain those they considered good priests from being transferred to other parishes. Out of the precious few decent priests available to them, parishioners would fight to hang on to those they recognized as fulfilling their spiritual responsibilities and representing a beneficial presence in their communities. The appeals coexisted with the myriad denunciations against insolent priests, and can be found across both the Havana and Puerto Rico Diocesan archives.

In 1867, 62 parishioners from the town of Sancti Spiritus added their signatures to a letter that pleaded with the Havana Bishop to go back on a recent decision that saw their priest, Father Pellón, relocated to the town of Matanzas. The parishioners protested before the bishop, describing how his removal had “filled with bitterness” all who had had the pleasure of knowing Father Pellón, who was not only “civil and solicitous,” but also “faithful to the precepts of his

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“El juez de primera instancia de Cárdenas interesa el arancel de esta diócesis para resolver sobre causa que sigue al párroco de Cimarrones por exacciones ilegales,” AHAH, *Comunicaciones*, Legajo 55, Expediente 99. See also: “Expediente en queja contra el párroco Francisco Eceizabarrena,” *Comunicaciones*, Legajo 43, Expediente 14.

ministry.” The pain of losing him was made yet greater by the fact that it left the reconstruction of the dilapidated Iglesia de La Caridad hanging in the balance, after having pinned great hopes on Father Pellón to repair and bring it to its former glory, as he had done with another church in town already. As the parishioners underlined—and entreated—the absence created by Father Pellón was not one that could be filled with another, similarly faithful priest, but by Pellón alone. As such, the inhabitants of Sancti Spiritus asked, in a less than rhetorical manner, whether their gratefulness and admiration was not enough to maintain Father Pellón among them, and wondered why they should be kept from “reaping the benefits of his meritorious actions.”<sup>107</sup> With their words, the parishioners implied that a symbiotic relationship existed between them and the priest, in which they had sustained him as much he had done them, and insinuated to the bishop that getting to keep Father Pellón in Sancti Spiritus was something they deserved.

A letter from Father Pellón appended to the parishioners’ petition in the Diocesan archive reveals that the initiative to get him back in Sancti Spiritus had come wholly from the townspeople. A surprised and apologetic Father Pellón penned a letter to the bishop as soon as he heard of the petition to reinstate him to his former parish, making it clear that the request had been placed without his consent. As his address to the bishop suggests, it seems that whether priests—in this case, Father Pellón—agreed with parishioners’ plans to retain them did not matter. Similar requests found in the archives do not include the kind of follow-up that Pellón sent after his former parishioners spoke up in protest of his relocation, yet it does not seem

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<sup>107</sup> The original Spanish quote reads: “Si de algo vale la voz de un pueblo agradecido y admirador constante de las cualidades de su Pastor ausente, ¿por qué no hemos de tenerlo entre nosotros? ¿Por qué no hemos de gozar de los beneficios que arrojan de sí las acciones meritorias, que, en armonía con su índole y amor a la humanidad, pone en acción el Padre Pellón?” See: “Expediente pidiendo que vuelva el Pbro. Pellón a la parroquia de la Caridad de Sancti Spiritus,” AHAH, *Comunicaciones*, Legajo 39, Expediente 25.

unlikely that—with priests being subject to the absolute authority of their prelates—such requests would not have been backed by the very priests whose permanence motivated them. Yet however mindful of the obedience that the common faithful likewise owed the Church, parishioners’ religious sentiments would surpass this, to the point of going against their priests’ wishes, to prevent the spiritual ruin that their abandonment would bring about.

As was the case, in 1871, the *cuervo de voluntarios*, the mayor, judge, and the town council (*junta municipal*) of Cifuentes, came together in representation of the town and reached out to the Bishop of Havana, concerned over the news that their parish priest and chaplain to the *voluntarios*, Father Rodríguez, had been reassigned to another parish. Asking the bishop to revert his decision, the men cited the priest’s willingness to help his parishioners overcome their difficulties, and the “moral influence” he wielded over the town, as factors to consider in the plans for his relocation. Their collective letter was followed by individual missives from the mayor and the *teniente gobernador*, who variously spoke of the priest’s beneficial effects upon the town, along with the “zeal and assiduousness” that had made him so well-loved and respected.<sup>108</sup>

In 1878, a petition to maintain their priest from the inhabitants of the Arroyo Arenas parish in Havana garnered 19 signatures. The signatories, all particular devotees of a Jesús Nazareno image located in their chapel, explained that since their current priest’s arrival, devotion to the image had experienced significant growth, and were now hoping to form a devotional association (*hermandad*) in its honor. Yet with their priest set to leave the parish, the project would become impossible, for—as the inhabitants of Sancti Spiritus had done before

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<sup>108</sup> “Expediente instruido a consecuencia de oficio del Sr. Alcalde de Sagua y en representación de los Voluntarios del Escuadrón de Cifuentes para que reponga el Gobierno Eclesiástico al Presbítero Rodríguez y Suárez en Cifuentes,” AHAH, *Comunicaciones*, Expediente 45, Legajo 24.

them in order to repair their dilapidated church—they were counting on the priest to help organize the association.<sup>109</sup>

In 1890, in the town of Quebradillas, Puerto Rico, 331 townspeople undersigned a petition to retain their parish priest after receiving news of his would-be transfer to the town of Yabucoa, explaining that their respective priest, Father Perea, “wholly fulfilled the responsibilities of a Catholic pastor, [being] always attentive to the betterment and perfection of all things concerning the Church.” Father Perea was modest and virtuous, and had elevated the parishioners’ religious fervor to “heights never seen before” in Quebradillas, a boon that would be all but lost should he be taken away from their parish.<sup>110</sup>

The faithful adopted different strategies in their attempts to sway the higher ecclesiastical authorities in their favor. Parishioners were mindful of describing their priests’ unimpeachable natures and they were careful to inform their prelates about the benefits the priests had brought to their communities, implying along the way that such achievements—an increased religious fervor, a new religious association, the intended renovation of an old church—would be undone without their continued presence.

Parishioners also knew to appeal to material and political concerns when pleading their cases. As the parishioners of Cifuentes told it, Father Rodríguez was needed in town, not just because he represented the paragon of a priest, but also because “of the catastrophic circumstances in which the parish finds itself due to the [present] insurrection.” Making a reference to the then ongoing Ten Years’ War (1868-1878), the men who undersigned the

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<sup>109</sup> “Expediente promovido por los vecinos de Arroyo Arenas, feligreses de Cano, solicitando se quede en el curato el Presbítero Don Daniel Rubalcaba que fue promovido para el curato de Consolación del Sur,” AHAH, *Comunicaciones*, Legajo 51, Expediente 104.

<sup>110</sup> AHA, *Correspondencia de Parroquias*, Caja G-26, Legajo “Quebradillas.”

petition to retain Father Rodríguez alluded to the importance of religion and sound spiritual guidance as instruments for attaining peace. In his following, individual letter, the mayor of Cifuentes likewise implied the same, declaring Father Rodríguez to be a “useful and necessary presence to the general interests of the State, [as well as] the highest [interests] of the institution which he represents.”<sup>111</sup> The same was a reminder to the bishop of what the Catholic Church stood to lose should the separatist rebellion in Cuba not be controlled, fanning fears of godless and Freemason revolutionaries who would strip the Church off the rights and prerogatives it enjoyed under Spanish rule.

Yet this speech, while tangible for the bishop, as much as for people like the town mayor and Father Cifuentes, chaplain to the *cuervo de voluntarios*, stands out as exceptional among common parishioners’ entreaties. In this case, spiritual care for the petitioners of Cifuentes—all colonial officials—meant sharing in the appeasing power of religion, and bringing the Church into their struggle for peace. Their discourse, while limited in its reach, coexisted with demands for spiritual attention that were rooted in more material concerns.

Among the poor and isolated communities from which most petitions originated, parishioners often relied on the language of religious devotion and respect for the Church to get their points across. This measure that would likewise demonstrate to the bishop the effective evangelization their priest had accomplished. In Quebradillas, the faithful explained to the Bishop how much his intercession would mean to them, “pleading that their virtuous priest, father of the poor, and edifying apostle of the Catholicism that we all profess, not be distanced

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<sup>111</sup> “Expediente instruido a consecuencia de oficio del Sr. Alcalde de Sagua y en representación de los Voluntarios del Escuadrón de Cifuentes para que reponga el Gobierno Eclesiástico al Presbítero Rodríguez y Suárez en Cifuentes,” AHAH, *Comunicaciones*, Expediente 45, Legajo 24.

from our bosom.”<sup>112</sup> In Sancti Spiritus, the parishioners talked about their pain and dashed hopes for the reconstruction of their church, but also spoke to the bishop’s own pious and affectionate nature, whom they knew to be a virtuous man, “who never strayed from justice, nor failed to listen to the supplications of his flock,” and was certain to grant them their petition.<sup>113</sup>

The Vicar General of the then vacant Havana Diocese, Benigno Merino, approved the parishioners of Cifuentes’ petition, reverting his original resolution to have Father Rodríguez relocated from the parish.<sup>114</sup> If the Sancti Spiritus’ and Quebradillas’ parishioners impassioned words worked, there is no record in the archive to show for it. Yet assuming that the lack of an official response meant that their respective bishoprics stayed their course and the parishioners had to contend with the removal of their trusted priests—perhaps, given the lack of available replacements, even going without a pastor for an indefinite amount of time—religious sentiment among them need not have fallen to the lows that the desperate petitioners predicted. While the supplicants depicted the presence of a priest in their communities as crucial to the continuance of their faith, the truth is that even in their absence—or that of an official church building—parishioners found ways to tend to their religion.

Evidence of parishioners attending to their beliefs amid the absence of institutional representation in their communities is abundant among the letters addressed to the higher ecclesiastical authorities. On September 9, 1876, for example, the residents of Playa Húcares in Naguabo, Puerto Rico, first entreated the bishop to bless and grant official recognition to the

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<sup>112</sup> AHA, *Correspondencia de Parroquias*, Caja G-26, Legajo “Quebradillas.”

<sup>113</sup> “Expediente pidiendo que vuelva el Pbro. Pellón a la parroquia de la Caridad de Sancti Spiritus,” AHAH, *Comunicaciones*, Legajo 39, Expediente 25.

<sup>114</sup> “Expediente instruido a consecuencia de oficio del Sr. Alcalde de Sagua y en representación de los Voluntarios del Escuadrón de Cifuentes para que reponga el Gobierno Eclesiástico al Presbítero Rodríguez y Suárez en Cifuentes,” AHAH, *Comunicaciones*, Expediente 45, Legajo 24.

chapel they had just finished building. Constructed in honor of the Virgen del Carmen, unofficial patroness of the seaside residents in town, the chapel was the ultimate expression of devotion to the Marian figure that had for “some time” (*algunos años*) been venerated in the coastal enclave – a cult that was distinct from that of the official patroness of Naguabo, the Virgen del Rosario. The interlocutors spoke on behalf of Playa Húcares’ 800 residents and described to the bishop how, after celebrating her feast day every year and gathering at a local home to venerate her image in lieu of a chapel, the devotees had made great sacrifices to finally have a temple from which to “elevate their prayers,” having gone through great difficulties in amassing the necessary funds and materials. To inaugurate the much yearned for chapel, the residents now only required for the bishop to grant it his official blessing.<sup>115</sup>

On September 12, the bishop authorized the parish priest of Naguabo to bless the chapel on his behalf. Yet in July 1877, the parishioners of Playa Húcares once again wrote to the bishop, this time, asking for permission to hold a feast day Mass for their patroness in the local customs house, rather than the chapel. Hurricane San Felipe, which had devastated Puerto Rico on September 13, 1876, and made its landfall on the eastern coast where Naguabo is located, had destroyed their chapel—one can assume—before the local priest was able to bless it. The destruction that followed in the wake of the hurricane, however, did nothing to weaken the parishioners’ faith, instead seeming to heighten their devotion, and leading them to hold on to their cult of the Virgen del Carmen—patroness, as she was, of seafarers amid rough seas. As the parishioners put it to the bishop, the celebration at the customs house was meant as a provisional solution while they waited to rebuild the chapel. In the ten months since the hurricane had torn apart the original structure, they had been able to gather much of the materials for its

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<sup>115</sup> AHA, *Correspondencia de Parroquias*, Caja G-26, Legajo “Naguabo.”

reconstruction, but lacked the capital to pay for labor. The residents implored the bishop for a donation, citing their great love of religion, and shame over the fact that they could go so long without attending Mass or other religious functions, given their difficulties in getting to the parish church in town. Should their chapel be realized, in turn, the residents of Playa Húcares could attend Mass every Sunday, and religious sentiment would grow stronger among them.<sup>116</sup>

While there is no response from the bishop on record, it seems that their request was not met, as another 1881 letter from the parish priest of Naguabo shows the residents of Playa Húcares still pleading with the ecclesiastical authorities for permission to celebrate the Virgen del Carmen. In a casual manner, the parish priest explained to the bishop how the devotees had come to him in person, asking to celebrate the Virgen del Carmen in Playa Húcares for her feast day on July 16. As the priest further explained, he had turned down their request, for he had been planning to celebrate the Virgen del Carmen in the parish church of Naguabo, with the intent that the feast become a town-wide celebration boasting a high turnout. Yet he was now coming to the bishop all the same, at the insistence of the residents of Playa Húcares, who declined to participate in the celebration at the center of town and kept pushing to have their own festivities. As the parishioners' 1877 letter to the bishop had made clear, it was difficult for them to go into town, citing this as the cause for their persistence. Yet their priest likewise intimated to the bishop that this pushback might have been born out of "a particular devotion to their image and love for their neighborhood," both reasons that the priest admired enough to arrive at a compromise with the devotees of Playa Húcares and agree to officiate over their own Mass and

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<sup>116</sup> AHA, *Correspondencia de Parroquias*, Caja G-26, Legajo "Naguabo."

*novenas* to the Virgin, with the only trade-off being that they be held on the Sunday after the official feast day.<sup>117</sup>

After this, it would be another four years before the residents gained the means to rebuild their lost chapel. A series of letters from 1885 and 1886 detail renewed attempts to get a chapel in Playa Húcares off the ground, with its residents recounting, once again, how their image of the Virgen del Carmen had been venerated at a local home all these years, and alluding to the “spiritual advantages” that would arise from building a chapel that would allow them to house the image in the splendor it deserved and tend to their devotion year-round. This was to be taken into special consideration, seeing as how the number of residents for Playa Húcares had grown from 800 since their original petition in 1876 to 1,000 at the time of their writing, with a great number of them exhibiting exceptional piety. 63 signatures accompanied the petition, which was approved at the bishopric with the indication that the chapel be built in a “more central and convenient spot” than the one indicated, with the intent of facilitating attendance for the greatest amount of parishioners.<sup>118</sup>

Yet once their approval was granted, the parishioners protested. Notwithstanding the good intentions that motivated this mandate, they had gone ahead with construction in the original location, for the chapel would have been too distant from the residents living “in the first street” of Playa Húcares, which was then the most populated and, in their estimation, set to keep growing. In their intended location, the chapel lied at equal distance for all the faithful in the

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<sup>117</sup> AHA, *Correspondencia al Obispo*, Caja G-6, Legajo 25.

<sup>118</sup> AHA, *Correspondencia al Obispo*, Caja G-6, Legajo 30.

neighborhood, and was better poised to suit their needs than it would have been in the area that the bishop had pointed out to them.<sup>119</sup>

As much as the parishioners of Playa Húcares had sought out approval from both the parish priest of Naguabo and the bishop to celebrate their patroness in due splendor, devotion to the Virgen del Carmen had appeared and grown among them far from the guidance of a supervising priest. Playa Húcares did not have a temple, and it is evident from its residents' petitions that the parish priest of Naguabo, who presided over the church in the center of town, was but a scant and infrequent presence in the area. As is also evident from their letters, before their first, 1876 petition to host feast day celebrations for the Virgen del Carmen, the devotion was already well-established in Playa Húcares, with *novenas* and processions in her honor likely having been held numerous times before, without the presence of a priest to guide and bless them. However much the priest of Naguabo supported their efforts and sought to act as a mediator between them and the bishopric, there was no one better suited to advocate for the residents of Playa Húcares and their devotion than the petitioners themselves. The parishioners were mindful of this, and if needed, they would push back in order to safeguard their beliefs and tradition. When the priest sought to harness their devotion, and institute a town-wide celebration, the parishioners refused. When funds from the bishopric for the reconstruction of their chapel were not forthcoming, the parishioners persevered and managed to gather enough funds to reconstruct it themselves. When the bishop approved their chapel, and recommended a location that displeased them, the parishioners went ahead and built it where they thought best. That a vivid religious sentiment had grown among them through veneration of the Virgen del Carmen,

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<sup>119</sup> The letters from 1876, 1877, and 1886 are all part of the same folder. Only the letters from 1885 and 1881 (from the preceding two citations) form part of another folder. See: AHA, *Correspondencia de Parroquias*, Caja G-26, Legajo "Naguabo."

despite the virtual neglect of a diocese that did not endow them with their own chapel, nor priest, was likely a point of pride for the residents of Playa Húcares, and one they would not so easily concede before a priest and prelate who had too late shown an interest in their devotion and did not participate in their quotidian experience of religion.

Local and communal devotions flourished in the absence of the institution, and parishioners were active in tending to their beliefs and their spiritual needs, be it laboring under a vacuum of institutional representation, or against pushback from clergymen who sought to shape and guide pre-existing beliefs and practices. Parishioners did not plead for patriarchal oversight, but rather, for the resources that would permit them to better tend to their religious sentiments. Most often, this took on the form of a priest, but the priest had both to exhibit the virtue required of a pastor and to suit their specific needs. If the pleading parishioners maintained a particular devotion, then the priest could not come between them and their cult. Even if lacking in proper catechism, parishioners were aware of the importance of religion for their ultimate salvation, and sought to bring it into their lives, recurring to different strategies to make it so, with or without the active participation of an overseeing pastor.

In 1875, the parish priest of Manatí, Puerto Rico, wrote to the bishopric in complaint over what had just transpired in the town: a procession made up of parishioners from the neighboring town of Vega Baja had shown up unannounced at his church with an image of the Virgen de los Dolores in tow, asking him to ring the church bells for their reception, and to lend them an image of Nuestra Señora de Altagracia to add it to the procession. The parishioners planned to make their way back to Vega Baja alongside theirs and the Manatí image, coming back to return the image of Nuestra Señora de Altagracia the following day.

While the faithful from Vega Baja claimed to have permission from the mayor and parish priest to take out the Virgen de los Dolores and march her to Manatí, neither of them accompanied the procession, nor had either of them thought to inform the Manatí parish priest of the visiting procession. Finding this both suspect and infuriating, the parish priest of Manatí denied the parishioners' request to take the image of Altagracia.

The priest had written to the bishopric in complaint of formal protocol being broken, but also to inform of sacred images not being handled with the proper considerations, protesting, as well, that night had fallen upon the Vega Baja parishioners after their 6:00 pm departure to Manatí – a scenario that, he presumed, had led to the Virgen de los Dolores' image not being treated with “the decorum, respect, and reverence, owed to sacred images.”<sup>120</sup> Yet while his anger stands out as peculiar—in comparison to that of his counterpart in Naguabo, for example, who did not take offense, but rather, accommodated the residents of Playa Húcares' insistence to celebrate their patroness on their own terms—what is to be rescued here is both the Vega Baja parishioners' initiative and their priest's willingness to let them go without informing the bishopric or conferring with his peers about their impromptu procession. While priests were meant to be active participants in and supervisors to such practices as the Vega Baja parishioners' procession, it was not uncommon for them to abstain from interfering in less than orthodox or properly sanctioned shows of devotion. Historian William B. Taylor points this out as a recurring scenario for the case of colonial Mexico in his classic study of eighteenth-century Mexican parish life, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, explaining that priests were predisposed to stand back and let the faithful engage in their own, unsupervised practices when their income—from

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<sup>120</sup> AHA, *Correspondencia de Parroquias*, Caja G-25, Legajo 1.

sacramental fees, for example—hung in the balance.<sup>121</sup> Whether the priest of Vega Baja was aiming to keep his parishioners happy simply to avoid complaints over burial or baptism fees, or whether he was too overworked to trouble himself over the correct handling of a procession that nonetheless meant his parishioners were faithful and devoted, it is difficult to know. No reprimand from the bishop appears in the archival record, nor does there exist correspondence between the Vega Baja parish priest and his colleague in Manatí. Such cases, however, were not infrequent across parishes in Cuba and Puerto Rico, with a great number of lay initiatives developing and finding shelter in their silence.

## **1.2 Forming Devotional Communities**

A prime example of this, beyond spontaneous celebrations and bottom-up organizing for the construction of a chapel, was to be found in confraternities and hermandades. Affiliated with devotion to a specific saint or representation of the Virgin, confraternities and hermandades were lay religious associations that served as spaces for their members to come together and practice their faith outside the bounds of Sunday Mass or the sacrament of confession, with special attention paid to veneration of their title patron or patroness. Devotees would band together to pay for their feast day celebrations, along with the necessary upkeep of their images, such as outfitting them or buying candles for their chapels. In the spirit of Christian charity, many of these organizations likewise served as societies for mutual aid, with members expected to pay for medical care and provide housing for associates that had fallen on hard times, as well as arrange

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<sup>121</sup> William B. Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred: Priests and Parishioners in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 322.

funerals for their deceased brethren and organize prayers for their eternal rest.<sup>122</sup> While such spaces likewise embodied important venues for social welfare, with mutual aid being a strong feature in their constitutions, belief and members' inclinations to tend to their devotions as their main organizing and guiding principles should not be taken for granted. Confraternities, in the words of historian Nicole von Germeten, functioned as legitimate "outlets for emotional and spiritual needs."<sup>123</sup>

While von Germeten was referring to confraternities in seventeenth-century Mexico, her words gain special relevance when applied to the underserved nineteenth-century parishes across Cuba and Puerto Rico, where priests were few and far between, and access to the parish church—as seen above—was a virtual impossibility for many parishioners, separated from them by bad roads, rivers, mountains, and inclement weather. In this context, confraternities and hermandades, as communities of parishioners who gathered in the fulfillment of their spiritual needs and sponsored outward, public shows of devotion via feast day celebrations, acted as instruments for the ongoing evangelization of the locales that hosted them. The parishioners of Arroyo Arenas, for example, were cognizant of this when pleading with the Havana Bishop not to relocate their cherished parish priest, lest their dreams of legitimizing their devotion to Jesús Nazareno via an hermandad of their own be put on hold.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> For a detailed look at one of these mutual aid-based religious sodalities, see: A.J.R. Russell-Wood, *Fidalgos and Philanthropists: the Santa Casa da Misericórdia of Bahia, 1550-1775* (London: Macmillan, 1968).

<sup>123</sup> For quote, see: Nicole von Germeten, *Black Blood Brothers: Confraternities and Social Mobility for Afro-Mexicans* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2006), 2. For his part, William B. Taylor acknowledges and explores the financial benefits of belonging to a confraternity, while also describing confraternities as "pious works" that depended on members' devotion to sustain them. See: Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 322.

<sup>124</sup> Distinctions between *hermandades* and confraternities were rarely observed, with priests and parishioners in the Mexican state of Oaxaca, for example, using the terms interchangeably well into the twentieth-century. See: Edward Wright-Ríos, *Revolutions in Mexican Catholicism: Reform and Revelation in Oaxaca, 1887-1934* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 101, 104.

As the parishioners of Arroyo Arenas point us to, losing their priest would impede them from submitting their intentions to congregate into a formal religious association before the bishopric, because while confraternities and hermandades were spaces for the laity to observe their faith, their institution was also done under state and Church supervision. Aspiring *cofrades* had to submit the statutes that would rule their association before the bishop, and attain the blessing of their parish priest, under whose watch they would congregate. The bishopric would evaluate the legality of their proposed statutes in light of the existing royal and papal decrees that regulated confraternities. Should their intent and statutes not be found wanting and the bishopric approve the request, their petition would then be remitted to the civil authorities in Madrid, whose final approval would allow for the association to be instituted. After their approval was granted and the *cofrades* permitted to congregate, they would be subject to the parish priest's supervision, who had to be named as a spiritual advisor in their statutes and be present at each of their meetings.<sup>125</sup>

As vehicles for sustaining parish devotional life via their promotion of feasts and special masses in honor of their patrons, the institution of a confraternity or hermandad represented supplemental income for the parish priests who oversaw and facilitated these functions. As such, it was not uncommon for them to be promoted from the top.<sup>126</sup> Yet in practice, confraternities and hermandades belonged to the faithful, whose commitment and enthusiasm was essential for their success and continuation. As William B. Taylor points out for Mexican confraternities, these “depended on popular devotion and [parishioners’] willingness to serve, feelings that a

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<sup>125</sup> For more details on the process of institutionalization for confraternities, see: Rafael L. López Valdés, *Pardos y morenos esclavos y libres en Cuba y sus instituciones en el Caribe Hispano* (San Juan: Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, 2007), 103-105, 118.

<sup>126</sup> Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 305.

priest might tap but could not expect to create and control.”<sup>127</sup> Applied to Cuba and Puerto Rico, this meant that the faithful—as in the case of Arroyo Arenas—often spearheaded their own requests to congregate and observe their devotions under proper sanction, without waiting for a priest to establish an association among them.

On this point, it is important to note that whether the brainchild of priest or parishioners, would-be confraternities did not always pass official examination. On the parishioners’ part, however, acquiescing to the authorities did not necessarily follow these denied petitions. Failed attempts at establishing a confraternity many times led to what anthropologist Rafael López Valdés called “apocryphal confraternities,” whereby these rejected associations continued to act as one and convene without license, standing as examples of parishioners’ perseverance to take charge of their religious lives.<sup>128</sup> Such an example can be surmised from Santiago Biñón and Miguel Porrata’s petition to the Bishop of Puerto Rico in 1863. The men, who identified themselves as *morenos*, had petitioned to congregate under their allegiance to the Virgen del Carmen. They had obtained permission from their priest and had sent the statutes for their intended confraternity, but were ultimately denied, based on a papal bull that declared there could be no two confraternities of the same patron under the same population. The Carmelite nuns in San Juan had been *cofrades* of the Virgen del Carmen since the seventeenth century, and thus, another confraternity could not be granted license.<sup>129</sup> The possibility that their proposed confraternity progressed, however, can be gleaned based on the dates of their correspondence with the bishopric. Santiago and Miguel had obtained permission from the priest and written to

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 322.

<sup>128</sup> López Valdés, *Pardos y morenos*, 102.

<sup>129</sup> AHA, *Correspondencia al Provisor*, G-36.

the bishop in October, yet they were not answered until December. In the months prior to filing their petition, they necessarily had to gather enough aspiring *cofrades* to justify the formation of a confraternity and ensure that the association would be able to sustain itself financially. Having unofficially formed themselves and obtained the blessing of the priest under whose supervision their association would function, it can be surmised that in the meantime, they were acting as a sanctioned confraternity. Historian Arturo Dávila, moreover, has written on devotion to the Virgen del Carmen in Puerto Rico, stating that a confraternity of *morenos* was later approved in her name, in 1866. Although he does not cite his source, he does state that it was approved to operate in the Franciscan church of San Juan – the same place where the 1863 petitioners had sought to establish themselves.<sup>130</sup> In this case, the likelihood that Santiago, Miguel, and their fellow devotees, had been meeting informally in the three years that passed between filing their original petition and the moment an approval was granted does not seem a far-fetched assumption.

Others, it seems, had been formed and operating as confraternities in all but name for several years before an official license was sought from the authorities. In 1867, the *morenos* Cristóbal Enrique and Benigno Hernández solicited approval from the Bishop of Havana—via their priest, who explained that the supplicants did not know how to write—to formalize their devotion to Jesús Nazareno and the Virgen del Cobre into a confraternity in their town of Matanzas. The supplicants and their fellow devotees, as the priest explained, were active faithful, already organizing and incurring the cost of feast day celebrations for the Virgen del Cobre, to which he added that the “festivities are carried out with the highest decorum, without there ever having been, in many years, any disagreement or lack of religiosity in these pious acts.” The

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<sup>130</sup> Arturo Dávila, “Los morenos de la Virgen del Carmen,” *El Nuevo Día*, July 19, 1987, 12-15.

prospective *cofrades* likewise hosted processions with the images of Jesús Nazareno and Our Lady of Solitude every year.<sup>131</sup>

The faithful of Matanzas had sustained their devotions and established a tradition around them—as one can surmise, given the assertion that their practices had been observed for several years before their request was registered at the Bishopric—without much intervention from the priest that now wrote a letter on their behalf. Given the lack of available of priests for the many parishes across the Diocese of Havana, it is also not improbable that their relationship to the figures of Jesús Nazareno and the Virgen del Cobre likewise hailed from a time before the undersigning priest arrived at their parish. With their present request, the devotees sought to formalize what had become local custom, via a recognized religious association that would imbue their devotions with greater splendor.

In a similar manner, in 1879, a complaint lodged at the Havana Bishopric and signed by *pardo* Sebastián Duarte, told about his and his fellow devotees' attempts at creating an hermandad around Nuestra Señora del Consuelo in the town of Guanajay. In 1871, when the project was first presented before the authorities, the association was approved by the Governor General of the island, yet although the group of devotees had sent the same set of documents asking permission from the bishopric for its institution, no response had been forthcoming. In 1878, and in representation of his fellow devotees, Sebastián had tried to coax a response out of the bishopric – in another letter, it seems, which does not form part of the archival record. Still without an official response, the present 1879 letter represented their third attempt at getting their

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<sup>131</sup> “Expediente promovido por Cristóbal Enrique y Benigno Hernández, solicitando erigir una Cofradía en la Iglesia de término de San Carlos de Matanzas bajo la advocación de Jesús Nazareno y la Santísima Virgen de la Caridad. 1867,” AHAH, *Asociaciones*, Legajo 1, Expediente 10.

congregation recognized by the higher ecclesiastical authorities, an endeavor that Sebastián submitted “with the object of growing such a saintly and pious hermandad.”<sup>132</sup>

In this case, although the three petitions addressed to the bishopric between 1871 and 1879 denote a special concern over the rules and regulations set forth by the authorities, like Santiago and Miguel before them, it stands to reason that the devotees of Nuestra Señora del Consuelo in Guanajay had been meeting—if without proper ecclesiastical sanction—since their 1871 approval from the civil government was granted. To appear before the bishopric, again and again, meant that their devotion to Nuestra Señora del Consuelo was ongoing – a sentiment that without proper management and enthusiasm from the base, with the visible acts of piety that this entailed, would have been difficult to maintain. That the civil government had granted the devotees of Guanajay approval to gather in an hermandad, moreover, was likely understood as a precursor to recognition from the Church, and a verdict that would have spurred their organizing further, with little reason not to keep meeting while they waited for a response from the bishopric.

Others, still, formed without seeking approval from the authorities altogether. In 1886, the newly appointed priest of the Santo Cristo de la Salud parish in Havana complained to the bishop that upon arrival at his post, he had found three hermandades—in the names of the Virgen del Rosario, the Virgen de la Candelaria, and El Señor—operating without civil or canonical license among the parishioners. In all three of them, he reported, members took it upon themselves to organize collections and failed to report to him with an account of the donations, acted upon their own wishes and failed to include him in their plans. When he proposed to

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<sup>132</sup> “Expediente promovido por el pardo Sebastián Duarte, vecino de Guanajay en averiguación del estado en que se halle el expediente sobre erección de una cofradía bajo el título de la Virgen del Consuelo,” AHAH, *Asociaciones*, Expediente 55, Legajo 8.

regulate their activities, and move their holdings—funds, cloth, and vestments for the Virgen de la Candelaria—out of their homes and into the parish church, the members refused, declaring that neither the previous priest nor the parish church had been involved in their acquisition, and asserting that the objects were theirs to keep.<sup>133</sup>

Their new priest doubted their devotion, denouncing their stubbornness as greedy, yet nothing in the uncooperative parishioners of the Santo Cristo de la Salud nor in the abovementioned confraternities and hermandades that dared meet and organize without prior approval indicates a lack of belief. And assuming that the members in charge of collecting and maintaining the hermandades' funds in the Santo Cristo de la Salud parish were, indeed, doing this out of greed and swindling their fellow neighbors, this meant that devotion to the Candelaria, Rosario, and el Señor was widespread and strong enough that the faithful kept up a sizeable stream of donations for their upkeep – enough to impress their new priest, who sought to redirect the funds into the church, as well as their covetous neighbors, who sought to keep the funds for themselves. A few bad apples, moreover, would not have undermined the case of parishioners who claimed ownership over their devotions and related associations, and much like the parishioners of Playa Húcares in Naguabo, likely took pride in practices that they had fostered and maintained without a priest. These sentiments, as William B. Taylor explains when referring to the sense of ownership over parish churches that was common among Mexican parishioners, “were nourished by a sense of locality and continuity. Priests “came and went.” [...] It was the community and its members that continued.”<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> “El cura del Santo Cristo de la Salud participa haber encontrado allí establecidas tres hermandades sin autorización alguna,” AHAH, *Comunicaciones*, Legajo 55, Expediente 85.

<sup>134</sup> Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred*, 250.

Yet beyond points of communal pride and venues through which faith was enacted and celebrated, confraternities and hermandades were also a refuge for many of their members. While the Santo Cristo de la Salud priest does not indicate the race of his parishioners, the rest of the abovementioned petitions were all submitted by supplicants identified as *morenos* and *pardos* – colonial racial categories for Black and mixed Black and White individuals, respectively. Confraternities and hermandades provided shelter for *morenos* and *pardos* to come together without raising suspicion at a time when slavery in Cuba and Puerto Rico was still in existence, and the movements of Black people, whether free or enslaved, were heavily scrutinized.<sup>135</sup> In the case of Cuba, these religious associations stood as opposites to *cabildos de nación*, which, although similar in organization to confraternities, were aimed at those who identified with a specific African nation, their membership being made up of both enslaved and freed men and women for whom their home continent was a recent memory.<sup>136</sup> Though formed around a title patron or patroness, whose feasts members would observe annually via public celebrations, *cabildos de nación* were nevertheless seen as sites rife with unorthodox practices and syncretism, and as potential origin points for rebellion, which drew the attention and vigilance of colonial officials.<sup>137</sup> Confraternities and hermandades, formed under the principles of the Church, and housing free, Cuban born *morenos* and *pardos*, in turn, allowed for their congregants to

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<sup>135</sup> David Sartorius analyses how suspicions of Black uprisings after the 1812 Aponte rebellion and 1843 La Escalera conspiracy affected Black militiamen in Cuba. The same applies to the movements of Black people across the Island, in and outside the Spanish militia. See: David Sartorius, *Ever Faithful: Race, Loyalty, and the Ends of Empire in Spanish Cuba* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 84-86.

<sup>136</sup> Records from the 1840s mention the existence of *cabildos de nación* in Puerto Rico, but they appear to have been less abundant in Puerto Rico in comparison to Cuba, for which the topic has been more widely studied. See: López Valdés, *Pardos y morenos*, 173-174, 180-185.

<sup>137</sup> José Aponte, leader of the 1812 abolitionist conspiracy known as the Aponte Rebellion, had been a member of a *cabildo*. See: Matt D. Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle Against Atlantic Slavery* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 95-99. On *cabildos* as sites of suspected syncretism and unorthodox practices, see: López Valdés, *Pardos y morenos*, 187-195, 248-254.

demonstrate allegiance to Catholicism and distinguish themselves from *cabildo* members. In this sense, confraternities and hermandades acted as spaces of relative freedom from the vigil and patrol of civil authorities, afforded them through their practice of Catholicism.

Religious sodalities like hermandades and confraternities constituted spaces wherein the faithful sought to act in accordance with acceptable models of Catholic practice and to do so under the auspices of the Church, but that were nonetheless largely self-started and managed organizations. These offered material benefits, like mutual aid, as well as other less tangible but no less significant advantages for the Black lay men and women who sought to form their own devotional associations. They also represented a medium via which their members could tend to their spiritual necessities and tread a path towards salvation through their engagement with the Church and collective acts of piety. Such devotional communities likewise stood as demonstrations of enduring faith and agency among parishioners that sought to organize around their beliefs, often, in the absence of priests that would foster religion among them.

### **1.3 Coming Together Outside the Bounds of the Church**

In the absence of priests, unsanctioned cults and practices likewise flourished. As historian José Manuel García Leduc wrote for the case of Puerto Rico, the development of individual or communal devotions around saints and particular Marian figures that was often concurrent with an “independence from institutional sacramental life,” and has been characterized as popular religion, did not come about for a lack of Catholicism, but due to the lack of institutional representation.<sup>138</sup> Often, these unsanctioned cults were not about resisting the Church. Neither did they give way or mask unorthodox practices like syncretism. As is evident

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<sup>138</sup> García Leduc, *La pesada carga*, 262.

from the cases explored above, parishioners sought out recognition from the Church, whether through their parish priest or via direct entreaties to their prelate, to officialize certain practices or boost devotion in their parishes. In the cases where parishioners appeared to be acting in open defiance of the Church, as the ecclesiastics that denounced them thought, it is difficult to read in them the spread or establishment of unorthodox practices. Rather, the parishioners involved in these cases attempted to emulate that which was missing from their experience of religion: the practice of communal veneration, an official temple or chapel at which to gather, and the figure of a priest to turn to for spiritual guidance. Whenever the ecclesiastical or civil authorities intervened, they did so in the cases where large followings that could take power and attention from the Church were involved. As historian John Lynch described it when talking about the prosecution of popular cults in Latin America: “Usually the Church was less concerned about the substance of superstition than about its independence of Church authority.”<sup>139</sup>

In January 1876, for example, the Bishop of Havana received a letter from the Diocese’s *promotor fiscal*, assistant to the acting ecclesiastical judge. All throughout the previous year, he explained, he had been collecting complaints regarding the behavior of certain parishioners in Wajay, a neighborhood located some 10 miles outside of the Havana city center. These came in the form of individual missives from the parish priest of Wajay, the parish priest of neighboring El Caño, and even the Cathedral Dean of Havana. Their grievances arose out of a string of gatherings that had been taking place at a local home, where an image of the Virgen de Covadonga and a Crucifix, both heralded as miraculous, were venerated. As he reported, the local *teniente gobernador*, assistant to the Governor General, had also written to his superior in denunciation of the matter. After evaluating the situation, the *promotor fiscal* recommended to

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<sup>139</sup> John Lynch, *New Worlds: A Religious History of Latin America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 172.

the Bishop that the images be confiscated and placed in the parish church, lest their devotees agree to build a public chapel wherein their cult could be placed under supervision of the Church. His official recommendations, however, did not elicit an immediate response.<sup>140</sup>

In April 1877, the bishopric received a follow-up letter on the matter, this time, from the mayor of Wajay, informing the ecclesiastical authorities in Havana, that acting upon orders from the Governor General, he and various members of the police went to the house where the illicit cult was held, and expropriated the images. While their owner did not put up a fight, he notes, he insisted on handing over the images in the parish church, where they were now stored.

That the civil authorities had acted then, and not in January 1876, to confiscate the images likely stemmed from a fresh wave of complaints that the Wajay parish priest had lodged against the group. The object of his ire was the tomb of Esteban Godínez, who rested in the cemetery since 1874, and whom the Crucifix and Virgen de Covadonga devotees recognized as the discoverer of their miraculous images and architect of their cult. In a letter addressed to the bishop, they spoke of him as “El Santo,” and celebrated him for his preoccupation over the parish’s devotional life. His admirers had requested and gotten approval from the bishopric to put up a fence and plant a flower garden around his tomb at the time of his death in 1874, in order to better keep his memory alive among the people of Wajay. Now, the parish priest was coming before the Bishop to have the fence and garden removed. The devotees had not planted flowers around the tomb, but rather, three cypress trees, which had now grown so large that their roots threatened to overtake the small parish cemetery, leaving less room for new interments and

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<sup>140</sup> “Expediente instruido a consecuencia de estar dándose culto público en la Casa del Potrero “Ferregut” en la feligresía de la Parroquia del Wajay a una imagen de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo Crucificado,” AHAH, *Comunicaciones*, Legajo 48, Expediente 15.

forcing the premature transfer of interred bodies. Moreover, the parish priest claimed, such a monument to Godínez should have never been allowed in the first place, since the reasons presented for doing so were “false” and did not stand up to “sacred judgment.” His complaint was founded upon the basis of practicality and public health, but underlined by his repudiation of his parishioners’ ongoing and illicit cult to the images that Godínez had bequeathed them. A week after his official complaint before the Bishop, the civil authorities showed up to the house where the images were kept and brought them over to the parish church. Another week after the images were confiscated, the Bishopric granted the priest license to remove the fence and garden that surrounded Godínez’s tomb.<sup>141</sup>

The campaign waged in Wajay against the Crucifix and Covadonga devotees, however, was not enough to deter them from continuing with their cult, nor make them redirect their devotion towards the parish church. In August 1878, the bishopric received a letter from the parish priest of Bejucal, a town located some nine miles south from Wajay, informing him that “a portion” of the Wajay families involved in the dispute had moved into his parish after the images were expropriated. In Bejucal, they had supplied themselves with another Crucifix and a second image of the Virgen de Covadonga, and set them up in a private home, where they continued to gather in veneration. He had already alerted the civil authorities on the matter, but sought further guidance from the bishopric. The Ecclesiastical Governor replied with copies of the original Wajay files, and asked him to keep the bishopric informed as to their behavior.

A month after this exchange, the Bejucal parish priest, along with three policemen, showed up to the house where the images were kept, and broke up a meeting that was then underway. As it was evident from the inventory of the items confiscated at the house, the cult

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

had only grown larger and lavisher since moving from Wajay to Bejucal, with 121 seized objects, among them, a full-size altar, a collection of 37 small portraits of different saints, 13 bouquets of flowers, 6 crucifixes of varying size, and 3 representations of the Virgin. This paled in comparison to the 2 images that the authorities had seized back in Wajay. While the Bejucal priest complained in his letter of numerous people escaping as the police bust into the house, he also included the names of 16 men and women accounted for in the meeting. Having received notice of what had transpired in Bejucal, both the Civil Governor of Havana and the Ecclesiastical Governor at the Bishopric swore to “punish it [the illicit cult] with a strong hand,” after which the owner of the house and then keeper of the cult, José Vigoa Collazo, was fined with 150 pesos, under the menace of a court trial should he reinstate private veneration at home.

Undeterred, and convinced that what he was doing was right, Vigoa Collazo wrote to the bishopric, asking to have the fine dismissed, and claiming that the local priest had long wished him ill – his accusations and persecution bearing a personal motive. According to the selfsame priest in an 1879 follow up letter sent to the Bishopric, not only did Vigoa Collazo fail to pay his fine, he also ignored the civil authorities’ threat of taking him to trial, and as of January of that year, continued hosting devotional gatherings in his home.<sup>142</sup>

The correspondence record on the case does not reveal whether the Bishopric or the civil authorities sought to punish this instigation. What is evident is that Vigoa Collazo and the devotees that congregated in his home were not tempered in their insistence to fulfill their spiritual needs outside of the bounds of the Church. Appended to the Vigoa Collazo case file at the Bishopric Archive in Havana are two letters from August 1879 and January 1880 undersigned by two laymen from Bejucal who sought permission to carry out a series of divine

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<sup>142</sup> AHAH, *Comunicaciones*, Legajo 48, Expediente 24.

promises, whereby they and several of their fellow parishioners intended to visit various of their neighboring parishes to pray the Rosary, attend Mass, and offer alms to those in need. Their letters went unanswered, but it is safe to assume that this was a commonly held practice that they nonetheless pursued, and that Vigoa Collazo was likely to have participated in them, for in December 1880 Vigoa Collazo himself wrote to the Bishopric with news regarding the fulfillment of a divine promise in Bejucal. While he attended Mass in observance of the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the priest attacked him and various of the parishioners in the pews, lashing out during his sermon with accusations towards the faithful of theirs not being a true devotion, and against Vigoa Collazo of being a thief, thereafter refusing confession to several of the parishioners in attendance. Vigoa Collazo, backed by the 19 witnesses that signed the document, demanded that the priest apologize, lest he see himself in the uncomfortable position of taking the priest to court.

Without apparent intervention from the authorities, civil or ecclesiastical, the tense stand-off between Vigoa Collazo and the Bejucal parish priest was set to continue. In 1882, the Bishopric again received an official complaint from Vigoa Collazo, relating a similar scenario, where he and a group of parishioners attempted to fulfil a promise offered for the relief of a smallpox epidemic then raging through the population, consisting of attending Mass at the parish church. They were prevented from doing so, however, as the priest, after having said yes to officiating the Mass, again attacked them during the ceremony, telling them their actions did not amount to religion, that Vigoa Collazo was a conman, and asking them to leave. Vigoa Collazo addressed two letters to the bishopric in December 1881 and January 1882 reiterating his original stance: that the priest apologize or a trial would ensue.<sup>143</sup> No record of a response exists in the

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

extensive archival record on his case, but it is likely that the Bishopric had chosen to ignore—and file—his complaints. It is also likely that Vigoa Collazo continued with the Crucifix and Covadonga cult in his home, as his past actions point us to, and as the parish priest's attacks imply.

The Crucifix and Covadonga devotees had actively and repeatedly chosen to maintain their cult private and far from ecclesiastical supervision, as it seems, stemming from a conflict with the local Church authorities, whose origins were never disclosed in the correspondence regarding their case. Yet, considering the host of parishioner complaints that piled up at the Havana Bishopric regarding the behavior of their parish priests, it is not difficult to image why the Crucifix and Covadonga devotees were reluctant to give up control over their cult. Perhaps they did not wish to pay for expensive sacramental fees or perhaps the parish priests in Wajay and Bejucal both behaved themselves in a way that made the faithful unwilling to trust them with their treasured cult. Their devotion, along with that of Vigoa Collazo, however, is manifest.

Notwithstanding that both priests denounced their faith as being untrue, and that the priest from Bejucal named Vigoa Collazo as a charlatan and a swindler, the civil authorities' reports on the case do not speak of Vigoa Collazo outright charging nor asking for donations from the devotees towards the images' upkeep. In the case that funds were indeed collected among the devotees, it is likewise evident that a considerable amount of them was spent on the sustenance and greater opulence of their cult, as the 121 items impounded in Bejucal attest. That Vigoa Collazo had moreover insisted upon handing over the original Crucifix and Virgen de Covadonga in the Wajay parish church, rather than letting the police transport them from his home, also demonstrates a preoccupation over the possible profanation of images that he considered sacred. In addition to this, the 1876 report from the *promotor fiscal* to the Bishop

regarding Vigoa Collazo mentioned a petition he had filed—though without much details as to its contents—and recommended that it be denied. Considering how the rest of the case against Vigoa Collazo evolved, it is likely that he was petitioning—as did many parishioners across Cuba and Puerto Rico before him—to have the Crucifix and Covadonga cult ratified, be it by forming a confraternity around it or asking for permission to take the images out in a procession.

In this case, the cult around the Crucifix and the Virgen de Covadonga did not develop behind the ecclesiastical nor civil authorities' backs. Taking into account the veritable place of worship that Vigoa Collazo's home had become, the great number of followers the cult seemed to have, and its longstanding duration, but for the fact that a priest did not preside over it, devotion to the Crucifix and the Virgen de Covadonga in Wajay and Bejucal cannot be said to have contained unorthodox elements. The Wajay and Bejucal devotees were enacting the kind of shows of devotion that would have been equally pertinent in church or within an established confraternity, and it is not unlikely that their cult would have first grown out of the lack of institutional representation that many rural parishes faced. As such, it stands as a prime example of parishioners' autonomy and impetus for taking their faith and spiritual care into their own hands, in recognition of religion as an integral part of their daily lives.

## **1.4 Conclusion**

The practice of Catholicism was a focal point for communal association and a quotidian experience for rural inhabitants across Cuba and Puerto Rico. As this chapter has shown, the parishioners living in these communities did not hesitate to tell their corresponding priests and prelates what was missing from their ministering. Notwithstanding their generalized lack of access to the Church and scarce knowledge of formal doctrine, parishioners recognized what was

owed them and endeavored to attain that which the Church should have better provided, taking action to ensure their spiritual wellbeing and taking charge over their salvation. While many sought to organize themselves as devotional communities under the auspices of the Church, as an official religious association or as a more informal group of neighbors wishing to celebrate their patron saint, the faithful nevertheless enjoyed a sense of ownership over their devotions and the customs that had grown among them as a result of the Church's scant presence. Out of this same sense of ownership, and in recognition of their own strivings to keep and celebrate their faith, parishioners likewise often acted in open defiance of the ecclesiastical authorities who refused to recognize their practices. In such cases, their refusal to be tempered in their devotions represented a defense of what they considered true Catholicism – unlike that meted out by the nearest misbehaving priest or on offer only during special feast days or pastoral visitations. However mindful the faithful might have been over proper form and subjection to the Church, they would continue to observe their beliefs amidst institutional neglect. Altogether, their actions stand as testament of how Catholicism was experienced among the most neglected parishes throughout the Havana and Puerto Rico dioceses, and as the backbone that kept Catholicism alive away from urban centers and seats of ecclesiastical power throughout the latter half of the century.

## Chapter 2

### To Defend and Propagate Catholic Doctrine: Catholic Publications and their Enemies

In December 1883, the Spanish Papal Nuncio received a bundle of letters from the Bishop of Havana. In it, the Bishop remitted a note that one of his parishioners, José Ramírez Ovando, had handed him the week before, having asked him to contact the Nuncio on his behalf. Ramírez Ovando, a devoted Catholic and veteran of the Havana publishing scene, wanted to alert the Nuncio about his latest editorial endeavor: *El Eco de San Francisco*.<sup>144</sup> The Catholic periodical was being published with license from the Bishop and had been in print since March 1883; existing numbers were enclosed with the letter.<sup>145</sup> As Ramírez Ovando explained, the paper was a direct response to Pope Leo XIII's September 1882 encyclical, in which he called upon the faithful to “build a damn against social disenchantment,” and foster a return to upright customs.<sup>146</sup> In his encyclical, Pope Leo singled out devotion to Saint Francis, and membership in the Third Order of Saint Francis—the Franciscan branch for unordained men and women who vowed to follow Francis' example in their own lives—as the answer to the varied host of present ills he denounced in his message to Catholics across the world.

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<sup>144</sup> José Ramírez Ovando, *Ramón Fernández de Piérola y López de Luzuriaga to Mariano Rampolla del Tindaro*. Letter. Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV), *Nunziatura di Madrid*, Box 549, Titolo X, Rubrica II, No. 7.

<sup>145</sup> Ramírez Ovando does not mention the ecclesiastical license nor the precise date for the first number in his letter, going instead with “close to a year” for how long the periodical had been in print. These specifics come from the periodical itself. See: “Licencia de la autoridad eclesiástica,” *El Eco de San Francisco*, March 4, 1883.

<sup>146</sup> The phrase quoted comes from Ramírez Ovando. For the Encyclical, see: Leo XIII, *Auspicato concessum*, Vatican website, September 17, 1882, [http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_17091882\\_auspicato-concessum.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_17091882_auspicato-concessum.html), accessed March 18, 2020.

Having heard this, Ramírez Ovando seized upon the occasion to prove himself a virtuous member of his global congregation. Per his own calculation, there was no one better suited than himself to undertake the task at hand. His personal devotion to Saint Francis, as an already committed member of the Third Order, and his previous publishing experience, with the now concluded Catholic journal, *La Verdad Católica* (1858-1866), made him the ideal candidate to establish a publication that set out to do just what the Pope ordered. As he informed the Nuncio, this earlier publication had garnered him personal recognition from Pope Pius IX, who graced him with not one, but “two autographed letters and two crosses of Saint Gregory the Great.” The latter, a medium by which the Vatican recognized outstanding Catholics for their service in favor of the Church, had, in essence, knighted him for his pious, editorial work. Should the Nuncio allow it, he added, once he completed a first volume for his new journal, he could send one to Pope Leo, as well.

Yet, for a publication he so extolled, *El Eco de San Francisco* was quite plain and straightforward: it came out once a month, and, apart from a small section dedicated to local and international news bulletins of diverse Catholic interest, it was largely made up of articles—some historical and some contemplative—on the life of Saint Francis and what modern readers could garner from it. The publication, moreover, did not last long, as José Ramírez Ovando died in January 1885, his descendants choosing to terminate it thereafter.<sup>147</sup> To maintain that it had much impact beyond its immediate group of likewise devoted subscribers would prove difficult. Even so, Ramírez Ovando’s relationship with the Bishop and his communication with the Nuncio serves as a window into the vivid world of Catholic publishing of late nineteenth century Cuba,

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<sup>147</sup> “El Dr. D. José Ramírez Ovando,” *El Eco de San Francisco*, March 1, 1885.

where writers and publishers understood their mission as a task much larger than themselves, to save Catholicism and the world it upheld, from the myriad troubles that accosted it.

This chapter presents an overview of the Catholic press in Cuba during the second half of the nineteenth century. It traces it from its emergence in the late 1850s as part of a global expansion in Catholic journalism that sought to push back against the rise of Liberalism, a development that for Catholics in Cuba was yet distant, but that resonated with them as avid followers of the circumstances afflicting the wider Catholic world, to its later transformation in the 1880s, after the events of the Ten Years War<sup>148</sup> brought those fears about the rise of Liberalism and the subsequent displacement of the Catholic Church closer to home. Throughout this period, Catholic publishing had to evolve to confront its proliferating fears and adversaries, both real and perceived. During the 1850s and 1860s, publishers responded to the spread of journals and periodicals that, while not outright anticlerical, ecclesiastical authorities and devout Catholics found superficial and undermining of religious values. Their goal was to uphold Christian morals amid an intuited deterioration of society and eroding respect for the Church, with Catholic publications serving as a medium with which to evangelize and contain the damage that the growing print marketplace brought about. During the 1870s and 1880s, publishers contended with looser press restrictions and the resulting increase in satirical, anticlerical publications, as well as the appearance of Freemason and Spiritist outlets that challenged Catholic doctrine and rivaled the Church for the attention of the public. Against this new competition, Catholic publications were compelled to engage in polemic and embrace

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<sup>148</sup> On the expansion of Catholic journalism, see: Cristopher Clark, "The New Catholicism and the European Culture Wars," in *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, eds. Cristopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 11-46.

confrontation. Tracing Catholic publishers' changing responses, the chapter studies the development of a militant Catholic press in Cuba, and argues for the adoption of this combative journalism as an essential tool in the fight of Cuban Catholics against the representatives of Liberal politics and attendant alternate doctrines, who had likewise turned to the press to publicize their beliefs.

The narrative develops as Catholics in Cuba faced ever-increasing pressure from the secular publications then pushing their way into the market. The arrival of the nineteenth century had brought with it a rapid expansion in the printing of newspapers and other periodicals across Cuba. At the close of the eighteenth century, there were a total of four print houses across Havana, whose scant production focused on publications of a religious and official nature.<sup>149</sup> As soon as 1823, however, 108 new publications had been founded throughout Cuba, focusing on a wide range of topics.<sup>150</sup> In 1857, the number of print houses across the island had risen to 39.<sup>151</sup> Though many of the new publications lasted only a short period of time, their appearance would remain an upward trend for the rest of the century.<sup>152</sup> The new periodicals represented a departure from the prayer books and catechisms that constituted much of what readers encountered before. Under these circumstances, the Catholic publications that this chapter

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<sup>149</sup> José Juan Sánchez Baena, *El terror de los tiranos: La imprenta en la centuria que cambió Cuba, 1763-1868* (Castelló de la Plana: Universitat Jaume I, 2009), 90, 32.

<sup>150</sup> Víctor Goldgel, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América: Prensa, moda y literatura en el siglo XIX* (La Habana: Fondo Editorial Casa de las Américas, 2016), 53. For an expansive and detailed look at these earlier publications, see: Joaquín Llaverías, *Contribución a la historia de la prensa periódica* (La Habana: Publicaciones del Archivo Nacional de Cuba, 1957).

<sup>151</sup> See: Sánchez Baena, *El terror de los tiranos*, 187.

<sup>152</sup> On their short time span, see: Goldgel, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América*, 50, 55. On this upward trend, for the years between 1851 and 1868, see: Baena, *El terror de los tiranos*, 190-198.

explores were born as a response to the progressive secularization of the printing sphere.<sup>153</sup> The periodical press, unlike the pamphlets and religious volumes that had thus far made up the breadth of Catholic output, provided a space from which to address the present context in a manner not permissible before through books.<sup>154</sup> As such, the press also represented a new way to reproduce—and consume—the word of God, via which Catholic publishers and writers would not just confront the threats embodied in the new secular publications, but also extend Catholic teachings to a wider audience. Along this same line, though the expansion of the press presented a menace to the Church, it also provided it with a new tool with which to defend itself and engage in a discursive war against those that would harm and threaten its position in Cuba.<sup>155</sup>

To illustrate this, the chapter centers on three major publications: *La Verdad Católica* (1858-1866), the *Revista Católica* (1873-1880), and *El Observador* (1888). The same were mixed lay and ecclesiastical initiatives with institutional backing, and, as in the case of the first two, were adopted as the official medium for the Bishopric of Havana before it began to produce its own publication. This latter publication, the *Boletín Eclesiástico del Obispado de La Habana*, represents an institutional endeavor into print that the chapter gives a brief assessment on, as part of the origin of Catholic journalism. The same is true for the *boletines* from the neighboring

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<sup>153</sup> On the secularization of the press, see: Goldgel, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América*, 53. On secularization at large, see: Clark, “The New Catholicism,” 11-46.

<sup>154</sup> Víctor Goldgel likewise deliberates on the advantages of periodicals in contrast to books. Periodicals were shorter, cheaper, and were filled with a variety of topics. All in all, newspapers and magazines had a wider circulation than books, were of easier access, and were more probable to secure readers for the multitude of topics they covered. See: Goldgel, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América*, 51, 61.

<sup>155</sup> In this sense, the chapter falls in line with studies that show how the Catholic Church coped with the modernizing zeal that threatened it, using the same technologies—like the press—that the proponents of secularism and anticlericalism relied on to propagate their views, and ties into others that speak about the modernization of the Catholic Church in a grander scale. See: Sol Serrano, *¿Qué hacer con Dios en la República? Política y secularización en Chile (1845-1885)* (Santiago: Fondo de Cultura Económica Chile, 2008). See also: Pamela Voekel, *Alone Before God: The Religious Origins of Modernity in Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

Archbishopric of Santiago de Cuba and the Bishopric of Puerto Rico, which, together with Havana, constituted a set of interconnected dioceses whose publications read and reproduced each other. Yet none are studied here at length. Instead, I have chosen the abovementioned examples for their demonstrated effort to break into the competitive print market and speak to an audience beyond that which the institutional publications contemplated. It is for this reason, as well, that *El Eco de San Francisco* does not form part of the larger study; while it shows the reach that Catholic publishers could attain, the periodical, unlike its predecessor, *La Verdad Católica*, was too narrow in its scope. Altogether, the examples presented here showcase and outline the evolution of Catholic anxieties throughout the later decades of the nineteenth century, along with their efforts to prevent these anxieties from becoming manifest.

Tracing this, the chapter also stands as a work of historical documentation that aims to capture what was once a vibrant Catholic publishing scene. This represents the first survey of the Catholic press on the island. Other than the abovementioned *boletines*, the examples chosen here are among the best kept publications of nineteenth century Catholic periodicals for Cuba. This takes into account both the document repositories in Cuba and the United States, online and otherwise. The biggest of these repositories, the Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, for example, lists eleven self-identified Catholic periodicals in existence for Havana and its immediate surroundings, all founded between 1858 and 1897: *El Despertador Católico*, *La Juventud Católica*, the *Revista Católica*, *El Boletín de la Asociación de las Madres Católicas*, *El Eco de San Francisco*, *Habana Católica*, *El Mensajero Católico*, *El Observador*, *El Boletín Oficial Eclesiástico del Obispado de la Habana*, *Crónica del Colegio Nacional y Extranjero de San Francisco de Asís*, and *La Bandera Roja*. Out of these, the Biblioteca has almost complete collections for only four titles: *La Verdad Católica*, *El Eco de San Francisco*, the *Revista*

*Católica*, and *El Observador*. In turn, the remaining publications hold only a handful of copies.<sup>156</sup> While Catholic publications do not seem to have been as numerous as their secular rivals, we can be sure that the few preserved in this and other archives were not all that was out there. Out of the other Catholic periodicals mentioned above, for example, *El Mensajero Católico* refers to itself as the continuation to *El Mensajero de Nuestra Señora del Corazón de Jesús*, a publication for which I have found no other record. To depict this once vibrant Catholic publishing scene through its surviving examples constitutes an effort to salvage what little remains of the archival record on Catholic conservative thought and intellectual life at a time when hard lines between liberal or conservative, and Catholic or godless, defined much of social and political life. Through this depiction, the chapter furthermore acts as a companion—and a challenge—to studies on the expansion of the press in Cuba that focus on the earlier part of the century as a period of growth and innovation, and that point towards this new and secularizing sphere as a triumph over the religious pamphlets that once dominated the print market, while failing to consider that the Church, too, took to the press just as the medium began to proliferate.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> See: *Catálogo de publicaciones seriadas cubanas de los siglos XVIII y XIX. 2da. edición*, ed. Josefina García Carranza and Miguelina Ponte (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 1984). The catalog boasts other titles yet, such as *La Familia*, *La Sombra*, *La Voz de Cuba*, and the *Diario de la Familia*, that did not label themselves as Catholic, but that promoted religious values and could be found in conversation with one or more of the abovementioned journals, which are not considered here. The ecclesiastical bulletins for Santiago and Puerto Rico can be found in their respective diocesan archives. The complete Havana bulletin can be found in other Church-affiliated archives, such as the Biblioteca del Centro Cultural Padre Félix Varela and the Biblioteca del Centro de Estudios Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, both in Havana.

<sup>157</sup> See the examples cited above: Baena, *El terror de los tiranos*. Goldgel, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América*. Llaverías, *Contribución a la historia de la prensa periódica*. See also: Ambrosio Fonet, *El libro en Cuba* (La Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1994). José G. Ricardo, *La imprenta en Cuba* (La Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1989).

## 2.1 The “Spirit of Catholic Propaganda” Reaches the Antilles

In 1858, priest Anacleto Redondo and law professor José Ramírez Ovando, established a new journal in Havana. *La Verdad Católica* was conceived as a response to what they deemed as widespread ignorance and the consequent lack of morals then accosting society; Catholicism being the source of its salvation. Their enterprise was urgent. Whereas before, as the authors pointed out, “vice had been isolated to books,” it was now likewise to be found “within institutions and the press, in speeches, conversation, in classrooms, [social] clubs, and at home.” To counter this, the public had to be educated—and in some cases, reeducated—in the practice of Catholicism. In this mission, they stated, the press would provide them with “a powerful medium” with which to spread truth and Catholic teachings, “attacking vice and error from within their own trenches.”<sup>158</sup>

The Bishop of Havana agreed. Redondo and Ramírez Ovando published their journal with the full blessing of the Havana Bishopric, having sought an ecclesiastical license to do so. In granting their request, the Bishop applauded their efforts, and cited the urgent need for “a periodical publication in the Diocese that confronted the impiety and religious indifference of the epoch,” one that would reach into homes and work alongside priests to educate the faithful.<sup>159</sup> His response letter, along with a circular that instructed priests to promote it among their parishioners, were used as opening statements in the journal’s first issue. Later, when the

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<sup>158</sup> The original Spanish reads: “El periodismo puede servirnos de un medio poderoso para hacer llegar la verdad a oídos de todos, y atacar en sus propias trincheras al error y al vicio.” See: Anacleto Redondo, “Prospecto,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1858, Volume I, 7.

<sup>159</sup> The original Spanish reads: “En consideración a lo útil y necesaria que es hoy en la Diócesis la publicación de un periódico que haciendo frente a la impiedad e indiferencia religiosa de la época penetre hasta el hogar doméstico y enseñe y repita a los fieles, al par que el sacerdote desde la sagrada cátedra, las verdades y virtudes que deben creer y practicar...” See: Ramón Fernández de Piérola y López de Luzuriaga, *Ramón Fernández [...] to [...] Rampolla del Tindaro*. Letter. ASV, *Nunziatura di Madrid*, Box 549, Titolo X, Rubrica II, No. 7. See also: Pedro Sánchez, “Circular N. 78,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1858, Volume I, IV.

Diocese of Havana came out with its own news bulletin in 1865, the same was distributed as a supplement to *La Verdad Católica*.<sup>160</sup>

That priests and parishioners alike subscribed to *La Verdad Católica* was indeed pressing. In 1853, Pope Pius IX addressed the Catholic world with a condemnation of the same vice and error the journal sought to vanquish, singling out the press for its ability to overcome them in a Papal encyclical where he urged his audience to “favor those who [...] labored via writing and publishing to defend and propagate Catholic doctrine.”<sup>161</sup> This he had said in the aftermath of the 1848 European revolutions that had shaken his Papacy. The relaxation of press restrictions that ensued across much of Europe had brought with it an increase in publications, with many of the new journals coming out of Lombardy espousing democratic and liberal views that promoted the project of a unified Italian republic, in which the Church would lose much of its power.<sup>162</sup> His reaction entailed a doubling down upon orthodoxy and dogma that sought to safeguard the Church and the faith from what he saw as a descent into materialism that negated the tenets of Catholicism, along with a proliferation of the avenues by which it could spread—an intransigence and alarm that would thenceforth characterize his reign. Catholic journalism, while

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<sup>160</sup> See: José Ramírez Ovando (La Redacción), “La Verdad Católica en 1866,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1866, Volume XVII, 185.

See also: Mariano Puyol Anglada, “Circular No. 4,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1866, Volume XVII, 190.

<sup>161</sup> Quoted in Spanish as: “Os rogamos encarecidamente que asistáis de todo corazón y favorezcáis a aquellos que, animados de un espíritu católico, y poseído de instrucción suficiente, trabajan por escrito y publicando libros y periódicos en defensa y para la propagación de la doctrina católica.” See: José Ramírez Ovando and Anacleto Redondo, “A nuestros suscriptores,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1858, Volume II, 3. For the complete encyclical, see: Pius IX, *Inter multiplices*, Vatican website, March 21, 1853, <http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-ix/it/documents/enciclica-inter-multiplices-21-marzo-1853.html>, accessed April 12, 2020.

<sup>162</sup> On the general easing of press restrictions after 1848, see: Jonathan Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848-1851* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 160. For examples from Lombardy, where the Italian republic first set roots, see: Franco Della Peruta, *Il giornalismo italiano del Risorgimento: Dal 1847 all'Unità* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2008), 95-104.

not new, was warranted now more than ever, being called upon to strengthen and expand its efforts to face the onslaught of harmful publications then competing with Catholicism for the attention of the public.<sup>163</sup> In 1850, for example, the Vatican joined in with *La Civiltà Cattolica*, a Jesuit-led journal that acted as “semi-official” mouthpiece for the Holy See and was born out of the need to “combat the spread of revolutionary ideas.”<sup>164</sup> The press had become an ally for the Church, who would fight its enemies with their own device. As a contributor to *La Verdad Católica* wrote in 1858: “The press, that terrible necessity of our age,” now also fell under “the influence of religion.”<sup>165</sup>

Pope Pius’ words, which were later quoted in the sixth issue of *La Verdad Católica*, were what Redondo and Ramírez Ovando had in mind when seeking to establish their publication.<sup>166</sup> Their shared apprehension over ignorance and corrupt morals were not particular to Catholics in Havana, but to Catholics the world over, in particular those in whose countries such warnings about impiety pointed towards a climate of rising liberalism and attendant persecution of the Church. Interspersed amid their calls for safeguarding Catholic values were stories about the rampant spread of anticlericalism and the various schemes to topple the Church in once God-fearing Europe. A six-page article published in 1858, for example, rallied against the persecution of the Hermanas de la Caridad in Portugal, whose public repudiation had been fueled by

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<sup>163</sup> For a general look at the earlier Catholic press and the subsequent backlash against the proliferation of these new periodicals, see: Clark, “The New Catholicism,” 24-26.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>165</sup> The original Spanish reads: “La misma prensa, esa necesidad terrible de nuestra época, siente como los demás elementos sociales, el influjo religioso, sujetándose a sus imperiosas exigencias.” Antonio de Sard, “Misión católica de España en el siglo XIX,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1858, Volume I, 295.

<sup>166</sup> See: José Ramírez Ovando and Anacleto Redondo, “A nuestros suscriptores,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1858, Volume II, 3.

anticlerical, Freemason publications that spread lies and derided their charitable works.<sup>167</sup>

Another five-page report from 1859 chronicled how the ongoing conflict over Italian unification, whose “sole motive was the destruction of the Pope’s temporal power, or more clearly, Catholicism,” was making the Pope ill.<sup>168</sup>

Both open anticlericalism and government criticism, in turn, were not allowed under the 1834 press censorship laws then in effect for Spain and its possessions.<sup>169</sup> The publishing scene in Havana, however, was prolific. Newspapers and magazines covering art, literature, science, business, and satire, as well as an array of youth and women centered publications that the Church found banal and detrimental to religious values flooded the market.<sup>170</sup> In 1854, for example, ecclesiastical authorities in Havana filed a complaint before the Fiscal de Imprenta for having allowed the printing of an article titled “Death of a Young Artist” in the newspaper *La Prensa* about the death by suicide of a young woman—a topic the ecclesiastical authorities found harmful to Christian morals.<sup>171</sup> Just as Redondo and Ramírez Ovando singled out in their opening editorial, ecclesiastics in Cuba were likewise facing increased competition in the public arena, not just from the abundant output of the press, but also from the growing popularity of the new meeting and gathering places then springing up around the island, among others, in the form of clubs, salons, and cafés—alternatives to the church as the point of community formation,

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<sup>167</sup> José Ramírez Ovando, “¡Santa indignación! Persecución entre las Hermanas de la Caridad en Portugal,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1858, Volume II, 344-350.

<sup>168</sup> José Ramírez Ovando, “Pío IX y la revolución,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1859, Volume III, 529-534.

<sup>169</sup> For more on the 1834 law, see: Baena, *El terror de los tiranos*, 158. At the time, Cuba was likewise beholden to its Gobernadores’ *facultades omnímodas*, or emergency powers, which allowed him to strike down publications dealing in politics, along with any others considered damaging to the public. See: Ricardo, *La imprenta en Cuba*, 52.

<sup>170</sup> In the 1850s, at least 30 new publications had appeared throughout Cuba. In 1857, there were 39 presses in Cuba; 20 of them in Havana. See: Baena, *El terror de los tiranos*, 184, 187.

<sup>171</sup> Llaverías, *Contribución a la historia*, 322-323.

where new forms of association and public life were developing away from the careful guidance of the clergy.<sup>172</sup> It was the feared outcome that the pervasiveness of such publications and alternative gathering places would lead to losses for the Church—with no Catholic publications to add their voices to the milieu—that the editors of *La Verdad Católica* sought to push back against. *La Verdad Católica* would seek to grab the attention of the lettered, middle class to which these new publications and meeting places catered, and, in doing so, would prevent Cuba from falling prey to the liberal and insurrectionist ideas that the Pope condemned in his encyclical.<sup>173</sup>

To do so, *La Verdad Católica* set out to present itself as an alternative to the “pernicious works” then circulating around Havana—an enlightening read that sought to knock down their “false philosophies.”<sup>174</sup> The periodical came out in bi-weekly installments of twelve pages (*seis pliegos*) each and was parceled out in three main sections.<sup>175</sup> The first and largest section centered the Church and matters of faith: a collection of didactic texts covering a wide range of topics, including documents of an official nature, like notices from the Bishop, and encyclical letters from the Pope; articles containing notes on the life of Jesus or biographies of contemporary figures within Catholicism, like that of Cardinal Giacomo Antonelli, the Vatican Secretary of State. The first section likewise copied—and many times translated—popular Catholic texts of the time, such as the long-running series of sermons on the topic of Christian

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<sup>172</sup> For more on these new meeting places, see: Louis A. Pérez, *Intimations of Modernity: Civil Culture in Nineteenth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 40-52.

<sup>173</sup> On the Cuban middle classes, see: Pérez, *Intimations of Modernity*, 40.

<sup>174</sup> F. de A. “Libros perniciosos,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1858, Volume II, 729.

<sup>175</sup> The same was priced at “dos pesos un real fuerte” per trimester in Havana and “18 reales fuertes” for the rest of Cuba. See: Mariano Puyol Anglada, “Circular N.4,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1866, Volume XVII, 190. On its biweekly nature, see: “Advertencia,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1858, Volume II, 64.

progress from celebrated French preacher Célestin Joseph Félix—a reflection on how the much touted notion of “progress” could be understood and repurposed to serve Christian life as another word for the betterment of the self, as opposed to justification for the abandonment of the Church.<sup>176</sup> The latter, a topic that preoccupied the publishers of *La Verdad Católica* as one of the many errors then presenting a challenge to Catholicism, became a fixture for the publication, with a different sermon published in every number, from the first in 1858 up until its last in 1866.<sup>177</sup> Similar reflections from local authors also occupied its pages, with José Ramírez Ovando contributing a series of essays on *la verdad católica*—or Catholic truth, as the title of the publication stood—throughout 1858. Other writings from Cuban authors included pious contemplations on the Virgin Mary and articles of more pressing national concern, calling attention, for example, to the lack of proper Christian instruction and evangelization efforts on rural haciendas.<sup>178</sup> The religious section also served as a useful medium for the promotion of new Catholic associations in Havana, like the Conferencias de San Vicente de Paul, whose foundation in 1858 coincided with that of *La Verdad Católica*, and which regularly published accounts from its meetings in the journal.<sup>179</sup> The journal likewise contained a second, literary section, where the

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<sup>176</sup> The sermons were preached at Notre Dame between 1856 and 1870. See: *Diccionario histórico de la Compañía de Jesús: Biográfico-Temático II*, eds. Charles E. O’Neill and Joaquín M. Domínguez (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2001), 1388.

<sup>177</sup> For the first and last entries in the series of sermons, see: R. P. Félix, “El progreso por medio del cristianismo,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1858, Volume I, 40-52. R. P. Félix, “El progreso por medio del cristianismo,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1866, Volume XVII, 448-460.

<sup>178</sup> One gets the sense that the contributors were a mixture of lay and ecclesiastical writers, as was often the case with these kind of publications, and indeed was with *La Verdad Católica*, given it was first founded through the efforts of a priest and layman. Yet the authors often hid behind pseudonyms and remain unknown. On this kind of collaborations, see: Clark, “The New Catholicism,” 25. For the case on evangelization among rural haciendas, penned under a pseudonym, see: DGV, “Una pequeña misión,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1858, Volume I, 73-79.

<sup>179</sup> See, for example: José Ramírez Ovando, “Próxima instalación de las Conferencias de San Vicente de Paul en esta capital,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1858, Volume I, 86-87.

editors published poems—many contributions from readers—and excerpts from popular novels of an edifying, Christian nature. A third section was devoted to both local and international news of varied Catholic interest, relating the construction of a new altar in a Havana church, or the reception of the latest sermon by the aforementioned Father Félix. Both literary excerpts and international news were seldom credited, though they likely came from the Spanish Catholic journals that the editors of *La Verdad Católica* also extensively promoted within the pages of their publication.

As the first to fill the void in Catholic publishing in the Antilles, the example set by *La Verdad Católica* was soon followed elsewhere in Cuba and in neighboring Puerto Rico. In 1859, for example, the Diocese of Puerto Rico established its own ecclesiastical bulletin. The Archdiocese of Santiago de Cuba followed suit with its own in 1864. Created under similar circumstances, the bulletins, or *boletines*, likewise offered similar content, and shared in the objective of continuing to evangelize via the written word amidst the novel circumstances then facing the Church—and the churches—across the islands.

Much like *La Verdad Católica* came to be used as an official channel by which the Havana Bishop could communicate with priests throughout his Diocese, the *Boletín Eclesiástico de Puerto Rico* originated as an instrument for the Bishop of Puerto Rico to circulate relevant civil and ecclesiastical matters among his priests.<sup>180</sup> The first Catholic periodical in the island, the *Boletín* likewise responded to developments across the wider Catholic world, heeding the call for the expansion of Catholic journalism put forth by the Vatican, as well as the example set by dioceses across Spain, which had begun publishing *boletines eclesiásticos* in increasing numbers

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<sup>180</sup> For more on the origins of the Puerto Rico Boletín, see: Álvaro Huerga, *Los obispos de Puerto Rico en el siglo XIX* (Ponce: Pontificia Universidad Católica de Puerto Rico, 1994) 158.

after the first one appeared in Toledo, in 1844.<sup>181</sup> The *Boletín Eclesiástico de Puerto Rico* was made up of twelve pages and published on a bi-weekly basis. Other than the official proclamations it was intended to publicize, which included royal decrees and ordinances from local government, pastoral letters from the presiding bishop, and encyclicals from the Pope, the *Boletín* contained local and international Catholic news, such as the ordainment of new priests in San Juan or the formation of a lay association in Madrid. These were accompanied with varied reflections on the teachings of Catholicism—historical and philosophical essays on the virtues of fasting and abstinence or fantastic tales of Protestant families converting to Catholicism thanks to Marian intervention. True to being a tool for the Bishop to communicate with the priesthood, articles on proper clerical conduct—from leading an honest life to fighting off laziness—were also a constant within the pages of the *Boletín*. Contributions like these were often copied from other *boletines* or Catholic publications from Spain and elsewhere in Europe and the United States. A quick look at its run for 1859 shows, for example, Spanish periodicals *La Esperanza* and *La Revista Católica*, the *Boletín Eclesiástico de Barcelona*, and the *New York Telegraph*, among those cited. Open for subscription to the public at large, other contributions yet came from readers, lettered laymen and women who often submitted poems on certain devotions and topics like Christian charity.<sup>182</sup> The *Boletín* also included promotions for other publications both priests and parishioners could—and should, according to the Bishop—subscribe to, among them,

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<sup>181</sup> After the first one was founded in Toledo, another 70 *boletines* would be established in Spain up until the end of the century. See: Carmen Diego Pérez and Montserrat González Fernández, “Los boletines eclesiásticos como fuente para la historia de la enseñanza primaria en España (1851-1931),” *Historia y Memoria de la Educación* 10 (2019): 243-244.

<sup>182</sup> See, for example: José Gautier Benítez, “A la llegada de las Hermanas de la Caridad,” *Boletín Eclesiástico de la Diócesis de Puerto Rico*, December 15, 1863, 289-290.

*La Verdad Católica*, from where it sometimes copied articles that reported on conditions in the neighboring island.<sup>183</sup>

The *Boletín Eclesiástico de Santiago*, first published in 1864, responded to the same directives. As in Puerto Rico, it was also the first publication of its kind in Santiago de Cuba and the surrounding region. Its inaugural issue described the periodical—and its mission—with the same exigency as *La Verdad Católica* had done in 1858. To the Archbishop of Santiago, it was evident that what he called “immoral, antichristian, and schismatic (*disolventes*) ideas” had found new vehicles by which to propagate.<sup>184</sup> Only a solid foundation in religious doctrine—in the form that the *Boletín Eclesiástico* intended to provide—could help counteract this. To do so, the Santiago *Boletín* counted with specific sections on Christian history, doctrinal teachings and Catholic virtues, that included, for example, articles on “keeping the home” aimed at women and others on the widespread benefits of reciting the rosary. In addition, it published pastorals from the Bishop and messages from the Pope, as well as regional and international news, and was likewise connected to local publications like *El Redactor* and *El Diario de Santiago de Cuba*, which, while not religious, often promoted the *Boletín* among their readers.<sup>185</sup> Like its predecessors in Havana and Puerto Rico, its editors at the Santiago Archbishopric also read and reproduced articles from overseas publications, from *boletines* in Spain to other Catholic

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<sup>183</sup> See, for example: “Isla de Cuba: Una misión en Villa Clara,” *Boletín Eclesiástico de Puerto Rico*, August 1, 1859, 173-177.

<sup>184</sup> See: “Introducción,” *Boletín Oficial Eclesiástico del Arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba*, January 7, 1864, 1-3.

<sup>185</sup> See, for example: “Sección local,” *El Redactor*, January 6, 1864. “Sección local,” *El Diario de Santiago de Cuba*, February 27, 1864.

periodicals like the French *L'Univers*.<sup>186</sup> The Santiago *Boletín* consisted of eight pages and published on a weekly basis, consistently, until 1898.

Out of the three Catholic journals to come out of Cuba and Puerto Rico around the same time, however, *La Verdad Católica* had the most ambitious project and the farthest reach. Though admiring of Catholic publications outside the islands, the *boletines* rarely engaged them, nor did they ever rise above the category of local publications with a limited audience. *La Verdad Católica*, on the other hand, stands out for its dialogue with publications from overseas, and for the clear ambitions of its editors to elevate it to the top echelons of Catholic journalism. Out of the same periodicals that *La Verdad Católica* often copied articles from, the most popular were *La Cruz*, published in Seville since 1852, and *La Revista Católica*, published in Barcelona since 1842.

In 1858, *La Cruz* appeared in *La Verdad Católica*—in the form of a reference for a news bulletin, a promotion, or an excerpt—a total of seven times. While this number might not seem high, *La Cruz* stands out as its most cited publication—the place where *La Verdad Católica* likely obtained many of its news items and a point of connection to its colleagues in embattled Catholic Europe, in a place without the advantages of the telegraph to send or receive information.<sup>187</sup> For its part, *La Revista Católica*, as its second most cited publication—with lengthy articles that sang its praises for its readers to subscribe to—appeared less: six times over

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<sup>186</sup> See, for example: “Sección Histórica,” *Boletín Oficial Eclesiástico del Arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba*, December 31, 1868, 418-421.

<sup>187</sup> For circulation of foreign news items in Cuba pre-telegraph, via steamship, see: Pérez, *Intimations of Modernity*, 31. The telegraph would not arrive to Havana until 1867. See: Canter Brown Jr., “The International Ocean Telegraph,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (October 1989): 153-154.

the span of 1859 to 1860. Yet looking at *La Revista Católica* and *La Cruz*, it becomes apparent that both were taken by Redondo and Ramírez Ovando as models for their own publication.

Compiled in two volumes per year, the first 1857 volume of *La Cruz* offers—among its 640 pages of material—a collection of sermons on topics like Purgatory, and the numerous ills afflicting Europe; call-outs to publications that contained irreverent or blasphemous writing; devotional poems, and Catholic news from around the world. The same also included articles that held up Catholic morals against those of the present-day, denouncing, for example, “the venom” found in modern novels; promotions for other Catholic journals; various of the sermons on Christian progress from the acclaimed Father Félix; and, in a nod towards Cuba, a laudatory report on the good work being carried out in the Diocese of Havana.<sup>188</sup>

*La Revista Católica*, published once a month in voluminous numbers that rounded a hundred pages, presents a similar scheme. Among others, its number for June 1858 contained articles on the virtues of those within the Catholic pantheon, like Saint Peter and the Virgin Mary, official Papal documents, and political discussions on proposed reforms in the Spanish Cortes. Extensive missionary reports from places where the Catholic Church was then concentrating its evangelization efforts, like Tibet, China, and Scandinavia, also figured within its pages, making claim to their own section.<sup>189</sup>

Both publications were among the best representations of the militant, ultramontane Catholicism that was prevalent in Europe, and which the editors of *La Verdad Católica* were

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<sup>188</sup> See: *La Cruz: Revista religiosa de España y de los demás países católicos*, 1857, Volume I, <https://archive.org/details/A044009>, accessed April 14, 2020.

<sup>189</sup> See: *La Revista Católica*, June 1858, <http://hemerotecadigital.bne.es/issue.vm?id=0005117757&search=&lang=es>, accessed April 14, 2020.

keyed into, products of a wave of Catholic publishing that began in the 1840s.<sup>190</sup> Unlike the *boletines*, which, though connected to other Catholic publications and open to be read and subscribed to by all members of the public, were principally written for the clergy and by the clergy, to take *La Cruz* and *La Revista Católica* as inspiration was to seek to be at the forefront of Catholic journalism—true to the editors’ wishes to reach the Havana public and join the ranks of the virtuous Catholic press the Pope so extolled.<sup>191</sup> *La Verdad Católica* would be a publication of mixed lay-ecclesiastical direction and readership, but it would also be able to hold its own in the wide reading market of Havana.

This was made evident when in late 1858, a couple of months after *La Verdad Católica* began publication, its editors reached out to León Carbonero y Sol, founder and editor of *La Cruz*, asking for his advice and collaboration, for, as they put it, they sought to “elevate their pens to the level of the best in their class.”<sup>192</sup> According to the news shared in *La Verdad Católica*, Carbonero obliged them, responding in an unpublished letter, where he extended his congratulations on their work and promised to collaborate with the journal, sending in his own writings.<sup>193</sup> In 1859, he followed up on this promise with a historical text on the Jewish people (*el pueblo hebreo*), which, though filled with factual details—from the initial settlement of the land around the Euphrates and the Tigris to the rise of Moses—was also steeped in anti-Semitic

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<sup>190</sup> Christopher Clark names both *La Cruz* and *La Revista Católica*, along with Madrid’s *El Católico*, as the most prominent representations of the “new Catholic press” in 1840s Spain. See: Clark, “The New Catholicism,” 24.

<sup>191</sup> While the *boletines eclesiásticos* did circulate among the lay public, they had originated—and were intended—as a way for the higher ecclesiastical authorities to communicate with the common clergy. See: Pérez and González Fernández, “Los boletines eclesiásticos como fuente para la historia de la enseñanza primaria,” 237, 243-244.

<sup>192</sup> See: Ramírez Ovando and Redondo, “Distinguido colaborador de *La Verdad Católica*,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1858, Volume II, 250.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

overtones, true to the overriding Catholic vision that considered Jews as deserving of divine punishment for their role in the crucifixion. The text was published in three installments over the course of the year.<sup>194</sup> This was followed up with various other collaborations throughout the life of the publication. Some months after this last text was published, for example, Carbonero sent in a series of six poems he had translated from Arabic. (Other than a prominent Catholic publisher, Carbonero was also a professor of Arabic at the University of Seville.)<sup>195</sup> After that, personal collaborations fell off, but the line of communication between them remained open. When Carbonero compiled and edited a new version of Father Félix's sermons on Christian progress in 1863, he turned to *La Verdad Católica* to publicize it, in whose offices interested buyers from Havana would also be able to arrange their payment.<sup>196</sup>

Redondo and Ramírez Ovando's admiration for Carbonero and his work was not one-sided. While Carbonero took to *La Verdad Católica* to publicize his own writing and editorial work, he also returned this admiration in kind. In 1859, *La Verdad Católica* got a two-page article in *La Cruz*, where Carbonero promoted it among his readers, expressing his delight that "the spirit of Catholic propaganda" had at last reached the Antilles, and praising the details with which it was printed as "far superior to the best foreign [European] publications."<sup>197</sup> Later that year, Carbonero copied an article that Ramírez Ovando had published in *La Verdad Católica*,

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<sup>194</sup> See: León Carbonero y Sol, "El Pueblo Hebreo I," *La Verdad Católica*, 1859, Volume I, 98-105. Carbonero y Sol, "El Pueblo Hebreo II," *La Verdad Católica*, 1859, Volume I, 129-135. Carbonero y Sol, "El Pueblo Hebreo III," *La Verdad Católica*, 1859, Volume I, 191-197. For more on Catholic belief on Jews and Judaism, see: David I. Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 19.

<sup>195</sup> See: Jesús Martín Tejedor, "León Carbonero y Sol," Real Academia de Historia, <http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/10679/leon-carbonero-y-sol>, accessed April 7, 2020.

<sup>196</sup> "Primera edición de la colección completa de todas las conferencias predicadas en Ntra. Sra. de París por el P. Félix desde 1856," *La Verdad Católica*, 1863-1864, Volume XII, 85-86.

<sup>197</sup> León Carbonero y Sol, "La Verdad Católica de La Habana," *La Cruz*, 1859, Volume II, 394-396, <https://archive.org/details/A044014/page/n399/mode/2up/search/habana>, accessed April 10, 2020.

calling on Catholics in Havana to begin a donation fund for the construction of a monument in honor of the Immaculate Conception, as other Catholics had already done in Spain, France, and Italy, to which Carbonero added his own commentary, wishing for the fruitful completion of the project.<sup>198</sup> After this, Carbonero continued to reference and extract articles from *La Verdad Católica* to include in his own publication, doing so again in 1861, 1864, and 1865, with varied articles on topics like the proper ringing of church bells, illicit works in the world of Catholicism and their condemnations, and biographies of living Catholic figures.<sup>199</sup>

Further successes for *La Verdad Católica*, while difficult to ascertain—there are no archival records related to the administration of the publication, nor was there much information shared on its subscribers nor coffers within its pages—can be measured in other ways. To mark the beginning of their second volume, in 1858, for example, Redondo and Ramírez Ovando announced with great satisfaction that the publication would grow from twelve to eighteen pages (*de seis a nueve pliegos*).<sup>200</sup> Unlike many other contemporary publications, for whom it proved difficult to stay afloat for more than a couple of years amid constant competition for a limited number of potential subscribers—in 1861, to reference the closest year in record, only twenty percent of the island’s population could read—not only did *La Verdad Católica* remain in publication for eight years, but also rare were the instances in which it pleaded with its subscribers to fulfill their payments on time, having had to do so only once towards the end of its

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<sup>198</sup> José Ramírez Ovando, “Proyecto de erección de un monumento a la Inmaculada Concepción de la Virgen María en La Habana,” *La Cruz*, 1859, Volume II, 605-607, <https://archive.org/details/A044014/page/n399/mode/2up/search/habana>, accessed April 10, 2020.

<sup>199</sup> See, for example: León Carbonero y Sol, “Biografía y funerales del Cardinal Wiseman,” *La Cruz*, 1865, Volume I, 72. “La costumbre de repicar las campanas durante las tempestades,” *La Cruz*, 1861, Volume I, 56-64. “Catálogo de las impugnaciones publicadas hasta hoy del libro impío de Renan, La Vida de Jesús,” *La Cruz*, 1864, Volume I, 323-332.<sup>199</sup>

<sup>200</sup> José Ramírez Ovando and Anacleto Redondo, “Advertencia,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1858, Volume II, 64.

run, in 1866.<sup>201</sup> Instead, the editors of *La Verdad Católica* often spoke vaguely, though assuredly, of the ways in which their base had grown, especially during its first few years in publication. A couple of months into 1858, for example, a contributor celebrated, expressing how the journal “began [publication] yesterday, already listing numerous subscribers, and occupying a distinguished position among the country’s press.”<sup>202</sup> The fact that these subscribers often contributed with their own writings, with the likes of Luisa Pérez de Zambrana—acclaimed national poet—and Ramón de la Sagra—Spanish botanist, writer, and politician that built his career between Spain and Cuba—points to a lettered, middle and upper class base of readers and contributors that accorded the publication a proud place in the Havana public sphere.

That other Catholic publishers outside Havana, like Carbonero, recognized and sang its praises likewise helps establish how *La Verdad Católica* lived up to the standards of its editors as defender of Catholicism and good virtues, not just at the local level, but in the world stage. In May 1858, U.S. Christian publication the *New York Tablet* announced the launch of *La Verdad Católica* among its readers, speaking of “the great talent with which it is conducted,” and auguring it great success.<sup>203</sup> The *New York Tablet* did not stop there, as it seems its editors subscribed to the Havana journal, publishing in June a critique—if mild—on certain points of Catholic history which *La Verdad Católica* had erred on—having said that Isaac Newton had

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<sup>201</sup> For the supplication in *La Verdad Católica*, see: Ramírez Ovando, “A nuestros agentes y suscritores,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1866, Volume XVII, 270-271. On the general competition for a limited number of subscribers, see: Ricardo, *La imprenta en Cuba*, 55, 83. For information on the number of readers, see: Pamela Maria Smorkaloff, *Readers and Writers in Cuba: A Social History of Print Culture, 1830s-1990s* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 5.

<sup>202</sup> The original Spanish reads: “*La Verdad Católica* empezó ayer, y ya cuenta con numerosos suscritores, y ya también ocupa un puesto distinguido en la prensa de este país.” See: Antonio de Sard, “Misión católica de España en el siglo XIX,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1858, Volume I, 295.

<sup>203</sup> See: “Literature,” *New York Tablet*, May 29, 1858, 10.

being inspired by “Catholic truth” when conducting his experiments, even though he was Protestant—which *La Verdad Católica* answered by insisting that Newton was acting as a Catholic in his search for God as the source of truth.<sup>204</sup> The retort was in good faith, however, as the *New York Tablet* continued to be featured within the pages of *La Verdad Católica* in the coming years, providing articles which its editors copied and translated, and bits of news from Catholic Europe and the United States.<sup>205</sup>

It was not long before the reach and good work of their publication earned Redondo and Ramírez Ovando recognition from the Pope, as well, who extended them a letter of congratulations in 1860. The same was a response to a letter that Ramírez Ovando had sent him in 1859, in which he expressed his sympathies for the problems then confronting Pope Pius’ tenure and advertised his own work towards the strengthening of Catholicism. The Pope thanked them for their endeavor and gave them his blessing to continue their work in favor of the Church. According to an 1866 mention in *La Verdad Católica*, the Pope sent José Ramírez Ovando—for Anacleto Redondo had stepped down as co-editor in 1861—a second letter of congratulations in 1864.<sup>206</sup> This is the same letter that Ramírez Ovando mentions in his 1883 communication with the Nuncio. Further record of the letter does not exist, however, as the issue in which it was published was not preserved.

As the Pope sent his second letter in 1864, the exiting Bishop of Havana, Francisco Fleix Soláns, likewise took to his farewell pastoral letter to praise *La Verdad Católica*. In his message,

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<sup>204</sup> See: Ramírez Ovando and Redondo, “*La Verdad Católica* y el *New York Tablet*,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1858, Volume I, 411.

<sup>205</sup> See, for example: “Misión dada por los RR. PP. Paulinos en la Iglesia de la Inmaculada Concepción, Nueva York,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1861, Volume VIII, 619.

<sup>206</sup> See: José Ramírez Ovando, “Pío IX y la Prensa Católica” *La Verdad Católica*, 1866, Volume XVII, 1-84.

the Bishop spoke of sponsoring the publication as one of the great achievements—and legacies—of his tenure as head of the Havana Diocese, leaving instructions for his clergy to care for it in his absence.<sup>207</sup> In 1865, his successor, Fray Jacinto María Martínez y Sáez, used the pages of *La Verdad Católica* as official vehicle for the office of the Bishop to communicate with priests across the diocese, appending a small section with the Havana Diocese’s incipient *boletín eclesiástico* to its pages, which would run—along with *La Verdad Católica*—until 1866.<sup>208</sup>

With his pioneering initiative, Ramírez Ovando laid the groundwork for the host of Cuban Catholic journalists that would come thereafter. Though both Cuba and the Havana publishing scene would undergo rapid change in the time to come, and the publications to follow would be obligated to adopt a much more belligerent stance in their defense of Catholicism, it was his fears and his reaction to them that served as the basis for the more combative tradition of Catholic publishing that would come about as a response.

## **2.2 Much Closer and Tangible Fears: The Birth of a Belligerent Catholic**

### **Journalism in Cuba**

For all that José Ramírez Ovando strived to uphold Catholicism and set the Cuban public on the path of righteousness, he did so in the absence of genuine enemies for Church and Nation. From his journal, he fought against the perceived immorality then being spread through the often frivolous and irreverent writings found in the secular press, as well as the advent of new gathering places that hinted at a reduced audience for the Cuban clergy. His was also a response

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<sup>207</sup> See: Francisco Fleix Soláns, *Carta Pastoral del Excmo. E Ilmo. Sr. D. Francisco Fleix y Soláns, Obispo de La Habana* (La Habana: Imprenta del Tiempo, 1864), 10.

<sup>208</sup> See: José Ramírez Ovando, “A nuestros suscriptores,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1865, Volume XVII, 190.

to the real, though distant fear of Catholicism being accosted by liberal governments and the advancement of alternative doctrines, as was then happening throughout much of Europe and the Americas. At the time, Catholicism throughout the Spanish Empire was protected as the State religion under the conservative reign of Queen Isabella II. Though heading a constitutional monarchy with a progressive faction in its Parliament, Queen Isabella was renowned for her religious zeal and the privileges her administration bestowed upon the Church.<sup>209</sup> Product of the 1851 Concordat that her government negotiated with the Vatican, which guaranteed the exclusivism of Catholicism as the State religion, and protected religious orders and Church properties from State meddling, her reign stood as a bulwark for Catholicism amid the heated culture wars then afflicting the rest of Europe.<sup>210</sup> When Ramírez Ovando set out to combat immoral practices and an apparent distancing from the Church among the Havana public, he did so under the impression that the Church—thus far safeguarded by the civil authorities—did not run the risk of losing these protections. If *La Verdad Católica* lacked articles where it called out the opposition, it was for a lack of true competitors. After the end of its run in 1866, however, the political, social, and religious scene in Cuba changed quickly—and, as we shall see below, the journals to come about after it would be faced with a host of new issues.

In September 1868, Spanish liberals deposed Queen Isabella in a coup that became known as the Glorious Revolution. Later that same month, insurgents in Puerto Rico rose up in arms to claim their independence from Spain. In October, rebels in Cuba followed suit. While the

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<sup>209</sup> Pope Pius IX was godfather to Isabella's son, the future King Alfonso XII. See: Carmina López Sánchez, "The Succession of an Unborn King: Constitutional Politics in Spain after the Death of Alfonso XII" in *Sons and Heirs: Succession and Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, eds. Heidi Mehrkens and Franz Lorenz Müller (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 155-156.

<sup>210</sup> For a more thorough discussion of the 1851 Concordat, see: José Luis Comellas, *Los moderados en el poder, 1844-1854* (Madrid: Escuela de Historia Moderna, 1970), 297-301.

rebellion was swiftly squashed in Puerto Rico, the same led to the Ten Years' War (1868-1878) in Cuba. In the meantime, the liberal coalition that overthrew Isabella would proclaim a new constitution in 1869, among whose reforms was freedom of religion. The ensuing period of unstable politics where liberals and conservatives fought over power and the form that the new Spanish government would take, known as the Sexenio Revolucionario, ended in 1874, when another coup resulted in the restoration of the Bourbon Crown. The return of the Bourbons notwithstanding, the events of this period—coupled with the ongoing war in Cuba—shook up the image of safety and stability that had thus far shielded Catholics across the Spanish Empire from becoming enmeshed in the religious-secular conflicts their peers had been confronting elsewhere.

Amidst these novel circumstances, in 1874, the *Revista Católica* began publication in Havana. The journal was the brainchild of Eduardo Llanas, a Spanish priest and school teacher then working in neighboring Guanabacoa.<sup>211</sup> The same would serve as mouthpiece for the Asociación de Católicos de la Habana, which he founded that same year along with various members of the conservative Havana elite—among whose spokesmen (*vocales*) was José Ramírez Ovando—and was to be a continuation of the periodical that Father Llanas had founded and been directing from the school he worked in since 1871, *La Juventud Católica*.<sup>212</sup> As mouthpiece for the Asociación de Católicos, however, the *Revista Católica* would be able to make a stronger stance against the more pressing conditions that Catholicism in Cuba now faced.

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<sup>211</sup> See: María Providencia García Segarra, “El Padre Eduardo Llanas Jubero,” *Littera*, no. 3 (2011): 23-24. See also: Joan Florensa Parés, “Eduardo Llanas Jubero,” Real Academia de Historia, <http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/22725/eduardo-llanas-jubero>, accessed July 16, 2020.

<sup>212</sup> The Biblioteca Nacional José Martí has just one number from *La Juventud Católica* available. The journal seems likely to have been the first Catholic publication to fill the gap left after the end of *La Verdad Católica*, but it is difficult to historicize it further.

The journal would run until 1880, and—as *La Verdad Católica* had done before—it would likewise serve as official medium of the Havana Bishopric.

In the manner that Francisco Loriga Taboada, President of the Asociación de Católicos, put it in his inaugural speech, “man had declared war on God.”<sup>213</sup> The Asociación, and in consequence, the *Revista*, would make a case for the restoration of the Catholic Church to its rightful place, reinstate the respect that was owed to both public and ecclesiastical authorities, and wrestle back “civil order” from the “dissolving elements” that had pervaded society.<sup>214</sup> His words, though vague and reminiscent of the speech adopted by Catholics like Ramírez Ovando when he penned the opening lines to *La Verdad Católica* sixteen years before, nevertheless pointed to much closer and tangible fears.

In the words of regular contributor to the *Revista Católica* and Spanish lawyer, Ramón de Araíztegui, upon the return of the Bourbons to the Spanish throne, the past six years had been “the most antireligious epoch in Spanish history.”<sup>215</sup> During said time, he claimed, “everything had been done so that the name of God would be forgotten.”<sup>216</sup> Yet even now that the Crown had been restored, Catholics could not lower their guard. As Araíztegui reminded his audience, the 1868 uprisings, in Spain as in Cuba, had been devised from the hearts of masonic lodges. It was the Freemasons, he stated, that had conceived the ill-fated freedom of religion decreed in 1869,

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<sup>213</sup> Francisco Loriga y Taboada, “Discurso leído en la solemne inauguración de la Asociación de Católicos de la Habana el día 2 de febrero de 1874 por Francisco Loriga y Taboada, presidente de sala cesante de esta audiencia,” *Revista Católica*, February 2, 1874, 12.

<sup>214</sup> Loriga y Taboada, “Discurso leído en la solemne inauguración de la Asociación de Católicos de la Habana,” *Revista Católica*, February 2, 1874, 3.

<sup>215</sup> Ramón María de Araíztegui, “1874 y 1875,” *Revista Católica*, January 23, 1875, 715.

<sup>216</sup> Araíztegui, “1874 y 1875,” 715.

“opening the door to all the discord and greed of apostasy” and the ensuing persecution of the Catholic Church.<sup>217</sup>

As Araíztegui would have it, Cubans were now living in a world where Freemasonry had suddenly become much more visible and much more threatening. Indeed, Freemasonry, which had existed within the island under various degrees of legality since the late eighteenth century, had begun to acquire prominence in the 1860s, under the favor of liberal-minded Gobernadores.<sup>218</sup> From 1860 to 1868, for example, 22 new lodges sprang up throughout Cuba.<sup>219</sup> This expansion notwithstanding, Freemasons might not have yet been so conspicuous, as their existence was a topic that *La Verdad Católica* only ever mentioned as an occasional reference to the unfortunate reality of places where these kinds of apostasies were tolerated.<sup>220</sup> That said, amidst growing suspicions that lodges were hotbeds for sedition, authorities did keep a close watch on them.<sup>221</sup> After the events of 1868, with their suspicions confirmed, the image of masonic lodges as probable sites for the spread of rebellious ideas acquired much more weight in the eyes of both civil and ecclesiastical authorities.

As such, the *Revista Católica* would make of Freemasonry an object of concern and frequent denouncement. In early 1875, for example, Eduardo Llanas condemned the apparent

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid, 716.

<sup>218</sup> See: María del Carmen Barcia, *Capas populares y modernidad en Cuba (1878-1930)* (La Habana: Fundación Fernando Ortiz, 2005), 23-24. See also: Dominique Soucy, *Masonería y nación: Redes masónicas y políticas en la construcción identitaria cubana (1811-1902)* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Ediciones Idea, 2006), 107.

<sup>219</sup> Freemasons obeyed different traditions or rites. The 22 new lodges in question all fell under the Gran Logia de Colón tradition, which was then spreading throughout Cuba and Puerto Rico. See: Soucy, *Masonería y nación*, 113.

<sup>220</sup> See, for example: J. Mañe y Flaquer, “Cuarta Carta,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1863-1864, Volume XVII, 64.

<sup>221</sup> Never mind that the Logia Gran Colón, the specific masonic rite then gaining popularity had been largely pro-Spanish throughout the decade, beginning to turn towards independence in the 1870s. See: Soucy, *Masonería y nación*, 113-115.

popularity of a photograph then circulating around Havana that depicted Pope Pius IX surrounded with masonic insignia.<sup>222</sup> Convinced that Freemasons were behind still larger acts of sabotage across the globe, Llanas also reprinted an article from an unnamed Madrid-based newspaper that aimed to shed light upon the universal and “diabolical” aspirations of the group. The same described an 1866 meeting “in a Northern European nation” where Freemasons agreed to wage war against Catholicism, attacking Catholic dogma—among other available avenues to do so—through the press. It was also as a result of this meeting, the newspaper claimed, that Freemasonry had begun its global expansion, going on to include wide-ranging examples of the related troubles then facing the Church in countries like Prussia, Switzerland, Brazil, and Mexico. The article served both as a warning and as a word of advice to the Spanish government and Catholics therein, concluding: “Because of this, it is necessary that Catholics be prepared to eschew the ills from the constant machinations of Freemasonry, and united, decide to undo the great damages that the pestilent sect has bestowed upon the Church. [...]”<sup>223</sup> The *Revista Católica* would take it upon itself, as the Freemasons had done against Catholicism, to fight them via the press, and prevent them from wreaking further havoc upon Cuba.

Among the alternate doctrines of which Freemasonry formed a part, there were others yet, like Spiritism, which preoccupied the Asociación and the *Revista* writers perhaps to an even larger extent. Spiritism became the subject of nine articles during its first year in publication alone, being referred to, among other denunciations, as a heretical set of beliefs and the latest manifestation of the Antichrist.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Eduardo Llanas, “Travesura masónica,” *Revista Católica*, January 16, 1875, 700.

<sup>223</sup> See: “Persecución a la Iglesia Católica: Trabajos de la masonería,” *Revista Católica*, July 4, 1874, 258-262.

<sup>224</sup> See, for example: Araíztegui, “Moral católica y moral espiritista,” *Revista Católica*, February 28, 1874, 9-11.

Spiritism had arrived in Cuba from Europe and the United States during the late 1850s and, like Freemasonry, began to spread in earnest throughout the following decade.<sup>225</sup> At its core, Spiritism professed the evolving nature and ultimate perfectibility of the human spirit. In turn, Spiritists believed in reincarnation, with each return to corporeal life offering an opportunity for improvement upon their past selves. Practitioners also believed in communication with the spirit world and would gather to hold séances whereby mediums would impart messages from other, more perfect spirits. Spiritists, who described their practice as a science, rather than a religion, were also interested in different branches of knowledge, and would hold lectures and conferences from their meeting places. In accordance with this, they were likewise fascinated with the cosmos and believed that Earth was just one of various inhabited planets, their writings and speeches often being peppered with references to astronomy and celestial bodies—planets and stars—where other humans existed.<sup>226</sup> While Spiritists were Christian and indeed, one of the aspects that most seemed to bother Catholics and the writers of the *Revista* about it was the fact that much of their ideas were rooted in Christianity, the practice—associated with the idea of societal progress—was nonetheless anticlerical in that it presented its practitioners with an alternative to the rigid structures of the Catholic Church.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> See: Víctor Almanza, Ramón Pérez, and Isidro Marín, *La práctica del espiritismo en una región histórica de Cuba: La sociedad espiritista en la provincial de Villa Clara* (Madrid: Editorial Académica Española, 2012), 6. See also: Reinaldo Román, “Governing Spirits: Spiritism and the Struggle for Progress in Republican Cuba,” in *Journal of Religion in Africa* 37 (2007): 221.

<sup>226</sup> This aspect of Spiritism would become a running joke for later Cuban Catholic publication, *El Observador*. See, for example: Pedro Cavaller, “Rebencazos,” *El Observador*, February 12, 1888, where he jokes that the Universe, “los otros planetas y los otros satélites que los acompañan, las estrellas fijas, los cometas y las nebulosas, y todo cuanto tiene movimiento y vida en el seno de los espacios,” had been saved through the efforts of local Spiritists.

<sup>227</sup> Spiritism did not negate Christian thought. In fact, when its founder, Allan Kardec, set out to explain the practice, he indicated that Spiritism intended to interpret the teachings of the Gospel—oftentimes written in difficult and imprecise language—and offer in its stead a more approachable, universal moral blueprint for humankind. The layman interpretation of the Gospel that Spiritism offered was made possible through communications with enlightened spirits, who were creatures of God. See: Allan Kardec, *El evangelio según el espiritismo* (Barcelona: Establecimiento Tipográfico de L. Domenech, 1875), IV-V. That Spiritists referred to God at all greatly bothered

The legitimacy of both Spiritism and Freemasonry co-existing publicly with Catholicism had been nebulous from the start. Unlike the Peninsula, Cuba and Puerto Rico were ruled through their respective Gobernadores' *facultades omnímodas*, or “emergency powers,” rather than the complete articles of the Constitution.<sup>228</sup> That is, whether new lodges or Spiritist groups were instituted was up to the Gobernadores' own policies. (As stated above, for example, it was under the auspices of a series of liberal gobernadores during the 1860s that Freemasons spread throughout Cuba.) In 1876, the new Spanish constitution upheld Catholicism as the State religion, and abolished the religious freedom decreed in 1869, replacing the latter with religious tolerance. Other cults would be able to co-exist alongside Catholicism in Spain, though their practitioners would not be able to perform public rites. While these measures were not immediately applicable to the islands, their proclamation in Spain is likely to have resulted in a climate where their presence was still easier to condone—and from the reaction of the *Revista*, it was evident that this tolerance was seen as concession enough to put both Catholicism and Cuba at risk.<sup>229</sup>

To the menace proffered by the proliferation of practices like Spiritism and Freemasonry, the secular press of the time added yet another set of challenges. Illustrated satirical publications

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Catholic writers of the time, who often made a point to rebuke their assertions of faith. See, for example: Eduardo Llanas, “El Espiritismo V,” *Revista Católica*, February 22, 1874, 1-4, which begins: “Tan ridícula nos parece la pretensión de los espiritistas en presentarse como cristianos...”

<sup>228</sup> For further on the *facultades omnímodas*, see: Javier Alvarado, “Preámbulo a una singularidad,” in *La administración de Cuba en los siglos XVIII y XIX*, ed. Javier Alvarado Planas (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2017), 19.

<sup>229</sup> Three months before the 1876 Constitution was proclaimed the prelates from Cuba and Puerto Rico had also written in protest to the King. See: “Exposición a Su Majestad el Rey del Episcopado de la Provincia Eclesiástica de Santiago de Cuba pidiendo la conservación de la unidad católica en la península y sus dominios de ultramar,” *Boletín Eclesiástico de Santiago de Cuba*, no. 6 (XII): 7. The letter is further discussed in Chapter 4.

had first appeared in Havana in 1857 and continued their spread throughout the 1860s.<sup>230</sup> Their growing numbers were never a topic of discussion for *La Verdad Católica*, but in the 1870s, they constituted a reality that the *Revista* could no longer leave unaddressed. For the *Revista*, moreover, these kinds of publications presented it with an adversary that was easier to name—and engage with—than the phantoms of Spiritism or Freemasonry.

In 1874, the *Revista* went against the satirical *Juan Palomo*. The magazine had been founded in 1869 under the premise of defending Spain after the 1868 separatist uprising in Cuba.<sup>231</sup> The fact that its director and collaborators were pro-Spanish, however, did not mean that they shared the preoccupation over religious integrity across the empire—nor of Catholicism's place within Spanish society—with the directorate of the *Revista Católica*. The satirical publication was all for Spain triumphing over the Cuban insurgents, but it was also openly liberal and anticlerical. While the bulk of its content was made up of jabs aimed at separatist thought and its leaders, arranged throughout the magazine in essays, doggerel, and imagery, the Catholic Church was often a subject of ridicule. During Holy Week that year, for example, the magazine published a cartoon depicting a crucified Carlos de Borbón, the then pretender to the throne under the eponymous Carlist cause. For Eduardo Llanas, this was a double insult: to use the image of the Cross was a sacrilegious act, evocative of taking the Lord's name in vain. The Carlist cause for the Spanish throne, moreover, advocated for a return to an old regime, traditionalist Spanish Crown that likewise emphasized the union of Church and

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<sup>230</sup> Manuel Barrero, "Orígenes de la historieta española, 1857-1906," *ARBOR* CLXXXVII 2EXTRA (2011): 21-23.

<sup>231</sup> See: Manuel Barrero, "El bilbaíno Víctor Patricio Landaluze, pionero del comic español en Cuba," *Mundaiz* III (2004): 13-14.

State.<sup>232</sup> The writers and illustrators for *Juan Palomo* disagreed with the cause and often made fun of Carlos and his supporters, picking fights with conservative publications and their editors via text and printing jeering caricatures like the one described above. In the context of the present Carlist bid for power, the latter section of the magazine often featured references to how the Church would reign alongside Carlos in the imagined Spanish government. The prospect was ridiculous enough for the people behind *Juan Palomo* that few comments had to be made about it, instead choosing to portray priests as laughable lackeys standing behind the representatives of civil government.<sup>233</sup>

While the Asociación de Católicos had declared upon its founding that it—along with the *Revista*—would not partake in politics, the group had evident ultramontane tendencies and it would not have been improbable for sympathizers of the Carlist cause to have been amongst its members.<sup>234</sup> In reference to the “restoration” of Catholicism that the Asociación kept front and center, the writings that appeared in the *Revista*, for example, made frequent references to the current, broken “principle of authority,” wistful for a time when the prerogative of the Church and the teachings of Catholicism went uncontested.<sup>235</sup> For this, *Juan Palomo* and its near sacrilegious caricatures of the men of the cloth must have piqued their ire. Yet it was this

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<sup>232</sup> See: Douglas Victor Askman, “The Renovation of the European Right: The Case for Spanish Carlism, 1868-1872,” PhD Dissertation (UCLA, 2001), 15.

<sup>233</sup> See: “La pasión y muerte de Nuestro Señor Carlos VII,” *Juan Palomo*, March 15, 1874, 84-85.

<sup>234</sup> In their constitution, as well, Article 4 read: “Son igualmente extrañas a la Asociación las discusiones teológicas, como también toda intervención en asuntos exclusivamente propios de la Autoridad de la Iglesia, a cuyos preceptos y consejos estará siempre y en todo humildemente sometida.” See: Eduardo Llanas, “La Asociación de Católicos,” *La Juventud Católica*, November 21, 1873, 155. For more on its prospect, see: Loriga y Taboada, “Discurso leído en la solemne inauguración de la Asociación de Católicos de la Habana,” *Revista Católica*, February 2, 1874, 3-16.

<sup>235</sup> See, for example: Eduardo Llanas, “La escuela materialista en sus relaciones con el progreso, discurso leído por el R. P. Eduardo Llanas en la solemne inauguración de la Asociación de Católicos de la Habana,” *Revista Católica*, February 2, 1874, 6.

depiction of Carlos as the crucified Jesus, during Holy Week, no less, that finally prompted the *Revista* to address it.

Incensed at the image, Eduardo Llanas countered what he decried as the “religious skepticism” exhibited by *Juan Palomo*—a character flaw that he also extended to the rest of society—with two miracle accounts recently arrived from El Salvador. To laugh at the Crucifixion was to deny the existence of miracles, he claimed, and he used the accounts as a reminder, and a warning to his readers not to fall prey to the same kind of blasphemy. To provoke *Juan Palomo*, Llanas further proclaimed how concerned fathers throughout Havana had confiscated the latest number from their children, and how those who had not been able to prevent their children from reading it, had taken them to Church to ask for forgiveness.<sup>236</sup> *Juan Palomo* countered this with a retort on how few people were reading the *Revista* and how little weight Llanas’ attack carried for them.<sup>237</sup> A week later, Llanas answered, in an article where he picked apart their flawed grammar and poor writing. Not only were the writers behind *Juan Palomo* blasphemous, they were “unqualified to appraise [...] and deride us.”<sup>238</sup> Its writers were lacking in intellectual and literary merit, and were not up to the challenge of arguing with the *Revista*.

Yet, that Llanas sought to engage *Juan Palomo* in the first place indicates an increased awareness about the place of Catholicism—and Catholic publications—amidst the growing public sphere of Havana, where alternate doctrines and irreverent, satirical and political

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<sup>236</sup> The miracles had been reported in the journal *La Verdad*, from San Salvador, which the Archbishop of Guatemala brought to Llanas as a gift upon visiting Cuba. See: Eduardo Llanas, “Aún hay fe,” *Revista Católica*, April 4, 1874, 57-59.

<sup>237</sup> See: “Menestra semanal,” *Juan Palomo*, April 12, 1874.

<sup>238</sup> Eduardo Llanas, “La gramática de Juan Palomo,” *Revista Católica*, April 18, 1874, 84-85.

publications now had a voice. In engaging with the likes of *Juan Palomo*, the *Revista* would attempt to talk to those beyond its immediate circle of Catholic readers and compete in the Havana marketplace of ideas.

*Juan Palomo* ended publication later in 1874, but similar newspapers and magazines that likewise presented a challenge to the Church remained in print. To bolster their case against them, Llanas—and the rest of the writers for the *Revista*—would make continuous use of the same line of attack. Their education, intellect and prose, were far superior to that of any dissenters, who were incapable of touching them for their lack of wit and imagination.<sup>239</sup> These accusations were often followed with treatises covering cannon law, history, and dogma, intended to prove that Catholicism held the ultimate truth. The *Revista* might have been the only Catholic publication amidst a growing number of titles, but it was the only one that possessed the right qualities to participate in the developing public sphere and speak to the citizens of Havana.

The growing number of titles against which the *Revista* was up against also meant that they were but one amid various new sources of information for the public. Beyond defending the truth of Catholicism against publications that manifested potentially subversive and heretical ideas, the *Revista* would also have to provide its readers with the right kind of information. In keeping with this, the *Revista* often included uplifting Catholic writings and news reports from an assortment of foreign sources, a selection meant to rival the local publications it sought to compete against.

It is difficult to say how many foreign publications circulated around Cuba at the time, but foreign news items and journals certainly did. Much like José Ramírez Ovando, Eduardo

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<sup>239</sup> Accusing your rival of “literary inferiority” was also part of the playbook for Mexican journalists in the nineteenth century. See: Pablo Piccato, *The Tyranny of Public Opinion: The Construction of Honor in the Mexican Public Sphere* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 74-75.

Llanas was clearly subscribed to various European publications that likely arrived via ship with some delay, though not enough to deter Cuban publishers from promoting subscriptions to them. Likewise, the telegraph had come to Havana in 1867, when a line connecting the city with Key West, and from there, with the East Coast of the United States, was inaugurated.<sup>240</sup> The intricacies of how Havana sent and received information to and from Europe and the United States after telegraphic lines reached it have not been written about, but it is not difficult to imagine how after this, the people of Havana could all the more easily and rapidly receive the information that the various press agencies of the time—Reuters and Havas, for example—wired to places like New York.<sup>241</sup> As such, the *Revista* often made references to the “latest news” received via telegraph from abroad. This was reflected in its “Variedades” section, a segment towards the end of each number, where Llanas included both local and international news. International items almost always credited the publication—newspaper or magazine—where these were first transmitted, though clarifications as to whether these had been copied from a journal to which Llanas was subscribed or had come from a specific wire dispatch, were rare. It is likely that the items in the section originated from both sources.

In 1874, the *Revista* made two explicit references to the “Prensa Asociada,” and listed another 60 publications amongst its sources.<sup>242</sup> Out of these publications, just 7 were from Cuba.

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<sup>240</sup> See: Brown Jr., “The International Ocean Telegraph,” 153-154.

<sup>241</sup> For more on press agencies and the circulation of news during the 1870s, see: Jonathan Silberstein-Loeb, *The International Distribution of News: The Associated Press, Press Association, and Reuters, 1848-1947* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 199-201.

<sup>242</sup> Less precise references to the news received via telegraph were much more frequent. For the “Prensa Asociada” references, see: “Encíclica del Papa,” *Revista Católica*, April 25, 1874, 204-205. See also: “Variedades,” *Revista Católica*, June 27, 1874, 249-250. In this case, the “Prensa Asociada” that Llanas credited was not the Associated Press, which was founded in 1892. Instead, it might be a reference to either the United States or the British “Press Association,” founded earlier in the 1800s. See: Silberstein-Loeb, *The International Distribution of News*, 2-4.

The remaining 53 were foreign. As one might surmise from the table below, it is difficult to believe that Eduardo Llanas was subscribed to the Scottish *Revista de Edimburgo* or the German *Gaceta Nacional*. Whichever information he got from there was likely copied from another publication or was included in a telegraphic dispatch. Notwithstanding their origin, their inclusion shows a conscious attempt to demonstrate the *Revista*'s connection to the world outside Cuba and its competence on global developments—a boon that they were able to offer to the public.

Table 1 (see Appendix at the end of the chapter) lists all periodical publications referenced in the *Revista Católica* of Havana, between February 22 and December 26, 1874. These dates reflect the first and last issues for 1874. When available, the publishing location has been included. The *Revista Católica* often translated the publications' names into Spanish, though not without some mistakes. In the cases where a publication is well-documented, its name has been included here in the original language.

That a wider variety of information was now circulating around Havana meant that the public was now also faced with choices that had not been so apparent before. New publications did not just represent the availability of more reading material for the sake of entertainment, but also the procurement of new ideas, hand-in-hand with the debates over differences of opinion that, like the spectacle of Llanas' sparring with the writers of *Juan Palomo*, must have cropped up with ever increasing frequency. Cubans could now all the more easily question just what to believe, and Eduardo Llanas was well aware of this. Bolstered with the right kind of information, the *Revista* would thus also engage in a war against what it deemed as the vagaries of public opinion, that were then harming the people of Cuba.

On October 10, 1874, the *Revista* published an article penned by frequent collaborator, Ramón de Araíztegui, that was titled “La opinión pública.” In it, Araíztegui bemoaned what he understood as the global expansion of rationalism, which had “spread throughout all countries, like a bad weed.” It was because of this that Spanish politics were so unsettled, he claimed, paraphrasing then Spanish Prime Minister, Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, to lament that there could be no consensus among Parliament, for “wherever there were ten Spaniards, there were also ten different opinions.” This, both rationalism and the difference it engendered, as he stated, were “the sad bequest of Protestantism, which could only create variance.” It was up to Catholics to eradicate this error of modern progress. The article went on to assert not just how Catholicism was inviolable, but also the one right path amid the chaotic world of noise—and dissent—that Protestantism and its offshoots had brought about.<sup>243</sup> While Catholics like Araíztegui and Eduardo Llanas were concerned about the place of Catholicism within public discourse, in their esteem, the concept of public opinion was a delusion, for Catholicism had long ago answered the questions that were now being debated.

Given all the present noise, Araíztegui posed the question: “How, then, does one distinguish the Truth from that which is not?” Because God had imbued man with the capacity to know the Truth, any good Catholic should be unfazed by this. Though “public opinion” cast aside the Catholic Church and had succeeded in reducing its number of followers, Jesus—and Catholicism, as its rightful representative within the realm of Christendom—was and remained the Truth. Public opinion had no basis other than the illusion that it represented the voice of the masses, which it claimed under the guise of a predominance in numbers, yet, “the criteria of individual reason being so fallible, [...] it is clear that Truth need not fear the verdict of public

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<sup>243</sup> Araíztegui, “La opinión pública,” *Revista Católica*, October 10, 1876, 481-483.

opinion, which often changes from morning to night.”<sup>244</sup> Knowing this, a real Catholic would thus, “not accept judgment from the so-called public opinion, which has no criteria for affirming the Truth, and whose voice, [moreover] was not loud enough to intimidate.”<sup>245</sup> Public opinion was the title given to the views only of those who shouted the loudest — a clamor that did nothing to make it valid. Public opinion was ever-changing; Catholicism and its teachings were constant. The presumed voice of the majority crumbled under the timeless teachings of the Catholic Church and the voice—and ultimate authority—of God. To the extent that the *Revista Católica* engaged the notion of public opinion, it did so to repudiate it.

Araíztegui’s argument would reverberate throughout the life of the *Revista*, which held fast onto its rejection of that which was deemed public opinion and continued to dismiss what others claimed as its apparent power. The *Revista* continued to reject all manner of Liberals, Protestants, Freemasons, and Spiritists, along with their arguments, as the misguided peddlers of a concept that, for Catholics who put their faith in the ultimate word of God, was null. The message was clear: Dissenters, no matter their numbers, would not be able to damage the foundations of Catholicism nor weaken its hold on public life.

More so than defending what they considered to be the truth, and contrary to what Araíztegui claimed, however, to grab hold of the audience and persuade them of your vision, as the print market kept on growing, the Cuban Church would need for its representatives to shout louder from here on out.

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<sup>244</sup> The original Spanish reads: “...siendo tan falible el criterio de la razón individual, que en su variedad lleva la señal del error, claro es por demás que la verdad no debe temer ante los fallos de la opinión pública, que muchas veces cambian de la mañana para la tarde.” See: Araíztegui, “La opinión pública,” 483.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

### ***2.3 La guerra por la novedad***

When José Ramírez Ovando set out to begin his second journal in 1883, *El Eco de San Francisco*, he put it forth in his prospectus that the paper, while interested in all things Catholic, first and foremost set out to answer Pope Leo XIII's desire for the cult of Saint Francis to experience a revival among the faithful—a tool for modern times that would act as a barrier against godlessness and protect devotees from the errors of the epoch. “Given the influence of the press,” as Ramírez Ovando stated, the paper was thus designed to inspire the members of the Havana public into joining the Secular Franciscan Order.<sup>246</sup>

It soon became apparent, however, that such a simple prospect would not be without its share of critics. In the following number, Ramírez Ovando found himself having to further defend his proposition, up against the slight of an unnamed rival publication, which had dismissed his latest endeavor as a creation for “prudish old ladies” (*viejas mojigatas*). In response, Ramírez Ovando redoubled his efforts, declaring that the journal was meant for a wide audience, and going on to wax poetic about the life and teachings of Saint Francis and all the celebrated figures that had admired him over the centuries, two and a half pages in which Ramírez Ovando spoke to his readers in a self-satisfied tone, having defended his mission and kept his resolve—in the process of which he ended up proving his rival right.<sup>247</sup>

The issue that Ramírez Ovando—and many other Catholic publishers before him—failed to see was that the battle being fought here was not just one of piety *versus* impiety, nor even one about the triumph of Catholicism over secular ideas that meant to depose it, but rather, one to

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<sup>246</sup> In his words: “...puesto que la prensa influye hoy tanto en el movimiento de las ideas, y estas influyen a su vez en los sentimientos del corazón, hemos considerado oportuna esta publicación...” See: José Ramírez Ovando, “Prospecto,” *El Eco de San Francisco*, March 4, 1883, 3.

<sup>247</sup> Ramírez Ovando, “Una breve explicación,” *El Eco de San Francisco*, April 1, 1883, 25-27.

grab the ever-fleeting attention of the public. More so than the rival publications debating whether learning about the life of Saint Francis had any value for society at large, what their words seemed to imply was this: *El Eco de San Francisco* was boring.

When Ramírez Ovando spoke, he spoke to his fellow tertiaries and parishioners, not the wide Havana public he meant to reach. For all his editorial know-how, he was too mired in dogma and visions of ultramontane Catholicism to sell papers. While the number of subscribers to *El Eco de San Francisco* is not available, it would be safe to assume that his publication had too narrow a focus to reach many beyond his immediate circle and, perhaps, likeminded ecclesiastics. While he had once attained success in capturing the Havana public with *La Verdad Católica*, the way of doing so in 1880s Cuba was different than in 1858. The market, already dynamic when *La Verdad Católica* was established, had kept growing. A look at the Biblioteca Nacional catalog for nineteenth century periodicals shows 92 magazines and 135 newspapers that were established in and around Havana between the end of *La Verdad Católica* in 1866 and the creation of *El Eco de San Francisco* in 1883.<sup>248</sup> To this, places with a significant Cuban émigré population, like New York, Madrid, and Florida, contributed an additional 6 magazines and 13 newspapers.<sup>249</sup> Publications founded in Santiago de Cuba during the same seventeen year period added another 27 journals into the picture.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> While the Biblioteca Nacional does not hold all the nineteenth century journals published in Cuba, its catalog—short of going to each municipal archive in the hopes of finding additional titles—remains the most thorough tool available to track the growth and expansion of the periodicals market on the island. See: *Catálogo de publicaciones seriadas cubanas de los siglos XVIII y XIX. 2da. edición*, ed. Josefina García Carranza and Miguelina Ponte (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 1984).

<sup>249</sup> For references to this émigré population, see: María del Carmen Barcia, *Una sociedad en crisis: La Habana a finales del siglo XIX* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2000), 50, 105. See also: Kenya C. Dworkin y Méndez, “Latin Place Making in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: Cuban Émigrés and their Transnational Impact in Tampa, Florida,” *English Language Notes* 56:2 (2018): 124-142.

<sup>250</sup> See: Virginia B. Suárez Piña and Graciela Durán Rodríguez, “Los periódicos en Santiago de Cuba en el siglo XIX: reflexiones sobre su importancia patrimonial,” *Santiago, Especial VLIR* (2016): 117-118.

It is important to note here that not all of these publications were around by the time that *El Eco de San Francisco* was founded. As was the case with publications in the earlier part of the century, for which various scholars of early Cuban print have established that short lifespans were commonplace, it can be surmised that many in this period did not last long, either.<sup>251</sup> The catalog does not list end dates for most of these publications, but for those that it does, two and three year stretches stand out as the most frequent. Nevertheless, the sheer number of publishing initiatives that came to fruition in the lead up to *El Eco de San Francisco* shows how the market had changed—and what Ramírez Ovando and other Catholic publishers were up against. For comparison, the total number of publications that had been established in the island under the immediate period leading up to the creation of *La Verdad Católica*, between 1850 and 1858, was 23 magazines and 2 newspapers.<sup>252</sup> Out of the numbers recounted above for the publications founded between 1866 and 1883, those that were established in or near Havana during the period under which the *Revista Católica* was active, between 1874 and 1880, totaled 37 magazines and 32 newspapers. Those established in places like New York and Florida included 6 newspapers and 2 magazines.<sup>253</sup>

Out of the new publications, most notable were those of masonic lodges and those with explicit political leanings, not for their numbers—out of the publications recounted above, for example, only seven called themselves masonic, and those that included terms like Liberal,

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<sup>251</sup> On this earlier part of the century, see: Baena, *El terror de los tiranos*, 115, 199. See also: Goldgel, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América*, 55. The assumption that later publications held the same ephemeral fate is likewise held by those who commented on the press under this period. See: Basail Rodríguez, *El lápiz rojo*, 71-72. See also: Ricardo, *La imprenta en Cuba*, 95.

<sup>252</sup> For the list of publications, see: Baena, *El terror de los tiranos*, 190-191.

<sup>253</sup> See: *Catálogo de publicaciones seriadas cubanas de los siglos XVIII y XIX. 2da. edición*, ed. Josefina García Carranza and Miguelina Ponte (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 1984).

Autonomist, Republican, or Democratic, in their titles totaled twenty-eight—but for the difference in the topics they broached when compared to that being published at the time that *La Verdad Católica* came around. As pointed out in the first section, under the 1834 censorship laws in effect when *La Verdad Católica* was founded, publications of a variety of topics were allowed to flourish. Yet none could speak ill of the Church and its ecclesiastics, nor the government, and all were beholden to previous inspection (*censura previa*) before they could circulate. This all began to turn after 1878. As part of the Pact of Zanjón, the peace settlement that ended the Ten Years' War, the ban on political parties and organizations that had until then been in place for Cuba was lifted.<sup>254</sup> And along with the new political parties came new publications, such as *El Triunfo*—official organ of the Cuban Partido Liberal from 1878 to 1885—which openly expressed and promoted a political stance that deviated from the colonial and Spanish administration's more conservative posture.<sup>255</sup> Not long after this, in 1881, the Spanish government extended to Cuba and Puerto Rico legislation that removed the previous inspection mandate to which all publications were subject before going to print.<sup>256</sup> Although the new censorship laws maintained the long-established prohibition to speak ill against the Church and government, the change in regulations led to an increase in publications across the island, all of which offered more varied and bolder topics than those that had come before.

Some of the new publications did condemn both the Church and conservative Catholicism. *El Triunfo*, for example, published a three-part editorial that denounced

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<sup>254</sup> On the Pact of Zanjón, see: Dominique Soucy and Delphine Sappez, "Autonomismo y masonería en Cuba," *REHMLAC* no. 1 (May-November 2009): 92.

<sup>255</sup> On *El Triunfo* and the Partido Liberal, see: Luis Miguel García Mora, "La fuerza de la palabra: el autonomismo en Cuba en el último tercio del siglo XIX," *Revista de indias* no. 223 (2001): 725.

<sup>256</sup> On the 1879 Ley de Imprenta, see: "Ley de Imprenta para la Isla de Cuba," *Gaceta de La Habana*, May 3, 1881.

ultramontanism within Cuba in December 1882. The series of articles called for the privileging of reason in public debate and rejected a belief in the supernatural as the basis of human knowledge. Reminiscent of the proclamations of God as the ultimate Truth and the denouncement of rationalism that could be found in *La Verdad Católica* and the *Revista Católica*, the editors of *El Triunfo* used this to underpin their critique of what they deemed as “lay ultramontanism” and the enduring spirit of Carlism on the island, defeated but in name under the present Spanish administration, and meant to maintain the colonial status quo. Ultramontanism and Carlism, in particular, were alive and well, embodied in the staunch defense of “absolutism and intolerance, [and] its hate for freedom and rights.”<sup>257</sup> These ideas were not being spread by Church officials or colonial authorities directly, but rather, by complicit laypeople and their institutions. While the editorial concentrated—albeit without naming names—on religious associations as the principal vehicle by which these ideas gained a foothold among the public, these were statements in which the work of Catholic publishers like José Ramírez Ovando and Eduardo Llanas was deeply implicated. Until 1880, the *Revista Católica* had been the official medium for the Asociación de Católicos de la Habana. *El Eco de San Francisco*, which would begin publication in March 1883, was itself the journal of the Tercera Orden de San Francisco and heir to *La Verdad Católica*.

Yet despite these attacks, rather than point to a scenario where the Church was now being persecuted by all the new publications, their growth points to a changed social and political scene in which publications now discussed and debated with each other over big and novel ideas that had not been allowed to circulate before then. It also speaks of reading for entertainment. Among

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<sup>257</sup> El ultramontanismo en Cuba,” *El Triunfo*, December 14, 1882. See also: “El ultramontanismo en Cuba II,” *El Triunfo*, December 16, 1882. See also: “El ultramontanismo en Cuba III,” *El Triunfo*, December 24, 1882.

the new publications, satirical magazines of the likes of *Juan Palomo*—whom the *Revista Católica* clashed with—also saw an increase, regularly publishing jabs directed at other publications—political, literary, or otherwise.

In his study of print culture in early nineteenth-century Cuba, Chile and Argentina, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América*, Víctor Goldgel describes how newcomer periodicals sought to entertain and capture their readers, amidst increased competition for a limited readership. These new publications had the task of rousing readers' curiosities and “delighting” them, rather than only presenting themselves as useful or didactic texts.<sup>258</sup> If they wanted to remain in business, thus, new publications had to “inflame hearts.”<sup>259</sup> This was true of Havana publications in the earlier part of the century as much as it was so for those in the Cuba of the 1880s. These relied on a variety of topics and sections to lure in readers and advertisers: from the latest news from abroad, to serialized novels and cartoons. Quarrelling with other publications and stirring up controversy was also a recurrent resource for editors and writers to create—and retain—an engaged audience.<sup>260</sup> In this post-Zanjón sphere, *Don Circunstancias* (1881-1883), heir to the satirical tradition that had started in the late 1850s, presents itself as a good example of conservatism and a staunch defender of the political union with Spain.<sup>261</sup> The journal published long tirades against liberal newspapers,

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<sup>258</sup> Goldgel, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América*, 98.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid*, 58.

<sup>260</sup> This phenomenon was not particular to Cuba, but rather to the nineteenth century periodicals' scene. It was, for example, a key feature in the development of the Mexican public sphere. See: Piccato, *The Tyranny of Public Opinion*, 71.

<sup>261</sup> See: Barrero, “El bilbaíno Landaluze,” 13.

like *El Triunfo*, calling out editors and contributors alike, and ridiculing them with pejorative names, insults, and caricatures.<sup>262</sup>

In this context, both Catholicism and the Catholic Church needed an equally loud representative. This was something that *El Eco de San Francisco*, with its poems and monographs on the life of Saint Francis, could not hope to fulfil. Neither could it hope to compete in the contest for the Cuban public with them. While other Catholic writers, like Llanas and Aríaztegui, acknowledged the growth and evolution of the market, setting upon resultant ideas like that of public opinion, and calling out their opponents—publications, Freemasons, or Spiritists—from within the pages of the *Revista Católica*, capturing and retaining the attention of the public must have also proved an elusive goal for them. Records pertaining to the administration of the *Revista* are non-existent. Thus, its number of subscribers is also unavailable. Yet, one can surmise that for all their strivings to address the competition and demonstrate their connections to the world outside Havana, with their insistence in correcting the others' grammar and lecturing in a flat, academic tone, it also fell short of speaking to a wider audience.

It is quite probable that the *Revista* had a strong base of moral and economic support from Cuban Catholics. After all, the publication served as both the official medium for the Asociación de Católicos and the Havana Bishopric. On top of this, Eduardo Llanas never complained about a lack of subscribers, nor, for that matter, a lack of funding with which to keep the *Revista* afloat. Yet the words that *Juan Palomo* directed against it come to mind: the *Revista Católica*, in their estimation, was little read and of little consequence. Notwithstanding the

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<sup>262</sup> *Don Circunstancias*' writers often deemed contributors to *El Triunfo* as ignorant "libertoldos." See, for example: "La discusión del martes," *Don Circunstancias*, October 30, 1881, 345-46.

number of devoted subscribers that the *Revista* might have had, its competitors refused to engage it much further than with a demeaning comment about what appeared to them as its lack of success. A Catholic publication for the still growing market would need for its enemies to acknowledge and debate it.

## 2.4 To Discipline Catholicism's Enemies

In the town of Sagua La Grande, however, priest Pedro Cavaller took notice of the competition. In 1887, he established *El Observador*, a weekly newspaper intent on defending Catholic interests. While not alone in his vision—other than *El Eco de San Francisco* and *El Boletín Eclesiástico de la Habana*, the Biblioteca Nacional registers *El Boletín de la Asociación de las Madres Católicas* (1879), *El Despertador Católico* (1882), and *El Mensajero Católico* (1887), as extant examples of Catholic periodicals published in the 1880s—*El Observador* stands out for its tone, narrow, unrelenting focus and editorial savvy. It is also the most well-kept.<sup>263</sup> To take a stand against what Cavaller called “the sophisms and crude errors of Freethought (*librepensamiento*),”<sup>264</sup> *El Observador* would imitate the liberal and secular periodicals then in circulation, with public call-outs and debates, seeking to engage its critics and create interest in the publication by picking fights with its opponents. As such, it stands as a showcase of the singular militancy that Catholic publications throughout the island had to adopt in the post-Zanjón public sphere.

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<sup>263</sup> *El Observador* boasts 51 numbers at the Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, rather than the handful of examples available for the rest of the periodicals published during this period.

<sup>264</sup> Pedro Cavaller, “Rebencazos,” *El Observador*, January 7, 1888.

Pedro Cavaller was certainly not the first belligerent, uncompromising Catholic writer to take up the pen in defense of the Church.<sup>265</sup> Eduardo Llanas and Ramón de Araíztegui could not have been said to attack their enemies with anything but vehemence from within the pages of the *Revista Católica*—in a way, foreseeing the scenario which Cavaller now faced. Yet, unlike other Catholic journalists before him, Cavaller would neither try to persuade those who had strayed from the Church of the perversity of their ways, nor wash away their sins through gospel. While he kept a similar stance to men like Llanas, Araíztegui, and Ramírez Ovando, in that he was convinced both of the supremacy of Catholicism, as he was of his own superiority—for he had, after all, the command over history and dogma that his enemies lacked—proving so would not be the backbone of his publication. Rather, he took the superiority of his religion, knowledge and person as a given, and dedicated himself to punishing those who thought otherwise. In the process, he would also save others from going down the same path. The object of his scorn—the abovementioned “freethinkers” whose works now proliferated—were too far gone to hope for a better outcome. As he saw it: “Rotten fruit, once thrown out, is not to be picked up again. What *El Observador* aims for is to prevent [further] contact, so that the as yet unspoiled fruit does not rot.”<sup>266</sup>

To Cavaller, the endeavor was also personal in ways that it was not for the editors of the *Revista Católica*, nor José Ramírez Ovando, who could focus the bulk of their evangelizing on spreading Franciscan values or hailing Catholicism as the true purveyor of public opinion. He

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<sup>265</sup> Nor was this his first foray into writing. Cavaller appears as a contributor to *La Verdad Católica* beginning in 1863. See, for example: Pedro Cavaller, “La Purificación de María Santísima,” *La Verdad Católica*, 1862-1863, Volume X, 382-385.

<sup>266</sup> The original Spanish reads: “Las frutas podridas, una vez que se botan no vuelven a recogerse. Lo que pretende *El Observador* es evitar el contacto para que no se pudran las que todavía están sanas.” See: Cavaller, “Gacetillas,” *El Observador*, June 24, 1888.

was, perhaps, the staunchest defender of Catholicism and Spain among them. In 1869, when the then reigning Bishop of Havana, Fray Jacinto María Martínez y Sáez, was removed from his post and virtually exiled through the efforts of the *cuerpo de voluntarios* and the Gobernador General, Cavaller was among the advocates of such a measure.

Before rebellion broke out in 1868, Fray Jacinto had been a stalwart critic of the colonial administration, denouncing what he saw as “bad government” (*mal gobierno*) before the Queen, and running afoul of the Gobernador General when he ordered his priests to stop the ringing of church bells upon his visits to their parishes—a long-practiced consideration that the Bishop thought was unworthy of a civil authority.<sup>267</sup> When the Ten Years’ War began, the long-simmering tension between the Gobernador and the Bishop worsened, as Fray Jacinto sought to intervene on behalf of insurrect priests awaiting execution. Among the civil government, the *cuerpo de voluntarios*, and the most devoted supporters of Spain on the island, this intervention, as well as his general call for peace, were interpreted as acts of treason.<sup>268</sup> In this entanglement, Pedro Cavaller was credited among those who “lead” (*capitaneaba*) disaffected priests in the move against the Bishop.<sup>269</sup>

At the time of writing *El Observador*, he was not only parish priest of Sagua, but also chaplain of the local *cuerpo de voluntarios*’ battalion, and a well-known and respected person about town because of it. As local newspaper, *El Comercio*, announced, for his 1888 birthday, the *cuerpo de voluntarios* celebrated him in a ceremony that included a serenade by the

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<sup>267</sup> On Fray Jacinto and the *voluntarios*, see: Rigoberto Segreo Ricardo, *Iglesia y nación en Cuba (1868-1898)* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 2010), 66.

<sup>268</sup> Ricardo, *Iglesia y nación*, 72.

<sup>269</sup> See 1896 letter from the Bishop of Havana to the Spanish Nuncio, cited in: Manuel Maza Miquel, *El clero cubano y la independencia: las investigaciones de Francisco González del Valle* (Santo Domingo: Centro de Estudios Sociales Padre Juan Montalvo, 1993), 186-187.

*voluntarios*' music band and the presence of the mayor and the local judge.<sup>270</sup> If *El Observador* was particularly aggressive, it is because Pedro Cavaller was.

In line with this, Cavaller launched himself against Spiritism—and its practitioners in Sagua La Grande—with particular passion. Just as with publications of different stripes, the post-Zanjón reforms had likewise allowed for the proliferation—and greater visibility—of beliefs like Spiritism. As established in the preceding sections, Spiritism had been around in Cuba since the late 1850s, and had kept on growing throughout the ensuing decades. It was in the 1880s, however, when it attained much more prominence.<sup>271</sup> While the Spanish Constitution of 1876 held up Catholicism as the State religion, it allowed for the coexistence—sans public worship—of alternative doctrines. Coupled with the constitutional guarantee of peaceful association and the 1880 Law of Public Meetings that allowed for peaceful gatherings—with local authorities having received previous notice—*espiritistas* could not be prevented from banding together and being vocal about their practices.<sup>272</sup> This was moreover helped along in 1888, when the Spanish government enacted a new Law of Associations that made it easier to register and get approval for different kinds of associations, guilds, and societies.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> For the note from *El Comercio*, see: “Il perché della musica delle mio caro fratello spiritista,” *El Observador*, August 12, 1888.

<sup>271</sup> Andres Bermúdez, “Notas para la historia del espiritismo en Cuba,” *Revista Etnología y Folklore* (1967), 10.

<sup>272</sup> In 1886, a priest in Cienfuegos denounced the intended gathering of a group of *espiritistas* at the local theatre, aiming for the civil authorities to prevent it. Both the mayor and the *espiritistas*, however, invoked the Constitution and the Law of Public Meetings to explain that to intervene against the gathering would be unlawful. See: David Sartorius, “Limits of Loyalty: Race and the Public Sphere in Cienfuegos, Cuba, 1845-1898,” PhD Dissertation (The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2003), 118-123.

<sup>273</sup> See: Mónica García Salgado y Janet Reinaldo Delgado, “Movimiento asociativo en Santiago de Cuba: Un acercamiento a sus orígenes y su evolución durante el siglo XIX,” *Historia Caribe* XI, no. 28 (January-June 2016): 60, 67. See also: Reinaldo Román, “Governing Man Gods: Spiritism and the Struggle for Progress in Republican Cuba,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* no. 37 (2007): 214. For the law itself, see: “Parte Oficial,” *Gaceta de la Habana*, July 10, 1888, 57-58.

The new allowances were well-timed, for Spiritism had gained momentum as a modern—and oftentimes anticolonial—idea after the end of the Ten Years’ War. New adherents and organizations proliferated.<sup>274</sup> For the most part, Spiritism spread in urban centers among the educated upper and middle classes, who saw it as an alternative to the retrograde Catholic Church—in league with the repressive Spanish administration—that did not require them to let go of their Christian faith. The new adherents organized around “centers” where they gathered to hold séances and conferences, and many times published—and funded—their own publications. For the period between 1874 and 1888, for example, scholars Víctor Almanza, Ramón Pérez, and Isidro Marín point to the production of ten Spiritist publications on the island—nine of them appearing post-1878.<sup>275</sup> For his part, pioneering scholar of Spiritism in Cuba, Andrés Bermúdez, counts another four between 1882 and 1889.<sup>276</sup> While in no way an exhaustive list of all the Spiritist publications that came to fruition in post-Zanjón Cuba, the numbers serve to show Spiritism’s growing occupation of the public sphere.<sup>277</sup>

This was true of the Spiritists in Sagua La Grande, who established the Centro El Salvador in 1886, and who funded and produced their own publication, *La Alborada*.<sup>278</sup> In 1888, moreover, it was Eulogio Prieto, president of the Centro El Salvador who travelled to Barcelona

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<sup>274</sup> See: Bermúdez, “Notas para la historia del espiritismo,” 7, 10

<sup>275</sup> See: Almanza, Pérez, and Marín, *La práctica del espiritismo*, 6.

<sup>276</sup> See: Bermúdez, “Notas para la historia del espiritismo,” 11-12.

<sup>277</sup> There is little written on the history of Spiritism and its development in Cuba. It is possible that the Biblioteca Nacional has more Spiritist titles in its catalog, but without them identifying themselves as such—in their names or in their subtitles, as Freemason publications often did—it is difficult to know just how many there were. Spiritist publications often paid homage to science and progress in their titles, with names allusive to light, the universe, and the heavens, but so did Freemason and other Liberal-inclined publications.

<sup>278</sup> See: “El espiritismo en Sagua: Sociedad espiritista de Sagua La Grande,” *Sagua La Grande: La Villa del Undoso* (blog), January 25, 2009, <http://sagualagrande.blogspot.com/2009/01/el-espiritismo-en-sagua.html?m=1>, accessed June 10, 2020.

to represent the Spiritists of Sagua at the First International Spiritist Congress. While four other Cuban associations—from Havana, Cienfuegos, Matanzas, and Quemado de Güines—were represented in the Congress, Eulogio stands out as having had an active role in the conversation. Along with three other men from Spiritist societies throughout Spain, Eulogio appears listed as one of the secretaries for the Congress and the single Cuban to have had a role in the directorate. The Centro El Salvador likewise stands out for the sizeable donation made to the Congress in its name, with its members having pooled together 600 *pesetas*—the biggest out of all the contributions listed in the Madrid-based Spiritist publication *Revista de Estudios Psicológicos*' overview of the gathering.<sup>279</sup>

It was clear from their performance at the Congress that the Spiritists of Sagua La Grande were among the leading contenders in Cuban Spiritism, and their sphere of influence was growing. This was too much for Cavaller, who saw them as interchangeable with all manner of freethinkers, and who accused them of being in league with the Freemasons, denounced them as veiled autonomists, and even called them out as Communists, in communication with the dead Garibaldi.<sup>280</sup> As Garibaldi, a leader in the movement for Italian unification that resulted in the

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<sup>279</sup> For an account of the Congress, see: *Primer Congreso Internacional Espiritista: Representaciones, Adhesiones, Sesiones Públicas, Sesiones Privadas, Conclusiones, Documentos, Etc: Reseña Completa Publicada Por Acuerdo Del Congreso* (Barcelona: Imprenta de Daniel Cortezo, 1888). For the amount donated, see: “Apunte de cuenta,” *Revista de estudios psicológicos*, October 1888, 211, [http://www.memoriademadrid.es/doc\\_anexos/Workflow/2/133705/hem\\_estudiospsicologicos\\_188810.pdf](http://www.memoriademadrid.es/doc_anexos/Workflow/2/133705/hem_estudiospsicologicos_188810.pdf), accessed May 20, 2020

<sup>280</sup> Cavaller often referred to the Spiritists at the Centro El Salvador as “espiritistas librepensadores.” See, for example, his article with the same title: Cavaller, “Espiritistas librepensadores,” *El Observador*, January 15, 1888. An unmistakable line also reads: “O lo que es lo mismo, entre los espiritistas y libre-pensadores, no hay diferencia esencial.” See: Cavaller, “Rebencazos,” *El Observador*, April 29, 1888. Allusions as to how the Spiritists and the Freemasons worked together also appeared at regular intervals. For example, in May 1888, Cavaller denounced that a big meeting (*velada*) of *espiritistas* was held at the local lodge. See: Cavaller, “Rebencazos,” *El Observador*, May 31, 1888. For the reference to Garibaldi, whom Cavaller speculated must have shown up in one of their séances, see: Cavaller, “Rebencazos,” *El Observador*, March 1, 1888. Here, the specific reference to Communism must have been an allusion to Garibaldi’s later support for the Paris Commune and the First International.

disbandment of the Papal States and the dramatic reduction of Papal temporal power, and as the autonomists who wished—in his eyes—for nothing less than independence from Spain, and as the Freemasons, longtime enemies of the Church, Spiritism and the Spiritists of Sagua were stand-ins for all the troubles then accosting Cavaller, Catholicism, and Spain. Spiritism was, in other words, the utmost expression of the *librepensamiento* he had set out to combat.

Other than *La Alborada*, the Spiritists of Sagua boasted two other publications from which to air their views. Autonomist journal *La Luz* and freethinking outlet *La Situación* often published Spiritist-authored pieces, and to Cavaller, were just as reprobate as the official Centro publication.<sup>281</sup> While other local and sometimes Havana-based periodicals were denounced in *El Observador*, as progressive mouthpieces and seeming hubs of Spiritism in Sagua, *La Luz*, *La Alborada*, and *La Situación*, were the publications that most engrossed Cavaller. All three were likewise willing to clash with the priest, their collaborators returning the favor of his attention, both on and off the page.

In January 1888, for example, Father Royo, a Jesuit priest from Havana, visited Sagua to host a week-long mission. According to Cavaller, who grabbed at each occasion to boast about turnout at his church and lord it over his opponents, the people of Sagua welcomed the priest with open arms, attending his services in great numbers and heeding his words with careful attention. Further according to Cavaller, this rallied the Spiritists of Sagua, one of whose members was heard exclaiming about the useful propaganda the Jesuit was doing in favor of

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<sup>281</sup> As the progressive organs of Sagua, all three held correlated ideas, and collaboration between their writers does not seem improbable. For more on the three publications, see: Antonio Beltrán, *El periodismo en Sagua* (La Habana: Tipografía La Australia, 1901), 193-196.

Spiritism, as he exited one of the services.<sup>282</sup> In his sermons, it seems, Father Royo had spoken about the impossibility of communicating with the souls of the dead (*almas de los finados*) and denounced all apparent contacts as tricks of the Devil. Yet for the empathic *espiritista* in the audience, the simple fact that Father Royo was admitting that Spiritists were connecting with the supernatural—whether this manifested itself as demons, angels, or indeed, the souls of loved ones—was propaganda enough to get people interested in their practice.

According to Cavaller, however, such bravado was a front for the very real fear the local Spiritists felt in the presence of Father Royo. The Spiritists—along with the freethinkers and Freemasons, whom he could not help provoking—were upset with the large gathering he had amassed. Father Royo’s mission had coincided with Pope Leo XIII’s 1888 Jubilee. The global event, marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination as priest, included international pilgrim delegations bearing sizeable donations to the Vatican, and public overtures of support at the local level, with bishops and archbishops across the Catholic world exhorting their congregations to pray for the Pope and the triumph of the Catholic Church amidst growing interference from liberal governments.<sup>283</sup> Altogether, Cavaller alleged, the visit from Father Royo and the celebrations for Pope Leo had agitated the local cadre of Spiritists, Freemasons, and freethinkers. In his words: “The entire town of Sagua has been witness to the fuss that these days’ religious festivities have raised among the peoples emancipated from the clerical yoke.”<sup>284</sup> Never one for

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<sup>282</sup> The original Spanish reads: “¡Bravo! Exclamaba un espiritista...” See: Cavaller, “Espiritistas librepensadores,” *El Observador*, January 15, 1888.

<sup>283</sup> Josep Vicent Penadés Aliaga, “La Exposición Vaticana de 1888: Roma y las ‘guerras culturales’ del siglo XIX,” PhD Dissertation (European University Institute, 2013), 119, 133-134.

<sup>284</sup> Cavaller, “Rebencazos,” January 22, 1888.

self-restraint, he further claimed that the festivities, had “driven them mad” and “made their blood boil.”<sup>285</sup>

The kind of burlesque and condescending tone with which Cavaller addressed them did not go unanswered. As was often their approach, the “*espiritistas librepensadores*” sought to make a show of their presumed superior intellect, in a deconstruction of Father Royo’s sermons that appeared in *La Situación*. While no copies of their criticisms against Father Royo survive, Cavaller accused them of attempting to deceive the public, misquoting the visiting priest to defeat him with false arguments.<sup>286</sup> Other than berating Spiritists for being conversant with the Devil, according to the writers at *La Situación*, the Jesuit preacher further censured privileging reason over faith in his series of sermons.<sup>287</sup> According to Cavaller, the denouncers had made this up. In a rare instance where Cavaller ventured to illustrate his enemies without resorting to jokes or insults—though perhaps this was not so much for the naysayers, as for the larger public in danger of believing their falsehoods—he explained that Father Royo had instead talked about how reason alone was not virtue enough for the perfection of man, calling on his audience to profess their faith alongside it. Even so, the explanation was brief. As he called them, the “simpletons” from *La Situación* were not worth his while.

His dismissal was just for theatrics, however, as this kind of exchange made up the publication. According to Antonio Beltrán, in his work on journalism in Sagua, *El periodismo en*

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> In his words: “Saben y están bien persuadidos de que faltan a la verdad a todas horas, y que jamás traducen a derechas los conceptos de los adversarios que quieren refutar...” See: Cavaller, “Rebencazos,” *El Observador*, January 15, 1888.

<sup>287</sup> The original Spanish reads: “‘Que el uso de la razón denigra al hombre y el uso de la fe lo enaltece y eleva,’ asegura *La Situación*, sin ponerse colorada, que dijo el Padre Royo.” See: “Rebencazos,” *El Observador*, January 15, 1888.

*Sagua*, the freethinking outlet devoted a specific section to debating with Cavaller. In the section, called “Disciplinazos,” the Spanish plural for disciplining or reprimand, the writers from *La Situación* took turns in provoking Father Cavaller.<sup>288</sup> To this, *El Observador* answered back with its own section, which Cavaller titled “Rebencazos.” Derived from the Spanish *rebenque*, meaning whip or riding crop, the section was dedicated to whipping his enemies for their ignorance and attacks against his person. After *La Situación* published its final number in May 1888, Cavaller turned his *rebencazos* on *La Alborada*, which went on to become the exclusive focus of the section. Yet other rival outlets, such as autonomist *La Luz*, continued to be denounced in *El Observador*.<sup>289</sup> After all, the kind of squabbles exemplified above were routine for Cavaller, who put it best when he declared: “If it were not for Spiritists, we would die of boredom, and have nothing with which to entertain our readers.”<sup>290</sup>

As such, Cavaller was delighted when *La Luz* began publishing a series of letters addressed to him, undersigned by an otherwise anonymous “*espiritista sagüero*.” Among other larger complaints against the Church, in the series of letters published between July and August 1888, the Spiritist writer chided Cavaller for having declined to attend their latest meeting. He sought to irritate the priest, mocking him with the use of convoluted expressions and peppering his speech with phrases in Latin and Italian to address Cavaller, who was both his *Pater* and his *caro fratello*. Here, it is relevant to note that while masses were held in Latin, sermons were dictated in the vernacular. Considering the manner in which Cavaller expressed himself via the written word, it is difficult to imagine him addressing his congregation in the elaborate and

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<sup>288</sup> See: Beltrán, “El periodismo en Sagua,” 194.

<sup>289</sup> On the end of *La Situación*, see: Cavaller, “Séale la tierra leve,” *El Observador*, May 6, 1888.

<sup>290</sup> Cavaller, “Rebencazos,” *El Observador*, July 8, 1888.

confusing way that the *espiritista* used to mock him. Yet, among the various other criticisms coincident with the anticlericalism of the time, the use of Latin as an archaic and inaccessible language that created a barrier between the Church and the public was common. In *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América*, Víctor Goldgel likewise talks about the frequent denunciations found across late eighteenth and early nineteenth century publications regarding the use of Latin and Greek in print, along with the host of *letrados*, such as priests, who spoke in “a lexicon [that was] incomprehensible to the rest of society.”<sup>291</sup> While this was likely the critique that the *espiritista* had in mind when arguing with Cavaller—and while it was certainly a problem for other Catholic writers, like José Ramírez Ovando—it was also one with which *El Observador*’s director must have been acquainted. In his response, Cavaller obliged his opponent, transcribing his letters and answering his accusations with joking interjections, in a mix of Spanish and Italian, while also correcting his Spanish grammar.<sup>292</sup>

Contrary to the *espiritista*’s claims, what set Father Cavaller’s publication apart from its predecessors and many of his contemporaries was precisely his rejection of such an approach, both to reach the public and to engage his enemies. Instead of cramming them with doctrine and hiding behind learned phrases that denoted superior learning, he would frame his replies in his enemies’ own language, and he would not be above using the same insults they used against him. Continuing to address the *espiritista* in his column, Cavaller further made fun of them by relying on the same terms they used to extol and explain their practices. As such, to conclude his response Cavaller relied on an article penned by frequent collaborator, Magín Franco, where the

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<sup>291</sup> See: Goldgel, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América*, 81.

<sup>292</sup> The response was spread out into three issues. See: Cavaller, “Solo de violón,” *El Observador*, July 15, 1888. Cavaller, “Solo de violón,” *El Observador*, July 29, 1888. Cavaller, “Solo de violón,” *El Observador*, August 5, 1888.

author referred to Spiritism's belief on reincarnation, musing that the likewise *caro fratello* must have felt the need to battle Cavaller so, having become "sick from all the bile [then] spilling from the innumerable corporeal wrappings around his soul."<sup>293</sup>

As much as the writings from the likes of the *espiritista sagüero* delighted Cavaller, his vitriol and willingness to engage them also amused the local Spiritists, who continued to feature him in their writings. In this sense, Father Cavaller comes through as much a stand in for the Church and all the *espiritistas* thought was wrong with it, as for him, the Spiritists of Sagua were the embodiment of all manner of perverse ideologies.

In September 1888, Sagua La Grande was caught in the direct path of a hurricane that devastated much of the province of Villa Clara.<sup>294</sup> After a month of silence for *La Alborada*, as it seems the Centro was hard hit in the hurricane, the Spiritist publication came back with an article that fictionalized what Father Cavaller must have been thinking as the storm hit town. The article depicted a gleeful Cavaller at the prospect of the hurricane wiping the locale clean off Spiritists and their influence, calling out his gratitude to the heavens, only to be disappointed by the sudden appearance of an allied spirit come to prove him wrong. Indeed, grateful for the attention, Father Cavaller reproduced the column in *El Observador*, musing whether it could be possible for *La Alborada* to have fallen so low as to recur to "such a banal, bland, and graceless tale in order to ward off the flies from [his] *rebencazos*."<sup>295</sup> As he put it, the graceless tale was

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<sup>293</sup> Paraphrasing from the original Spanish, which reads: "...tan amarillo de bilis derramada por toda la envoltura carnal número no sé yo cuántos (ni el tampoco) de su espíritu." Magín Franco, "Il perché della música delle mio caro fratello spiritista," *El Observador*, August 12, 1888.

<sup>294</sup> See: "Huracanes de Sagua La Grande (1888)," *Sabaneque* (blog), August 3, 2008, <http://sabaneque.blogspot.com/2008/08/huracanes-de-sagua-la-grande-1888.html>, accessed August 11, 2020.

<sup>295</sup> Paraphrased from the original Spanish, which reads: "¿Es posible que a tal grado de decadencia haya llegado *La Alborada* que para sacudirse las moscas de nuestros Rebencazos haya tenido que recurrir al extremo de inventar un cuento tan cursi, soso y sin gracia?" See: Cavaller, "Rebencazos," *El Observador*, October 7, 1888.

moreover an attempt at defamation, for it failed to depict what he deemed as his near heroic actions during the hurricane, whereupon he had crowded the church with refugees and held vigil throughout the storm. Further patting himself on the back, Cavaller ended his response with an accusation: the help he had provided would have been difficult for the Spiritists to admit, as they neither knew, nor practiced charity.

In essence, the back and forth between Cavaller and the Spiritists of Sagua constituted a battle over public space. Cavaller and the Spiritists battled for hearts and minds, but also over who would get to control the town of Sagua: whose calls would assemble the largest audience, whose publications beckon the most readers, and whose beliefs would influence the most people. It was, as historian Timothy D. Walker has said of the conflict between civil and ecclesiastical authorities over the intended reduction of Church structures in the plan to reconstruct eighteenth-century Lisbon, a battle where power hinged upon being seen, with the most visible of the opposing forces better embedding itself into the social fabric of the town.<sup>296</sup> For the Spiritists, as much as for Cavaller, Sagua would either be a hub for the thriving seed of Cuban Spiritism, or it would belong to the Catholic Church. The conflict was one about their potential to influence the people of Sagua and earn their esteem. On the occasion of the hurricane, the Spiritists' allegation was auspicious, for it gave Cavaller the chance to publicize his actions during the storm and contrast them with those of the Spiritists, whom he denounced as having done nothing. The implied question thus read: Who did more for the people of Sagua? As Cavaller put it, the

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<sup>296</sup> Talking about these “power indicators,” Walker identifies “perceptibility (especially visibility, audibility, and massiveness) and centrality” as the most salient. He adds: “In all cases, a greater level or measure of the feature in question indicates an assertion of social or political dominance.” See: Timothy D. Walker, “Enlightened Despotism and the Lisbon Earthquake: Asserting State Dominance over Religious Sites and the Church in Eighteenth-Century Portugal,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 48, no.3 (Spring 2015): 310.

Spiritists might have commanded three publications in town, but the Church had better social capital.

For all his fears about the advancement of Spiritism, Cavaller believed that he was winning, and he would not let his readers—neither opponents nor supporters—fail to notice this. As he was proud to report, his fire and rancor had gained him recognition outside of Sagua. Towards the beginning of 1888, Havana newspaper *El Pueblo* had called him out and consigned him to a metaphorical dog pound, where he was “put under observation” for the dangers he posed to the public. Cavaller had been gifted the issue and was glad to include the jab in *El Observador* for all to laugh along with him.<sup>297</sup> This recognition, however, also extended to his peers. According to Cavaller, the Bishop of Havana had written to congratulate him on the good work he was doing “in defense of God and the Church” on more than one occasion, with subscriptions to *El Observador* being promoted among readers of the *Boletín Eclesiástico de la Habana*.<sup>298</sup>

Later in September 1888, Cavaller reproduced an article from the *Boletín de la Policía de Santa Clara*, titled “Espiritumanía,” or “Spirit-mania.” In it, the police force from the Villa Clara capital described the presence of Spiritists in Santa Clara with a nod towards Cavaller and *El Observador*. The article opened: “It is not just in the town of Sagua La Grande that a handful of *ilusos* gather to behave like barbarians, to the detriment of progress, civilization, and natural light. It is imperative that Father Cavaller, honorable director of [...] *El Observador*, know that, as upon

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<sup>297</sup> See: Cavaller, “Estamos de enhorabuena,” *El Observador*, January 29, 1888.

<sup>298</sup> On the Bishop’s letter, see: Cavaller, “Muchas gracias,” *El Observador*, June 24, 1888. For the promotion in the Boletín, see: “El Observador,” *Boletín Eclesiástico del Obispado de La Habana*, May 17, 1888, 178.

God's green earth, we also have a bit of everything around these lands."<sup>299</sup> Father Cavaller, it is evident, had made a good job of publicizing and condemning the activities of Spiritists in Sagua. Now that the apparent foolishness had made it to the rest of the province, the police invited him to see for himself. Describing their surprise at encountering and witnessing the commotion coming from a Spiritist meeting during one of their rounds, the police finished their recount of the event by offering him a tour of their own *centro* – as the police columnist jokingly called it, “the best in the province.” Other than a note of gratitude and a succinct promotion of the *Boletín de la Policía* among his own subscribers, Cavaller reproduced the column with no further comment. For him, the text alone must have been illustrative of the name he had made for himself beyond Sagua, and indicative that his words against Spiritism were making the right impression. Spiritism might have been spreading, but the civil authorities had proven to be with him, and with the Church.

According to Antonio Beltrán in *El periodismo en Sagua*, Cavaller was called to fill a position in Havana in 1889. Beltrán also notes that *El Observador* moved with him, continuing to be edited from the Cuban capital.<sup>300</sup> While the Biblioteca Nacional holds no examples of the publication beyond 1888, *El Observador* does continue to get cited in the *Boletín Eclesiástico de La Habana*, twice between 1889 and 1890, and once again in 1894.<sup>301</sup> Whether it was then being

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<sup>299</sup> The original Spanish reads: “No es solo en la villa de Sagua La Grande donde unos cuantos ilusos se congregan, para barbarizar con mengua del progreso, la civilización y la luz natural. Preciso es que el Padre Cavaller, digno director del periódico *El Observador*, sepa que también por estos trigos, hay de todo, como en la Viña del Señor.” See: “Espiritumanía,” *El Observador*, October 21, 1888.

<sup>300</sup> See: Beltrán, *El periodismo en Sagua*, 198.

<sup>301</sup> The *Boletín Eclesiástico* reproduced a column that Cavaller had written upon the Bishop visiting Sagua, and another upon the Bishop's temporary departure to Spain. See: Cavaller, “Santa Misión en Sagua,” *Boletín Eclesiástico del Obispado de La Habana*, June 24, 1889, 223-225. See also: Cavaller, “Despedida del Ilmo. Sr. Obispo Diocesano,” *Boletín Eclesiástico del Obispado de La Habana*, June 30, 1890, 221-222. See also: “Reparación del Periódico *El Observador*,” *Boletín Eclesiástico del Obispado de La Habana*, January 31, 1894, 46-47.

edited from Havana or from Sagua is difficult to ascertain. With no further numbers in existence, it is also difficult to know its precise end date. That Cavaller continued to make Spiritism and the enemies of Catholicism and Spain a focus of his career, however, seems quite probable.

In 1895, back in the province of Villa Clara, as parish priest in the town of La Esperanza, Cavaller became notorious when insurgents entered the town and he climbed the church's bell tower to shoot them down.<sup>302</sup> During the Final War for Independence, he was also a correspondent for Madrid's Catholic newspaper, *El Siglo Futuro*.<sup>303</sup> His defense of La Esperanza earned him the respect of then Gobernador General Valeriano Weyler, who recommended him for a post in the Havana Cathedral in 1896. While Cavaller was not awarded the position, recognition from the highest civil official on the island for his work in favor of Spain must have been an award in itself. When the Final War ended in 1898, Father Cavaller appears to have been serving as priest in the Cienfuegos Cathedral.<sup>304</sup> Whether he remained in Cienfuegos thereafter or whether was one of the various pro-Spanish ecclesiastics that left Cuba after the island became independent from Spain, it is difficult to know.<sup>305</sup>

## 2.5 Conclusion

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<sup>302</sup> See: Manuel Maza Miquel, *Entre la ideología y la compasión: Guerra y paz en Cuba, 1895-1903* (Santo Domingo: Instituto Pedro Francisco Bono, 1997), 136.

<sup>303</sup> See: Fernández de Octomuro, "La Guerra Separatista XX," *El Siglo Futuro*, November 14, 1895. See also: Juan Bautista Casas, *La Guerra Separatista: sus causas, medios de terminarla y de evitar otras cosas* (Madrid: Tipografía de San Francisco de Sales, 1896) 10.

<sup>304</sup> This comes from the Cienfuegos' Cathedral website. See: "Sacerdotes de la Catedral," Catedral de Cienfuegos, <http://catedralcienfuegos.org/historia/sacerdotes.htm>, accessed June 7, 2020.

<sup>305</sup> See: Monseñor Ramón Suárez Polcari, *Historia de la Iglesia Católica en Cuba*, Vol. 2 (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 2003), 207.

Catholic journalism in Cuba began as the local expression of a much larger movement to safeguard the Catholic Church that utilized the press as a principal means of defense. At the time, Catholicism in Cuba—as in Spain and the rest of its colonies—was protected as the State religion, and the sole creed allowed public worship. Yet, Catholics in Cuba enmeshed themselves in the battle for Catholicism and the preeminence of the Catholic Church as dutiful members of its global congregation, endeavoring to curtail their vague misapprehensions over sinful and immoral behavior therein, seeking – and establishing – connections to the wider world of Catholicism in the process. With time, however, Catholic publications in Cuba started to sound more and more like those in embattled Catholic Europe, the place that Cuban writers and publishers most looked towards as a source of both information and inspiration. The near simultaneous events of the Glorious Revolution in Spain and the outbreak of the Ten Years’ War in Cuba spearheaded this change. While no Catholic press is available for 1868, when both events took place, surviving examples from the succeeding years – when Spanish politics remained unstable and Cuba was still at war – point to materialized fears about Liberalism and the corresponding evils of alternate doctrines and anticlericalism come knocking. From then on, the Cuban Catholic press would respond to anxieties of its own.

The combative journalism that resulted served as an instrument through which Cuban Catholics would contend for the predominance of Catholicism in public life and in the public sphere. It was not in sermons, nor in books, where the Church would find its more effective defense, but in the press, as the medium that would allow them to reach more people and compete with an expanding secular – and secularizing – press. Militant Catholics, both priests and laypeople, were aware that the battle to safeguard Catholicism in Cuba—and, therefore, Cuba itself, from “dissolving elements” that sought to rid the island of Spain and the Catholic

Church—was a battle for public opinion. In this battle of intellects between the proponents of Freethought and Liberalism, and those of a Conservative, pro-Spanish Catholicism, the latter needed to impress upon the Cuban public that Catholicism held the correct vision for the present moment – and for the world to come. As the celebrated writings of Father Félix and the sermons of Father Royo implied, progress, along with a celebration of reason and the possibilities that the changing world offered, could be had, but not without Catholicism and the reliable Truth it provided, at the center.

This was a task that Catholic publishers and writers across Cuba took to heart. While the numbers of Catholic publications did not ever surpass those of the secular publications that the faithful strove to combat, their endeavors engendered a vibrant scene of Catholic discourse and a battle over the written word that was a constitutive—yet unrecorded—part of the Cuban sphere of letters.

## 2.6 Appendix

Table 1: Periodical publications referenced in the *Revista Católica* of Havana

<b>Title of Periodical</b>	<b>Place of Publication</b>	<b>Mentions</b>
<i>Le Monde</i> [Illustré]	Paris, France	8
<i>Diario de Florencia</i>	---	6
<i>La Cruz</i>	Madrid, Spain	5
<i>La Civilización</i>	Madrid, Spain	4
<i>Annales Catholiques</i>	Paris, France	3
<i>L'Echo de Rome</i>	---	3
<i>La Defensa de la Sociedad</i>	Madrid, Spain	3
<i>La Unità Cattolica</i>	Turin, Italy	3
<i>La Voce della Verità</i>	Modena, Italy	3
<i>La Voz de Cuba</i>	Havana, Cuba	3
<i>Le Bien Public</i>	Dijon, France	2
<i>La Civiltà Cattolica</i>	Rome, Italy	2

<i>Gaceta de Spencer</i>	---	2
<i>Le Temps</i>	Paris, France	2
<i>L'Univers</i>	Paris, France	2
<i>Annales de Notre Dame du Sacre-Coeur</i>	Paris, France	1
<i>Anales Religiosos de Orléans</i>	Orléans, France	1
<i>La Bandera Española</i>	Santiago, Cuba	1
<i>The Church Herald</i>	England	1
<i>The Contemporary Review</i>	London, England	1
<i>Le Courrier de la Meuse</i>	Maastricht, Netherlands	1
<i>The Daily News</i>	London, England	1
<i>Diario de Barcelona</i>	Barcelona, Spain	1
<i>Diario de Ginebra</i>	Geneva, Switzerland	1
<i>La Época</i>	Madrid, Spain	1
<i>La España Católica</i>	Madrid, Spain	1
<i>La Familia</i>	Havana, Cuba	1
<i>Le Figaro</i>	Paris, France	1
<i>Le Français</i>	---	1
<i>Gaceta Nacional</i>	Germany	1
<i>La Germania</i>	---	1
<i>The Hour</i>	England	1
<i>La Iglesia Libre</i>	Oran, Algeria	1
<i>La Ilustración Americana y Española</i>	Madrid, Spain	1
<i>El Imparcial</i>	Madrid, Spain	1
<i>La Independencia Belga</i>	---	1
<i>Juan Palomo</i>	Havana, Cuba	1
<i>La Liberté</i>	Freiburg, Germany	1
<i>El Mensajero</i>	---	1
<i>Le Messenger du Coeur de Jésus</i>	Paris, France	1
<i>Misiones Católicas</i>	---	1
<i>El Moro Muza</i>	Havana, Cuba	1
<i>El Norte</i>	London, England	1
<i>L'Osservatore Romano</i>	Rome, Italy	1
<i>Le Pelerin</i>	Paris, France	1
<i>Revista de Barcelona</i>	Barcelona, Spain	1
<i>Revista de Edimburgo</i>	Edinburgh, Scotland	1
<i>Revista Europea</i>	Madrid, Spain	1

<i>Revue du Monde Catholique</i>	Paris, France	1
<i>Revista Popular</i>	Barcelona, Spain	1
<i>Revue Scientifique</i>	Paris, France	1
<i>La Semana Católica</i>	---	1
<i>La Sombra</i>	Havana, Cuba	1
<i>The Standard</i>	London, England	1
<i>Télégraphe</i>	Lyon, France	1
<i>The Times</i>	London, England	1
<i>El Trabajo</i>	Havana, Cuba	1
<i>The Tribune</i>	New York, USA	1
<i>Vaterland</i>	Vienna, Austria	1
<i>La Verdad</i>	San Salvador, El Salvador	1

Source: *Revista Católica*, 1874.

## Chapter 3

### For the Suppression of Excess:

#### Censorship and Persecution of the Press in Santiago de Cuba

On the night of July 27, 1883, Santiago de Cuba was kept awake as a crowd of over two-hundred residents broke out in a riot that would last past midnight and end with the sacking of a local convent. The riot, and the ensuing scandal, would shape public discussion in the coming months.

This chapter traces the immediate aftermath of that riot, which was picked up—and apart—in the local press, denounced to the Governor General, the Spanish Minister of Justice (*Gracia y Justicia*), and the Spanish Papal Nuncio, and elicited a set of lawsuits in local tribunals, prompted by the Archbishop of Santiago, who sought retribution for damages incurred and a resolution to the persistent problem of a press that—in his mind—endeavored to create havoc for the Catholic Church and the Spanish Empire.<sup>306</sup> It considers these actions within the fragile peace established after the end of the Ten Years' War (1868-1878) and the subsequent Guerra Chiquita (1879-1880), when it seemed like another separatist rebellion was just around the corner, the Cuban Church lacked the resources and the human capital to contain it, and the global Catholic Church faced an onslaught of its own amid rising secularism and liberal governments that sought to diminish its power. In so doing, the chapter argues that the archbishop used censorship as a tool to intimidate detractors among his archdiocese and a panic-

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<sup>306</sup> Terms translated from Spanish: Respectively, *Fiscal de Juzgado de Primera Instancia del Distrito Sur* and *Juez del Distrito Sur*.

ridden discourse—in private letters to higher officials and public missives read aloud during mass—to recruit its recipients in his fight against the enemies of Catholicism.

The disruptive nature of the riot, the chapter demonstrates, prompted the more diligent prosecution of publications that spoke ill of the Church, and in so doing, makes manifest the amicable relationship between the archbishop and court officials that made this censorship possible. The chapter further suggests how the alarmist language in which the archbishop framed the riot and its ramifications—tinged with references to an uncertain future and the need to submit oneself to ecclesiastical authority, lest dreadful consequences follow—was used to seek intervention that would punish those that were harming the archdiocese and prevent the faithful from becoming contaminated with the destructive ideas being broadcast in the press.<sup>307</sup> In this manner, it showcases both the fears and anxieties that defined the period, and the limitations placed on an incipient public sphere through the belligerence of local clergy. Though the latter is a fight the Church would eventually lose, with the growth and triumph of a more secular public sphere and attending civil society in Cuba and Latin America, the chapter offers a snapshot of the challenges faced to attain this.<sup>308</sup> The chapter thus represents a contribution to the scholarship

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<sup>307</sup> Comparable cases can be found in the literature that focuses on the use of fear in political and religious discourse, and that which explores the role of priests—as commanders of the spoken word in largely illiterate societies—as mediators between citizens and their government. On the use of fear in sermons to contain the movement for independence in 1820s Mexico, see: Matthew O’ Hara, “Anxiety, the Future, and Mexican Independence,” in *Emotions and Daily Life in Colonial Mexico*, eds. Javier Villa-Flores and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014), 198-220. On the power of the pulpit to galvanize audiences into a sense of nation around Catholicism in 1850s Guatemala see: Douglass Sullivan-González, “The Power of the Pulpit in Nineteenth-Century Guatemala,” in *The Power of the Word: Press and Oratory in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*, ed. Iván Jaksic (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2002), 86-109. A similar case can likewise be found in the making of republican Argentina, where priests served the inverse role of supporting the war for independence from Spain and legitimizing political change. See: Roberto Di Stefano, *El púlpito y la plaza: Clero, sociedad y política, de la monarquía católica a la república rosista* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores, 2004).

<sup>308</sup> On the growth of the public sphere and coinciding civil society throughout Latin America, see: Carlos Forment, *Democracy in Latin America, 1790-1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). See also: François-Xavier Guerra, and Annick Lempérière, eds., *Los espacios públicos en Iberoamérica: ambigüedades y problemas, siglos XVIII-XIX* (San Diego: Fondo de Cultura Económica USA, 1998).

that studies the development of the public sphere in the island, which tends to focus on the concurrent rise in associationism and expansion of the press during this time period, without considering the role of the Church—and of ecclesiastical authorities—in its configuration.<sup>309</sup>

Through its examination of this particular instance in the life of Santiago de Cuba, the chapter altogether stands as a history of the counterinsurgency against iconoclasm and the threat of separatism, representing the first time the Archdiocese of Santiago retaliated with political action against those it deemed hostile to ecclesiastical and national interests in what, until that moment, had been waged as a discursive war that concentrated on fostering the readership and creation of good, Catholic publications among the laity.<sup>310</sup>

To do so, the chapter largely concentrates on the brief period between the breakout of the scandal in July 1883 and May 1884, when the Archbishop of Santiago received a letter from the Papal Nuncio congratulating him on his efforts to contain the advances of those that had set the scandal in motion, with the required context filled in throughout the text. The chapter also follows a narrative structure, presenting the events as they were experienced by the archbishop, through the letters he sent and the speeches he printed, which represent the available sources on the incident and its fallout.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> On the general expansion of civil society in Cuba, see: Louis A. Pérez, *Intimations of Modernity: Civil Culture in Nineteenth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017). See also: María del Carmen Barcia, *Capas populares y modernidad en Cuba, 1878-1930* (La Habana: Fundación Fernando Ortiz, 2005). On the expansion of the press and civil society after the end of the Ten Years' War, see: Alfonso W. Quiroz, "Free Association and Civil Society in Cuba, 1787-1895," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 43, no. 1 (February 2011): 33-64. On the press alone, see: Juan José Sánchez Baena, *El terror de los tiranos: La imprenta en la centuria que cambió Cuba (1763-1868)* (Castelló de la Plana: Publicacions de la Universitat Jaume I, 2009). See also: Alain Basail Rodríguez, *El lápiz rojo: Prensa, censura e identidad cubana (1878-1895)* (La Habana: Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Cultura Juan Marinello, 2004).

<sup>310</sup> See previous chapter.

<sup>311</sup> Excepting Emilio Bacardí Moreau's *Crónicas de Santiago de Cuba*, where the aficionado historian at times copied entire press articles, examples for the nineteenth-century Santiago-based press are largely unavailable. There are scarce examples in Havana or Santiago for them, with the Biblioteca Nacional de Cuba holding mostly a collection of Havana-based papers, and the two Santiago periodicals archives—in the Biblioteca Elvira Cape and the

### 3.1 A Scandal at the Convent

It was seven o'clock in the evening when a nun at the Convento de las Hermanas de la Enseñanza began to shout, denouncing to all within hearing distance how her sister nuns had starved her for the past five days. Her accusations soon drew a crowd outside the convent, and as the shouting escalated, the audience swelled with scandalized civilians, who added to her clamor with their own calls for the death of the supervising priests and menaces to tear down the convent walls to rescue the starving nun. Over two-hundred of them were present when, two hours later, the governor for the Archdiocese of Santiago and its ecclesiastical judge, along with the acting mayor, three journalists, and a doctor, entered the convent to investigate the alleged misconduct, in name of their corresponding ecclesiastical and civil interests.

Once located, however, the nun assured the unbelieving doctor in charge of examining her that it had all been a misunderstanding. She suffered from a nervous disposition, which had become aggravated due to the weakness she felt at having missed her meals the day before, after a small conflict with her sisters. The neighborhood had heard her wrong. She insisted upon her wellbeing and turned down repeated offers from the present civilian representatives to be housed in secular lodgings while arrangements to reunite her with relatives were settled.

The civil representatives' concern was to be expected. This was not the first time the inhabitants of Santiago had encountered cries for help coming from the Convento de las Hermanas de la Enseñanza. In April 1882, worried family members had written to the Governor General in Havana for intervention on behalf of their respective daughters and nieces, who had

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Archivo del Museo Emilio Bacardí—holding only a handful of titles that do not cover the years studied in this chapter. Most press sources used here come from numbers or articles that were included in the archbishop's correspondence with higher officials.

taken vows with the order and now wished to abandon them, but feared that without his protection, their request would be denied and themselves punished.<sup>312</sup> Through their emissaries, the nuns cited verbal abuse and varied mistreatment that included the routine confinement of those who were thought to transgress. Abuses at the convent were also common knowledge, as one mother added in her appeal, including a press clipping relating how one of these instances of confinement had at least once before resulted in a “public and notorious” shouting episode, in which the captive nun had tried to recruit passersby to come to her aid.<sup>313</sup> As the Archbishop of Santiago would later explain in a letter to the Spanish Papal Nuncio, this had been one amongst a series of similar disturbances that took place at the convent between March and September 1882, memories of which would have been present among the attending civilians and those standing vigil outside the convent, as another nun claimed she was being starved.<sup>314</sup>

Thus, when the report on her condition reached them, the crowd turned angrier, in appall and disbelief. In their view, the victim had been knocked out, dragged, and hidden in the garden, which had gone unregistered. This was a cover-up from the civil and ecclesiastical authorities. The now violent mob began to throw rocks at the gathered police officers—who had shown up in the interim to control the crowd—and decided to storm the building. Pushing through the entrance, the crowd came in armed with rods and machetes, ransacking the convent, and

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<sup>312</sup> There are at least two petitions for intervention addressed to the Gobernador General and later remitted to the Minister of Justice archived in the Archivo Histórico Nacional de España. See: Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN), *Ultramar, Gracia y Justicia*, Legajo 1794, Expediente 29, Expediente 81.

<sup>313</sup> The press clipping came from Santiago-based *El Eco de Cuba* (“según se comprueba en el suelto publicado en el número 71 del mes de marzo del corriente año de *El Eco de Cuba*, periódico que ve la luz en esta localidad...”), mentioned in the letter, but apparently lost in transit, as the minister himself laments its absence in a note he made to the letter. See: AHN, *Ultramar, Gracia y Justicia*, Legajo 1794, Expediente 29.

<sup>314</sup> José María Martín de Herrera, *José María Martín de Herrera to Mariano Rampolla del Tindaro*. Letter. Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV), *Nunziatura di Madrid*, Box 549, Titolo X, Rubrica II, No. 9.

cornering the scared inhabitants in the chorus with their demands for the restitution of the real nun.

The brigadier general, Emilio March García, had been at the Club San Carlos when the shouting first started, and remained there as the disturbance continued to escalate.<sup>315</sup> It was only when the rioters decided to take the building that he interrupted his social gathering and resolved to send in police reinforcements. The siege ended with their arrival six hours after the turmoil first started. After the fact, the archdiocese counted damages numbering \$300 in Spanish gold coin, two nuns left the order to rejoin secular society, and at least 13 civilians were arrested as rabble-rousers, among them, one of the journalists present in the official investigation.<sup>316</sup>

The scandal would be followed with attacks against the convent and the church in the secular press, a drawn-out trail of correspondence between the archbishop and the civil officials whose intercession he sought, and an attempt at retaliation against the press that would involve the pulpit and local tribunals. The ongoing conflict would also make manifest for the archbishop the precarious situation in which the Catholic Church found itself, amid separatist struggle and the growing influence of liberal and reformist ideas that threatened to undermine the institution, that would see the him depend on intimidation tactics to keep the faithful from becoming contaminated with the destructive beliefs.

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<sup>315</sup> According to María Teresa Fleitas Monnar, the Club San Carlos was the leading social and cultural center of the Santiago upper classes. See: María Teresa Fleitas Monnar, “Vida cotidiana en Santiago de Cuba entre dos siglos (XIX y XX),” *Anales del Museo de América* XVII (2009): 150.

<sup>316</sup> The journalist arrested was the director for *La Fisga*. To my knowledge, no examples survive for this journal. All material used to narrate the scandal at the convent comes from the July 28, 1883 article of *El Derecho* reproduced in *Crónicas de Santiago de Cuba* and a report from the Archbishop to the Governor General that was later sent to the Minister of Justice and the Papal Nuncio. See: Emilio Bacardí Moreau, *Crónicas de Santiago de Cuba*, Vol. 7 (Santiago de Cuba: Tipografía Arroyo Hermanos, 1925), 51-58. See also: José María Martín de Herrera, *José María Martín de Herrera to Ignacio María del Castillo*. Letter. AHN, *Ultramar*, Legajo 1836, Expediente 13.

### 3.2 Misrepresentations of the Truth: The Archbishop Against the Press

The morning after the riot, the scandal was recounted in *El Derecho*, a local journal reporting on politics, business and literature, which had been founded that past June.<sup>317</sup> Speaking on his and the rioters' behalf, Francisco Serret, *El Derecho*'s founder, who was among the journalists present to cover the authorities' official inspection into the convent and the disturbance that followed, justified the riot as a "generous impulse." When the corresponding judge was first sought to order an investigation into the nun's allegations, Serret informed, he dismissed what was deemed by the reporting civilians as a crime, and relegated the task to the archdiocese's judicial vicar (*provisor*). This was a crime itself, he continued "as we understand that all crimes should be tried under civil law." The judge's decision resounded with the intense anticlericalism of the liberal minded reformers which Serret belonged to, who coveted, among other changes, to weaken the traditional privileges of the Catholic Church and its influence over public life.<sup>318</sup> Under these circumstances, the storming of the convent became a forceful show of the "people's sovereignty," unwilling to let an institution that behaved like "an inquisition" avoid consequence for this kind of abuse. The chronicle in *El Derecho* ended with a call for action from civil officials, and a word of advice to the presiding archbishop: the convent, which had

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<sup>317</sup> Emilio Bacardí Moreau, *Crónicas de Santiago de Cuba*, Vol. 7 (Santiago de Cuba: Tipografía Arroyo Hermanos, 1925), 63, 148. See also: Virginia B. Suárez Piña and Graciela Durán Rodríguez, "Los periódicos en Santiago de Cuba en el siglo XIX: reflexiones sobre su importancia patrimonial," *Santiago, Especial VLIR* (2016): 119.

<sup>318</sup> For a general overview of liberalism across the Spanish Empire and its relationship to the Church during this period, see: Luis Martínez-Fernández, *Protestantism and Political Conflict in the Nineteenth-Century Hispanic Caribbean* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 75-90. See also: Luis Miguel García Mora, "La fuerza de la palabra. El autonomismo en Cuba en el último tercio del siglo XIX," *Revista de Indias* LXI, no. 223 (2001): 715-748. In 1886, Francisco Serret went on to become part of the Junta Provincial of the Partido Autonomista in Santiago. See: Bacardí Moreau, *Crónicas*, 7: 148. Serret was also the founder of the Spiritist journal, *Revista de Estudios Psicológicos*. See: Bacardí Moreau, *Crónicas*, 7: 19.

“lost all moral force amongst the populace” should be closed. Should it remain open, he suggested, it would give rise to similar upheavals in the future.<sup>319</sup>

To the press, this was a matter of public indignity against clerical abuse. It was also a matter of long-held ecclesiastical prerogative over the rights of the individual, evident as the civil judge had made it in his dismissal of the initial reports, and whose denunciation had become possible with the 1881 passing of the 1879 Spanish Ley de Imprenta in the Antilles. The 1879 legislation made it a criminal offense to speak ill of the Catholic Church and its hierarchy, but it removed the previous inspection (*censura previa*) mandate to which all publications were subject before going to print, until then required under the reigning 1834 censorship laws. The measure led to a growth in publications across the island, with newspapers like *El Derecho* counting themselves among the newcomers. As the chronicle recounted above implies, the significant change likewise led to a bolder press that was not inclined to let the wrongs committed that night go unrecorded.<sup>320</sup>

To the Archbishop of Santiago, José María Martín de Herrera, this was a matter of public disorder and threatened privilege. Not without precedent did he expect similar events to happen, steadfast in his belief that the riot had been a Freemason plot to discredit the Church and spearhead a separatist rebellion. It is unclear whether Francisco Serret was, indeed, a Freemason. He was, however, a Spiritist, founder and editor of the local Spiritist journal, the *Revista de estudios psicológicos*. He was also a liberal who would go on to advocate for Cuban

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<sup>319</sup> For all quotes from *El Derecho*, see: Bacardí Moreau, *Crónicas*, 7: 51-58.

<sup>320</sup> On the change in censorship laws, see: Inés Roldán de Montaud. “La política española en Cuba: una década de cambios (1876-1886),” *Ayer*, no. 52, La política en el reinado de Alfonso XII (2003): 194-195. See also: Alain Basail Rodríguez, *El lápiz rojo: prensa, censura e identidad cubana (1878-1895)* (La Habana: Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Cultura Cubana Juan Marinello, 2004), 65-66, 90. On the 1834 Real Orden regarding *censura previa*, see: “Reglamento para la censura de los periódicos,” *Gaceta de Madrid*, June 5, 1834. On the 1879 Ley de Imprenta, see: “Ley de Imprenta para la Isla de Cuba,” *Gaceta de La Habana*, May 3, 1881.

autonomism.<sup>321</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2, fanatical priests and laymen often merged the two affiliations, which were not incompatible. As historian Lisa Abend points out, moreover, “the connections between different strands of heterodoxy” were not lost on ecclesiastics.<sup>322</sup> That a Spiritist journalist and not a Freemason had been the first to celebrate the riot did nothing to change Martín de Herrera’s perception.

In a letter addressed to the Governor General in Havana and copied to the Minister of Justice and the Papal Nuncio in Madrid, dated September 3<sup>rd</sup>, Martín de Herrera explained that the year prior—in September 1882—five nuns had been expelled from the order, after the election of a new abbess whom the nuns did not agree with, putting an end to the disturbances that had begun that March, for which the archbishop gave them partial credit. Three of the expelled nuns were relatives from Catalonia—two sisters and their niece—who had been left penniless after their forced secularization and unable to get back to Spain. In May, he went on to elucidate, the archbishopric received a letter from their nephew and cousin, asking the archdiocese to pay for their return passage, to which the archdiocese did not respond. In June, another relative living in Havana and a friend, whom Martín de Herrera identified as a known Freemason “with ties to a Mexican lodge,” traveled to Santiago to petition again on the nuns’ behalf, this time, asking the archdiocese to begin a donation campaign to help cover their travel expenses. The archdiocese refused their request, wherein the relative and his friend left, intimating “fatal and transcendent results.”<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> Bacardí Moreau, *Crónicas*, 7: 19, 148.

<sup>322</sup> Lisa Abend, “Specters of the Secular: Spiritism in Nineteenth-century Spain,” *European History Quarterly*, no.4 (2004): 517.

<sup>323</sup> The full report enclosed with the September letter is dated August 24, 1883. See: Martín de Herrera, *José María Martín de Herrera to Ignacio María del Castillo*.

In an additional note enclosed with his report to the Papal Nuncio, the archbishop added that the Catalan nuns assured those left behind at the convent that their freedom would come, too, having implied that the Freemasons would back them in their attempt at retaliation. Another pair of Cuban nuns, the past prioress and her sub-prioress, who were now asking to be secularized—and those to whom the archbishop assigned the remaining fault over the 1882 disturbances—had likewise implied the same, he continued, threatening to set the convent on fire with help from the Freemasons in their quest to leave. Linking the mounting threats to the July 27 riot, the archbishop indicated how, had it not been for the fact that a merchant refused to sell fuel to the Catalan nuns' relative and his friend, the convent would have burned down that night. Not only had the Freemasons aided them in their efforts, but it was also them whom he faulted with waging the war against the clergy, nuns, and the Catholic Church then sustained in the press, adding—to the Nuncio alone—how he feared that the sect had insinuated itself into all branches of civil government. Nevertheless, he told the Nuncio, God had inspired him to seek amends, sure that truth and justice would follow.

As Martín de Herrera told it, it was evident that the nuns' relatives had collaborated with local Freemasons—and their publications, which he credited with fostering a sentiment of hatred among the people—to convene the violence on July 27.<sup>324</sup> He pleaded with the civil authorities for justice. The nuns had been harassed and their seclusion vows violated, the orchestrating relatives had fled without being questioned, the arrested civilians had been freed, and no one would be made to answer for the spiritual and material damages caused that night. He appealed

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<sup>324</sup> Martín de Herrera, *José María Martín de Herrera to Ignacio María del Castillo*: "...a los que fácil les fue preparar los ánimos para el escándalo sucedido, puestos sin duda alguna en combinación con sus correligionarios, [...] así como de la consigna y tenaz insistencia de cierta clase y parte de la prensa en propagar mentiras, calumnias, exagerar y desfigurar los hechos, contra toda verdad y justicia."

to their sensibilities with a hagiographical tale about a group of nuns who had stood together and renewed their vows when faced with death, the victims of an “illegal sect” intent on breaking down law and order, and reminded the Governor General and the Minister of Justice to fulfil their duties in guaranteeing public peace, repressing the unlawful behavior and “excesses of certain sectors of the press,” and restoring “the principle of authority” that had been broken.<sup>325</sup>

Martín de Herrera presided over the Archdiocese of Santiago de Cuba during a tumultuous time. He had begun his tenure as Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba and Metropolitan—or head—of the overseas ecclesiastical province comprised of the Santiago, Havana and Puerto Rico episcopal seats, in 1875.<sup>326</sup> Born in Spain, he had been raised in a prosperous family with influential ties. At the time of his appointment, his older brother, Cristóbal, was serving as the Minister of Development (*Fomento*), and he was the one who first nominated him for the vacant position in Santiago.<sup>327</sup> Four years into his term as archbishop, in 1879, he was elected to serve as *Senador del Reino* in the Spanish Parliament, where he acted as a representative, both for his ecclesiastical province and the Catholic Church, chosen to do so by the prelates and clergy under his charge.<sup>328</sup> He managed the dual roles of senator and archbishop,

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<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

<sup>326</sup> Monseñor Ramón Suárez Polcari, *Historia de la Iglesia Católica en Cuba*, Vol. 2 (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 2003), 27-38.

<sup>327</sup> Cristóbal was soon after promoted to Minister of Justice. He died while holding the position in 1878. See: Inés Roldán de Montaud, “Cristóbal Martín de Herrera,” Real Academia de la Historia, <http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/16223/cristobal-martin-de-herrera>, accessed on October 1, 2019.

<sup>328</sup> According to the 1876 Spanish Constitution, senators were elected from the most influential state institutions, among which the Catholic Church was present. The election of prelates, however, was largely “symbolic,” and when they interjected, they did so mostly when it came to matters of the Church. See: Miguel Ángel Hernández Fuentes, *En defensa de los sagrados intereses: Historia religiosa de la diócesis de Zamora durante la restauración (1875-1914)* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2016), 162-163.

dividing his time between Madrid and Santiago, until 1889, when he was transferred to preside over the Archdiocese of Santiago de Compostela, in Galicia.<sup>329</sup> He was used to power and speaking to power, and was intimately linked with the Spanish administration. He was an ultramontane conservative with a large stake in maintaining Cuba and Puerto Rico's union with Spain and the predominance of the Catholic Church, both in Spanish political life and in the world stage, as other doctrines and religions continued to gain a foothold in former Catholic countries and the alternate nature of the Spanish Parliament challenged the standing of the Church.

The scandal had been the latest strenuous situation among a series of troublesome developments that had affected the Antilles' episcopate since Martín de Herrera arrived in Cuba. The outbreak of the Ten Years' War in 1868, seven years prior to his arrival, had thrown the island's economy into a depression that hit the eastern provinces around Santiago—where the fighting concentrated—especially hard. Sugar, tobacco, and coffee plantations were either ruined in the conflict, or fallen victim to creditors and the high taxes imposed by Spain to recuperate the financial losses it had incurred in its battle against the insurgents.<sup>330</sup> Various rural parishes likewise became collateral damage of war, interchangeably occupied—or razed—by Cuban rebels and Spanish troops.<sup>331</sup> It was in this context, moreover, that the cult of the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre, which the Church in Santiago had long wrestled to bring into its fold, was

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<sup>329</sup> Rigoberto Segreo Ricardo, *Iglesia y Nación en Cuba (1868-1898)* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 2010), 262. See also: Vicente Cárcel Ortí, "José María Martín de Herrera," Real Academia de la Historia, <http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/22926/jose-maria-martin-de-herrera-y-de-la-iglesia>, accessed on October 1, 2019.

<sup>330</sup> Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba Between Reform and Revolution*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 101-103.

<sup>331</sup> Suárez Polcari, *Historia de la Iglesia*, 2: 37.

being co-opted by separatist rebels as the emblem of an incipient Cuban nationalism.<sup>332</sup> The need for priests to tend to the resulting indigent, repopulate displaced rural parishes, keep the peace amid the present social, political, and economic unrest, and control the spread of such popular devotions, was urgent.<sup>333</sup> The church, however, was not in a position to look after the faithful. The colonial church, which had dealt with continuous financial hardship, along with the challenge of attracting and forming sufficient priests, before the war, now faced even more trouble to fill its coffers and ecclesiastical ranks.<sup>334</sup>

In Spain, the conservative Catholic government of Queen Isabella II had been toppled in a liberal coup just weeks before the outbreak of war in Cuba.<sup>335</sup> Following the takeover, the incumbent administration set to slashing funding for the Church and getting rid of the privileges that the conservative reign had signed into law in its 1851 Concordat with the Vatican.<sup>336</sup> Among other concessions, the Concordat recognized Catholicism as the religion of the State, guaranteed religious instruction in private and public teaching institutions, and pledged that “under no

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<sup>332</sup> Jalane D. Schmidt, *Cachita's Streets: The Virgin of Charity, Race, and Revolution in Cuba* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 55-58.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid, 30. For more information on the hardships of war among the general population, see also: María Teresa Fleitas Monnar, “Vida cotidiana en Santiago de Cuba entre dos siglos (XIX y XX),” *Anales del Museo de América* XVII (2009): 142-152.

<sup>334</sup> For a general panorama of the archdiocese from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, see: Segreo Ricardo, *Iglesia y Nación*, 259-261.

<sup>335</sup> For more, see: María Victoria López Cordón, *Revolución de 1868 y la I República* (Madrid: Siglo XXI de España Editores, 1976).

<sup>336</sup> After a series of liberal-lead *desamortizaciones*—or the forced secularization and eventual sale of Church properties—in Spain during the 1830s and 1840s, and amid a wave of secularization in Europe and Latin America, the Spanish government under Isabella II stood as one of the last defenders of the Catholic Church's traditional privileges. The 1851 Concordat negotiated with the Vatican won back many of the lost privileges and properties that the Spanish Church had lost in the previous decades and upheld Catholicism as the sole religion of the state. For a more thorough discussion of the 1851 Concordat, see: José Luis Comellas, *Los moderados en el poder, 1844-1854* (Madrid: Escuela de Historia Moderna, 1970), 297-301. On cutting funding for the Church, see: Martínez-Fernández, *Protestantism and Political Change*, 76.

circumstance” would prelates be impeded in the completion of their duties, having “full rein” to exercise their authority in matters concerning faith. As protested by the Spanish clergy, the liberal regime suppressed all this when it declared freedom of religion, expression, association, and instruction, in its 1869 Constitution.<sup>337</sup> Although the conservative Bourbon monarchy to which Isabella belonged gained back control of the throne in 1874, the Spanish episcopate was on high alert. The heralding of a new constitution in 1876 to replace the progressive Constitution of 1869 confirmed the priesthood’s anxieties: although it recognized Catholicism as the official religion and dissolved the previously established freedom of religion, it upheld religious tolerance, allowing other religions to coexist alongside Catholicism, sans the public shows of worship that had been permitted before, a privilege it reserved for Catholics. The 1876 Constitution also maintained the antecedent freedom of expression and association, yet Spanish ecclesiastics latched on to the small religious concession, seeing in it the imminent dissolution of the State and the Catholic Church. Prelates did not want to contend with the host of other religions and ideologies at that time making inroads in the countries where freedom of religion had been decreed, with Protestantism, Freemasonry, and Spiritism, as the most prominent among them.<sup>338</sup>

Under these circumstances, Archbishop Martín de Herrera and his prelates—the Bishop of Havana and the Bishop of Puerto Rico—wrote a long and tense dissent letter to the new King Alfonso XII in March 1876, some months before the proposed constitution was to go into effect.

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<sup>337</sup> Priest and lawyer José Antonio Ortiz Urruela details all this in his incandescent protest against the coup and the new regime’s actions against the Church. See: José Antonio Ortiz Urruela, *La Iglesia Católica y la revolución de septiembre en España* (Madrid: Librería de Tejado, 1869), 49-52.

<sup>338</sup> In fact, several Protestant congregations had established themselves in Spain after the allowances of the 1869 Constitution. See: Martínez-Fernández, *Protestantism and Political Change*, 76.

Suiting their demands to the Antilles, where, “at the expense of so much sacrifice the Spanish flag yet waved,” the prelates used the threat of ever-present political unrest in the overseas colonies—as separatist insurgents were fought in Cuba—to prevent the Spanish government from approving a constitution that breached the fundamental tenets outlined in the 1851 Concordat. The prelates demanded back the freedom to fulfill their spiritual responsibilities unimpeded, the return of religious instruction throughout the empire, and the guarantee that Catholic celebrations would be carried out in their “full splendor.” Dissociating themselves from the rule of God, as they interpreted the granting of religious tolerance to do, would bring about disastrous—and warranted—results. The prelates advocated for the construction of “a dam” against the enemies of the Church, whom they claimed:

...availed by that which the law has stopped considering a crime, will dedicate themselves to continuous works of anti-Catholic propaganda, provoke ill-temper, unsettle minds, and become a constant obstacle to the duties of the clergy, without the ecclesiastical authority being able to recur to the civil authority for the repression of such excess.<sup>339</sup>

To conclude their foreboding and supplicant lines, Archbishop Martín de Herrera and his diocesans reminded the King that the above contained all the more weight when applied to Cuba and Puerto Rico, who would either be Catholic and Spanish or lost forever.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> “Exposición a Su Majestad el Rey del Episcopado de la Provincia Eclesiástica de Santiago de Cuba pidiendo la conservación de la unidad católica en la península y sus dominios de ultramar,” *Boletín Eclesiástico de Santiago de Cuba*, no. 6 (XII): 7.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid*, 8: “...donde no hay más remedio para nuestra patria que, o ser sinceramente católica en su legislación, o renunciar a sus dominios de Cuba y Puerto Rico.” A manuscript version of this letter is also available at the

The constitution passed in the Spanish Parliament that June, as it stood at the time of the prelates' protest. Although it would not be applied in full in the colonies until 1881—as their political life had come to a halt during the ongoing fight for Cuban independence, being ruled through their respective governors' emergency powers (*facultades omnímodas*)—certain concessions were made to appease them in the interim years.<sup>341</sup> In 1878, following the official end of the Ten Years' War, the creation of political parties was permitted in Cuba. In Cuba, this led to the formation of the Partido Liberal Autonomista, whose members shied away from the question of independence, but who advocated home rule, representation in the Spanish Parliament, and overall looser restrictions on the island. Though this was soon countered with the creation of the pro-Spanish Partido Unión Constitucional, the political scene remained fraught.<sup>342</sup> Considering it was clear to Martín de Herrera that anything less than the iron fist of Spain over its colonies would mean disaster for Catholicism and the empire, the allowance of political parties, along with the eventual application of the 1876 Constitution and its attending Ley de Imprenta, must have proved prescient for the archbishop—a sentiment that would be further confirmed by events closer to home.

In November 1882, the archbishop took to the *Boletín Eclesiástico*—the official publication for the archdiocese and the channel used to communicate with priests throughout the province—to publicize an excommunication decree against Emilio Fuentes Betancourt. Fuentes Betancourt, an ordained Catholic priest from Puerto Príncipe, who had been exiled in Peru for

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archbishopric archives in San Juan, Puerto Rico. See: Archivo Histórico Arquidiocesano (AHA), *Correspondencia al Obispo*, Caja G-16, Sin Legajo.

<sup>341</sup> María Núñez Martínez, “Las cartas autonómicas de Cuba y Puerto Rico: Primer antecedente del estado autonómico,” *Teoría y Realidad Constitucional*, no. 25 (2010): 349.

<sup>342</sup> On the new Cuban political parties, see: Pérez, *Cuba Between Reform and Revolution*, 108-110.

his pro-independence views since 1877, had sent a letter to the archbishopric announcing his defection from Catholicism for a Methodist congregation in Mexico in late 1881.<sup>343</sup> The archdiocese governor had responded to the errant priest expressing hope that he would one day find it in his heart to return to the hearth of Catholicism, notwithstanding his lack of surprise at having received news of his desertion, he said, for he had been told that Fuentes Betancourt had joined a masonic lodge some time past. To this, the now married Methodist minister replied with confirmation that he had become a Freemason, along with a reiteration that he would not be returning to the Catholic Church. Taking this to be the final word on the matter, Archbishop Martín de Herrera had no other choice but to follow through with his “obligation to repress and punish [...] all manner of heresies,” and declare him excommunicated from the faith, proceeding to make it known to all within his ecclesiastical province, diocesans and priests across Mexico, the Spanish episcopate, and the Papal Nuncio.<sup>344</sup>

Following the excommunication decree, the Santiago archdiocese would face another loss in the form of a Real Orden, this time, handed down from the peninsular government. The decree, published in the official *Gaceta de la Habana* on July 21, 1883, prohibited funeral vigils where the deceased lied in the room—or *exequias de cuerpo presente*—in Cuba and Puerto Rico. The same had been adopted as a public health measure in Spain a decade before, and according to the authorities, it was past due that it be applied in the Antilles, where the tropical climate made this a matter of graver sanitary concern. The text that accompanied the announcement took

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<sup>343</sup> On Fuentes Betancourt, see: Jean Pierre-Bastian. “Emancipación política de 1898 e influencia del protestantismo en Cuba y Puerto Rico.” *Anuario de la Historia de la Iglesia* no. 7 (1998): 147.

<sup>344</sup> As it stood on the excommunication decree, the mandate was likely circulated via correspondence to those named. See: José María Martín de Herrera, *José María Martín de Herrera to Mariano Rampolla del Tindaro*. Letter. ASV, *Nunziatura di Madrid*, Box 549, Titolo X, Rubrica II, No. 1.

the likelihood of objections into account, and made it explicit that “the prohibition should in no manner affect nor debilitate religious sentiment” across the colonies, considering that it had not done so in the metropole.<sup>345</sup> Yet the archbishop pushed back against the measure all the same. The decree, he complained to the Governor General and the Minister of Justice, had been pounced on by that portion of the press that had throughout the past month been working to “declare triumphant the godless, savage, and separatist revolution against Catholic Spain,” spreading misinformation among the public to advance their cause. Archbishop Martín de Herrera claimed that their writings on the decree had not just lead the public to believe that funerals had been outlawed altogether, but also that all burials, baptisms, and matrimonyes were now civil matters.<sup>346</sup> As a first instance, this represented the loss of a traditional prerogative for the Church. On second instance, this was the privation of much needed revenue for the impoverished overseas church, and a callback to the period under the 1869 Constitution, when civil marriage was legalized and canonical marriage briefly declared invalid.<sup>347</sup> That the faithful were willing to go along with the false idea that together with outlawed funerals, these were all now civil concerns—a dismissal of those rites which the Catholic Church professed to be sacred and inviolable—must have also suggested to the archbishop a loss of goodwill and respect among his congregation—an added challenge in a fight that had the hearts and minds of the faithful at stake. Mixed with the secularization of the five nuns in September 1882—two months before the excommunication order against Emilio Fuentes Betancourt was published—the latest

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<sup>345</sup> “Texto de la R.O. que prohíbe exequias de cuerpo presente en las Antillas,” *Gaceta de la Habana*, July 21, 1883.

<sup>346</sup> Martín de Herrera, *José María Martín de Herrera to Ignacio María del Castillo*: “...los enemigos de la Iglesia no solamente reducen los entierros a un acto meramente civil, sino que llegan a negar a los párrocos los derechos que les corresponden por este concepto y aún los de bautismos y matrimonios.”

<sup>347</sup> Martínez-Fernández, *Protestantism and Political Conflict*, 76.

decree and its fallout constituted a series of troubles that had rocked the archdiocese in short succession. It was also under these conditions that the scandal at the convent broke out, the latest of the Freemason “machinations” to come to fruition, as Martín de Herrera saw it.

It was in the same September 3<sup>rd</sup> letter in which he decried the signing of the Real Orden that Martín de Herrera rallied against the affair at the convent. Yet he was not content that one missive would garner the required attention. A September 19<sup>th</sup> letter addressed to the Minister of Justice alone shows the archbishop in a state of continuous agitation. In it, he retold how the liberal press was both behind the pillage at the convent and the persistent confusion over the *exequias de cuerpo presente* decree. The “so called writers” behind these publications, he said, were nothing but “assassins of the honor and prestige with which all authorities in a Catholic and civilized society should operate.” Should nothing be done to contain their pernicious influence, not only would incidents like the riot repeat themselves, but such impunity would also lead to uprisings like those that had happened in the peninsula that same August, where a faction within the armed forces in Badajoz and Seo de Urgel sought to overthrow the regime of Alfonso XII, he reminded the minister, framing the imminent danger in terms he might better understand.<sup>348</sup> The Spanish government should take an interest, he suggested, indignant that it had not yet done so.

To that effect, Martín de Herrera included three numbers from the Santiago-based publication *El Ferrocarril*, an avowed anticlerical newspaper founded back in February, that he took to be representative of the corrupt publications he had recounted above.<sup>349</sup> The “righteous and devout” district judge, he explained, had written him to inform that he had filed a lawsuit

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<sup>348</sup> Eduardo González Calleja, *La razón de la fuerza: Orden público, subversión y violencia política en la España de la Restauración (1875-1917)* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1998): 104-113.

<sup>349</sup> José María Martín de Herrera, *José María Martín de Herrera to Vicente Romero Girón*. Letter. AHN, *Ultramar*, Legajo 1836, Expediente 9.

before the Tribunal de Imprenta against the paper based on two articles from those three numbers, belonging to issues 56 and 58. Though a first lawsuit had been filed some months earlier against the local *Revista de estudios psicológicos*—ran by Francisco Serret of *El Derecho*—for reproducing a text from a Spanish Spiritist magazine that prophesied the disappearance of the Catholic Church with the coming century, the suits against *El Ferrocarril* were among the first in a chain of legal actions to come in defense of the church after the scandal at the convent.<sup>350</sup> The suits—and all those that came after—had been filed under Article 16 of the 1879 Ley de Imprenta, alternating between Clauses 1, 9 and 10.<sup>351</sup> Under the first clause, all written materials found to contain attacks against Christian morals and Catholicism, along with its dogmas, ministers, or cult, were labeled as criminal. Under the ninth clause, texts that defended doctrines that opposed the wellbeing of families and property, that promoted discord among the populace, and that sought to incite class warfare or create coalitions for the same purpose, were likewise punishable. Under the tenth clause, publishing fraudulent news that could jeopardize the public order or damage state interests was also considered an offense.<sup>352</sup>

Although Agustín Gil de Báez, founder and director of *El Ferrocarril*, was among those present to cover the scandal at the convent, whatever articles he wrote on the Hermanas de la Enseñanza in the days after the riot are now lost. Instead, numbers 56 and 58 of his newspaper—

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<sup>350</sup> For the suit against the *Revista de estudios psicológicos*, see: “Sentencia,” *Boletín Oficial del Arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba*, no. 7 (XVII): 101-103.

<sup>351</sup> See: “Sentencia de la Audiencia de Puerto Príncipe contra *La Verdad de Manzanillo*,” *Boletín Oficial del Arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba*, no. 17 (XVII): 277-280. “Sentencia de la Audiencia de Puerto Príncipe contra el periódico titulado *El Ferrocarril* de Santiago de Cuba,” *Boletín Oficial del Arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba*, no. 3 (XVIII): 68-69. “Otra sentencia del mismo tribunal condenando otro número del mismo periódico, *El Ferrocarril*,” *Boletín Oficial del Arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba*, no. 3 (XVIII): 69-70. “Sentencia del Tribunal de Imprenta de la Audiencia de Puerto Príncipe contra el periódico titulado *El Ferrocarril Central* de Santiago de Cuba,” *Boletín Oficial del Arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba*, no. 6 (XVIII): 120-122.

<sup>352</sup> “Ley de Imprenta para la Isla de Cuba,” *Gaceta de la Habana*, May 3, 1881.

corresponding to September 9 and September 16, 1883—reported on the finances and perceived corruption within the archdiocese. Reminiscent of the public embracing the news that burials, baptisms, and matrimonies were now secular, in them, Gil de Báez appealed to the anticlericalism that sustained these ideas, with objections over the mishandling of church funds and untenable sacrament fees—an example of the kind of topics then covered in local print, and of the kind of writing that the archbishop, and the Tribunal de Imprenta, alongside him—were unwilling to tolerate.

In what Gil de Báez characterized as a “zeal for wealth-accumulation” that should “disgust all those who called themselves good Catholics,” his editorial for September 9 notified the public that Archbishop Martín de Herrera had received a raise of 2,000 pesos at the same time that he reduced stipends for parish priests and allocated himself the remainder: a “lamentable fact,” and a cause for protest among the populace, he suggested, as it was from their pockets that the archbishop derived his income.<sup>353</sup> This was one more sign of the corruption practiced throughout the archdiocese, he continued to intimate, which the people of Santiago knew well, accustomed to the vicissitudes of ecclesiastical whim, obliged to pay for church services not that which was stipulated by law, but rather, what the priest felt like asking for that day, with those being able to pay more getting their requests expedited—a greed and corruption he linked to the archbishop, whom he accused of encouraging this for personal gain.<sup>354</sup> Pointing out how the abusive custom was felt across all social classes, Gil de Báez finished his critique

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<sup>353</sup> The original Spanish reads: “Pero el afán de aumentar un caudal es lo que vemos en este acto extraño que repugna a todo el que de buen católico se precie.” See: “Todo es abarcar,” *El Ferrocarril*, September 9, 1883.

<sup>354</sup> The original Spanish reads: “Y es natural: entre nosotros las tarifas impuestas por el Gobierno en toda clase de ceremonias religiosas, son letra muerta; aquí no impera más que el capricho de la curia eclesiástica y el que más da, más pronto termina sus gestiones en aquella oficina. ¡Es claro, como que así percibe más gratificación el Sr. Arzobispo!” See: *Ibid.*

encouraging dissent among his audience, inviting them to complain about the measure and corruption in the church.<sup>355</sup>

Reaction to Gil de Báez's article was quick. In the following issue—*El Ferrocarril* number 57, which, though not subject to a lawsuit, was also forwarded to the Minister of Justice—Gil de Báez shared the news that he was being sued for the contents of his previous number, publishing the notice he received from the district judge. Certain that he had the moral high ground, Gil de Báez responded with the reaffirmation that he “would continue to attack those whom, supposed to be models of virtue and meekness (*mansedumbre*), stray from the rules, to wrench the sweat from the brow of those who need it, as there is no one to police them.” In words evocative of those used against him and his fellow journalists by Martín de Herrera, he continued, he would likewise condemn those who, with their actions, bring disrepute onto Catholicism, “without which there could be no society.” After all, as he declared, he was perhaps a better Catholic than a good deal of the ecclesiastics within the Church.<sup>356</sup>

This line of attack carried into the following number, with Gil de Báez publishing a response to another letter sent in reaction to his September 9 editorial, this one, from four parish priests who sought to defend the archbishop. In their letter, the priests denied the existence of a measure to reduce their stipends and assured him of their loyalty to their diocesan. Their words only acted as ammunition for Gil de Báez, however, who accused Martín de Herrera of trying to cover his tracks with the letter, a fake, as he pointed out, for the undersigning priests' signatures did not match the handwriting throughout the letter, coerced to sign a document whose

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

<sup>356</sup> See: “Nuestra denuncia,” *El Ferrocarril*, September 13, 1883.

authorship resided in the archbishopric. The article concluded with promises to further unveil the wrongdoings of Archbishop Martín de Herrera.<sup>357</sup>

Though no record of the exchange between Martín de Herrera and the judge regarding the prosecution of the above articles is available, it was not exceptional to have ecclesiastics seek to use their influence in pressing civil authorities to pursue harsher punishments for writings considered to attack or endanger the Church. In 1886, for example, Bishop Ramón Fernández Piérola of Havana reached out to the Governor General to do just that, complaining of two Havana-based papers that had been harassing his administration with particular resolve. Bishop Fernández Piérola received a negative response from the governor, who told him that it was not within his purview to intervene in such matters.<sup>358</sup> However, the exchange is telling of the religious authorities' confidence in the results their words had the potential to bring about. In this sense, that Martín de Herrera had appealed both to the Governor General and the Minister of Justice to request the repression of scandalous publications in his archdiocese, is likewise indicative of the suggestions he might have made—or complaints he voiced—to local authorities, like the district judge.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, while waiting to hear back from the Minister of Justice and the Tribunal de Imprenta, the archbishop took once more to the *Boletín Eclesiástico* to publish a pastoral letter in which he denounced the consequences of liberalism, and its corresponding liberalization of the press, aiming to curb the influence of anticlerical publications among the laity. One would not need to have been literate nor subscribed to the *Boletín* to have heard his

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<sup>357</sup> See: “No nos llega la camisa al cuerpo,” and “Es original,” *El Ferrocarril*, September 16, 1883.

<sup>358</sup> See: Rodríguez, *El lápiz rojo*, 161.

words, as the faithful across the province would have had the pastoral read to them by their parish priest during Sunday mass.<sup>359</sup> Evocative of the 1864 Syllabus issued by Pope Pius IX against the host of “modern errors” then constraining the Vatican and the Catholic Church—namely, liberalism, Rationalism, democratic government, and the spread of alternate religious beliefs—Martín de Herrera lamented how: “Ever since the so-called rights of man” were proclaimed, “man had defied God,” and used his God-given gift of speech to combat Catholicism and its teachings, rather than “the absurdities contained in false philosophies,” like Protestantism, Rationalism, Materialism, and even, Islam. Instead, man chose to question Catholic dogma, “the rights and prerogatives belonging to the Pope, the authority of bishops and archbishops, the dignity and impunity of the clergy, and the legal existence of religious congregations.”<sup>360</sup> While Martín de Herrera did not name the attack on the Hermanas de la Enseñanza as an example of the latter, he would have been thinking of it as he penned his letter, as much as his audience would have recalled the attack upon hearing his words. As he further reminded them in his letter: no individual freedom had the power to contradict divine law, going on to point out how ancient Church councils had ordered the burning and prohibition of immoral books, and how the Pope maintained the right to approve or ban books related to matters of faith. “Thus,” he proclaimed, “we declare the books, pamphlets, newspapers, and other scientific and literary productions, that hold ideas opposed to the doctrines of the Catholic Church to be righteously condemned and

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<sup>359</sup> For that matter, one need not have been literate to have known what was being decried in the secular press, either. Some illiterate tobacco workers might have had access to the press through the widespread Cuban practice of appointing someone to recite the news during work hours in workshops and factories. See: Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 89-90. See also: Araceli Tinajero, *El lector de tabaquería: Historia de una tradición cubana* (Madrid: Editorial Verbum, 2007), 19-61.

<sup>360</sup> For a more thorough discussion of the 1864 “Syllabus of Errors,” see: Owen Chadwick, *A History of the Popes, 1830-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 169-181. For the pastoral letter by Martín de Herrera, see: “Carta pastoral del Excmo. e Ilustrísimo Sr. Arzobispo de Santiago de Cuba al clero y el pueblo de esta archidiócesis,” *Boletín Oficial del Arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba*, no. 17 (XVII): 269-274.

prohibited.” The diatribe ended with the vilification of those who read and produced such publications, describing them as having become alienated from God and set on the path to perdition—a reprimand, as well as a warning, to those listening—and instructions for the faithful to relinquish any such publications in their possession to their corresponding priest.<sup>361</sup> Though a similar condemnation of bad periodicals and their purported consequences appeared in the Santiago *Boletín* in April 1882, in the form of an open letter from the Pope to the Bishops of Milan, Turin, and Vercelli, and following Papal Encyclical, where the Pope spoke of a war on Christ and the Vatican and called on the faithful to defend the Church—a text that would have also been read aloud to the parishioners—the October 1883 pastoral reemphasized and brought the point home for its audience in a more instructing and punishing tone.<sup>362</sup>

In the same number, a sentence handed down from the Tribunal de Imprenta in Puerto Príncipe against *La Verdad de Manzanillo* was likewise printed. *La Verdad* was being accused of promoting lies with regards to the July 27 scandal: among them, that the screaming nun had been murdered and tales that depicted the convent as a house of vice. Such falsehoods, the suit stated, posed a threat to public order, to the interests of the state, and to the wellbeing of families who had a member in the convent. The text contradicted the facts of what had occurred that night, instead giving weight to—and feeding into—the rumors that circulated among the populace. The paper was condemned under the terms presented in the 1879 Ley de Imprenta, resulting in a fine equivalent to 1,250 *pesetas*—according to article 58 of the same law—and a suspension for the

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<sup>361</sup> “Carta Pastoral,” *Boletín*, 274.

<sup>362</sup> For the 1882 publications, see: “Carta de Su Santidad a los venerables obispos de las provincias eclesiásticas de Milán, Turín y Verceil,” *Boletín Oficial del Arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba*, no. 8 (XVI): 120-123. See also: “Encíclica de León XIII a los venerables arzobispos, obispos y otros preladados de Italia,” *Boletín Oficial del Arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba*, no. 8 (XVI): 123-134.

duration of twenty issues—in accordance with article 22.<sup>363</sup> Though the sentence had been dictated back in September, the archbishop included it at the tail end of his October pastoral, in what seemed like a deliberate move to prove the meaning behind his words. The ruling against the paper became the first to be publicized among those filed in the wake of the scandal at the Convento de Hermanas de la Enseñanza. Whereas previous pronouncements and entreaties to civil officials had failed to secure the intended result, the archbishop, certain that he had a friend in the local judge—a presumed churchgoer, as his earlier “righteous and devout” description suggests—was now recurring to the threat of legal action, holding the prosecution of damaging and dangerous texts to their prescribed conclusion over the heads of his antagonists in the press.

The next series of court rulings to be published in the *Boletín* corresponded to a second set of articles in *El Ferrocarril*, and came following an October 15 response from the Minister of Justice to the same letter in which the archbishop had first complained about the paper, stating how his hands were tied on the matter of government intervention, as the “illegal Freemason sects” the archbishop denounced—and exemplified with his denunciations of the press—were not, indeed, illegal.<sup>364</sup>

Although the articles for which the publication was being taken to court a second time are now lost, the sentence reproduced in the *Boletín Eclesiástico* elucidates upon their content: much like *La Verdad de Manzanillo* before it, *El Ferrocarril* was convicted on two articles, corresponding to its numbers 70 and 82. The same were found, one, to “foster among the people

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<sup>363</sup> The original text for *La Verdad de Manzanillo* is not available, nor is the original suit, but the sentence reproduced in the pages of the *Boletín Eclesiástico* describes the contents of both. See: “Sentencia de la Audiencia de Puerto Príncipe contra *La Verdad de Manzanillo*,” *Boletín Oficial del Arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba*, no. 17 (XVII): 277-280.

<sup>364</sup> The original November response from the Minister of Justice is was copied and sent to the Spanish Nuncio the next March. See: José María Martín de Herrera, *José María Martín de Herrera to Mariano Rampolla del Tindaro*. Letter. Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV), *Nunziatura di Madrid*, Box 549, Titolo X, Rubrica II, No. 5.

principles opposed to the monastic institution [...] known as Hermanas de la Enseñanza,” and second, to “combat the fundamental tenets and dogmas of the Catholic Church, along with its ministers, its Pope, and its saints.” In both cases, Agustín Gil de Báez was ordered to pay the predetermined 1,250 *pesetas*, and had his paper suspended for a total of 50 issues.<sup>365</sup> The sentences handed to the paper for its numbers 56 and 58—as referenced above—are likewise lost. Based on the previous sentences, however, it is safe to assume that the earlier issues were met with a similar outcome.

Though the Minister of Justice had effectively answered Martín de Herrera’s complaints about the press—and the supposed Freemasons behind it—with his lack of power to intervene, the sentences must have nonetheless proved a vindication for the archbishop, who insisted upon their illegality, and recurred to a lengthy response to tell the minister why he—and the Spanish government—were wrong. Notwithstanding the recent proclamation of the 1876 Spanish Constitution in the Antilles, he explained, an 1812 Royal Decree (*Real Orden*) prohibiting Freemasons had never been abrogated. Moreover, the presumed meetings among the apostate journalists were forbidden, for these were never notified to the authorities—a flagrant violation of the 1870 Penal Code then in effect. In the slow fashion that characterized exchanges between the colonies and the metropole, this last letter to the Minister of Justice was not sent until January 4, 1884. Nevertheless, these were the points the archbishop must have had in mind when he

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<sup>365</sup> The articles in question were respectively titled “The Three Nuns” and “The Church of Error.” See: “Sentencia de la Audiencia de Puerto Príncipe contra el periódico titulado *El Ferrocarril* de Santiago de Cuba *Boletín Oficial del Arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba*, no. 3 (XVIII): 68-69. See also: “Otra sentencia del mismo tribunal condenando otro número del mismo periódico, *El Ferrocarril*,” *Boletín Oficial del Arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba*, no. 3 (XVIII): 69-70.

alluded to the scheming of “illegal sects” in his initial entreaties to the minister and the Governor General.<sup>366</sup>

Such anxiety and fervent attempts at prosecution should be read, not just through the fear the archbishop felt about the incursion of alternate ideologies among his congregation and the suggestion of political rebellion this conjured up for him, but also in light of the rapid pace at which these ideas had the power to spread among his archdiocese. It was not just because of the zealotry particular to Martín de Herrera that the Church was now so harassing the press. This was also a response to the rapid expansion of the Cuban press in the short time after the end of the Ten Years’ War and the Guerra Chiquita, in accordance with the freedoms and guarantees that followed, such as the conservation of free speech in the 1876 Constitution—however limited the definition might have been—and the 1879 Ley de Imprenta. As discussed in Chapter 2, this was a development with which Havana had been hard hit—home, as it was, to many more publishers than Santiago—with a notable uptick in anticlerical writings coming from Liberal, Freemason, and Spiritist publications. Their spread had alarmed ecclesiastics and the Catholic uppercases alike, who took to their own publications to combat them. Perhaps devoid of the capital required to undertake their own publishing ventures, the laity in Santiago did not react the same way. Perhaps because of his fanaticism, as well, it was that Martín de Herrera chose a different, less rhetorical approach to deal with the local press.

In Santiago, nine publications were founded between 1881 and 1883, with six of those being established in 1883, the same year the scandal at the convent took place.<sup>367</sup> No such growth had

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<sup>366</sup> The archbishop’s response to the Minister of Justice was likewise copied to the Nuncio. See: Martín de Herrera, *José María [...] to [...] Rampolla del Tindaro*, ASV, *Nunziatura di Madrid*, Box 549, Titolo X, Rubrica II, No. 5.

<sup>367</sup> For a table with the publications founded in Santiago throughout the nineteenth-century, see: Suárez Piña and Durán Rodríguez, “Los periódicos en Santiago de Cuba,” 117-118.

been seen in the Santiago printing sphere since 1869, after liberals in Madrid declared freedom of speech for the first time since 1837, and ten publications were founded within the same year.<sup>368</sup> The number of publications founded in the interim years between 1870 and 1880 totaled nine. That is, the same amount of newspapers that had been founded in Santiago in the two years between 1881 and 1883 equaled the sum for those that had been founded over the entire previous decade. Out of the nine newspapers that began publication between 1881 and 1883, four had been denounced by the archbishop, without counting those that were based out of Santiago, such as *La Verdad de Manzanillo*.<sup>369</sup>

While the number of people who read these publications remains uncertain—with the exception of *El Ferrocarril*, which, in September 1883 advertised itself as having acquired 500 subscribers between then and February—figures from the 1887 Cuban census allow us to intimate the state of readership at their time of publication. Out of the 1,631,687 people counted in 1887, 424,195 could read and write, and another 28,135 could read, but not write, totaling the reading population at 480,465. That said, these figures do not take into account the more diverse routes by which information travelled in illiterate societies, like word of mouth and public reading.<sup>370</sup> In Cuba, for example, the practice of having one worker read to the others in tobacco

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<sup>368</sup> For reference numbers, see: *Ibid.* The 1837 decree pertained to a previous liberal stint in government. Freedom of the press had also been declared once before this, in 1812. Laws regarding censorship and freedom of expression are covered in the previous chapter. See also: José G. Ricardo, *La imprenta en Cuba* (La Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1989).

<sup>369</sup> Other than Santiago-based *El Ferrocarril* and the *Revista de estudios psicológicos*, which received sentences published in the *Boletín*, the archbishop also complains about *El Derecho* and *El Mercurio* in his original report to the Gobernador Civil. *La Fisga* is also mentioned. This last one, however, is not counted in the compilation of Suárez Piña and Durán Rodríguez for Santiago publications, and no examples survive that might tell us where it was based.

<sup>370</sup> Robert Darnton explores this in *Poetry and the Police: Communication Networks in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, where he explains how incendiary poems against the King made their way through the largely illiterate French public in the mid-1700s. See: Robert Darnton, *Poetry and the Police: Communication Networks in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

factories and workshops was a well-established custom by the 1880s, with reading material covering a wide range of topics and mediums, from the latest novels to political newspapers.<sup>371</sup>

Though much smaller than the industry in Havana, Santiago was the second largest tobacco manufacturer in the island, with 1,106 workers tallied in 1859 and 2,674 in 1899. Assuming Santiago tobacco workers rotated between the periodicals then in publication for their reading material, it is not difficult to imagine them passing on their content at home and on the street.<sup>372</sup> In this sense, while we cannot ascertain that all participants in the riot were cigar makers, the power of simple talk in propagating the kind of ideas that publications like *El Ferrocarril* and *El Derecho* promoted, should not to be dismissed. After all, notwithstanding the number of people who could read in his archdiocese, or the number of subscribers a paper might have had, to Martín de Herrera, the riot was proof of the undue influence these publications commanded over the populace.

To provoke a riot among his congregation and have it turn against the church and religious orders, moreover, was to come too close for comfort to that which the archbishop feared most: that this kind of disorder would sustain the conditions under which separatist—and therefore, anti-Catholic—sentiments could prosper. Finalizing his January 4<sup>th</sup> missive to the Minister of Justice with an overview of the varied ills he considered to be plaguing Cuba, among which he once again underscored the presence—and actions—of the Freemasons, and decried the meager funds assigned him to run the archdiocese, Martín de Herrera said as much, stating how he would

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<sup>371</sup> In terms of reading material, Araceli Tinajero cites syndicalist journal *La Aurora* and reform-minded political journal *El Siglo*, among the most read newspapers, with Victor Hugo's works among the better loved novels. See: Tinajero, *El lector de tabaquería*, 28, 32, 41.

<sup>372</sup> Tinajero likewise intimates as much when discussing the reach of all that read at the cigar-making workshops. See: *Ibid*, 42.

not be surprised if separatist insurgents took advantage of the present situation to strike against Spain.<sup>373</sup>

Without sufficient resources to address the current crisis and its anticipated repercussions, in turn, inspiring fear among public officials—and dipping into publishers’ finances, with the persecution, fining, and suspension of their publications—were assets the archbishop exploited to persuade the first to come to his aid and the second to stop producing the slander that threatened to destabilize the Church and the Spanish union. On the other hand, emphasizing in his own public pronouncements to the faithful how said publications had the destruction of the Catholic Church as their ultimate ambition, he was relying on their good faith—after all, the intended audience was that in attendance during mass—and assumed politics to inspire them to denounce readers among their midst, and hand in their own publications.

In late January 1884, another suit was thus filed against newcomer *El Ferrocarril Central*, just a month after its first number was issued. The journal, it is worth noting, identified itself as the successor of *El Ferrocarril*, whose founder, the aforementioned Agustín Gil de Báez, had been murdered on December 1<sup>st</sup> in a knife attack from a Spanish soldier amid the rush of judicial procedures against him, in what fellow journalists deemed as vengeance from his “powerful enemies,” and linked to his writings against the Church.<sup>374</sup> Word of his death,

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<sup>373</sup> The original Spanish reads: “...creo que basta para comprender que el estado de esta provincia es alarmante, y que no extraño se valgan de esto mismo los separatistas, para rugir contra el Gobierno español.” See: Martín de Herrera, *José María [...] to [...] Rampolla del Tindaro*, ASV, *Nunziatura di Madrid*, Box 549, Titolo X, Rubrica II, No. 5.

<sup>374</sup> Gil de Báez’s assassination stands out as a fascinating side note to the narrative presented here, yet there is a significant lack of documents to unravel it much further. What I have gathered from the case, I have been able to piece together from odd ends: an entry in the *Crónicas*, a small note in Havana-based *El Triunfo*, a small note within the pages of *El Ferrocarril* itself, which continued publication for some weeks after his death; and another small note in *El Ferrocarril Central*. Madrid-based *El Motín* also reproduced the text printed in *El Triunfo*. In all, news of his death was tinged with implications that his murder had been committed in “vengeance” on behalf of his “powerful enemies.” No other documents exist that would allow me to hold this up. See: Bacardí, *Crónicas*, 7: 66-

however, must not have been enough to satisfy Martín de Herrera that the press would stop its campaign against the Church, continuing to denounce Báez and his successors to higher officials. *El Ferrocarril Central* was found guilty by the Tribunal de Imprenta later that March. The journal editors were tried for making light of excommunication in a text that, the suit alleged, likewise poked fun at the Pope and Archbishop Martín de Herrera. In what could be construed as a vindication of their late friend—who had once made a joking reference to the “excommunications that had rained upon him” since he founded his paper—the editors ridiculed the righteousness with which the archbishop imposed his ecclesiastical censorship and declared the ineffectiveness of such decrees to impede salvation.<sup>375</sup> *El Ferrocarril Central* was fined for insulting a representative of the Church and sentenced to the suspension of 30 numbers.<sup>376</sup>

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of March, the archbishop published an edict wherein he excoriated the above publications for spreading heretical beliefs and promoting “prohibited anti-Catholic sects,” further pointing out how these actions had been devised as part of their war against the archdiocese and the Catholic Church. Much like his previous pastoral letter, the edict was ordered to be read aloud during mass, and meant to draw attention to his efforts in persecuting the scandalous publications and containing the enemies of the Church, recounting the sentences that had been pronounced thus far and announcing the still unpublished ruling against *El Ferrocarril Central*. On this occasion, however, Martín de Herrera set aside the passionate

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67. “Asesinato de un periodista,” *El Triunfo*, December 7, 1883. “Manejo de flores místicas,” *El Motín*, January 6, 1884. “Última hora,” *El Ferrocarril*, December 18, 1883. “Al público,” *El Ferrocarril Central*, December 27, 1883.

<sup>375</sup> For the original December 16, 1884, *El Ferrocarril* article where Gil de Báez dismissed his supposed excommunication, see cut-out included in letter to the Nuncio: Martín de Herrera, *José María [...] to [...] Rampolla del Tindaro*, ASV, *Nunziatura di Madrid*, Box 549, Titolo X, Rubrica II, No. 5.

<sup>376</sup> For sentence against *El Ferrocarril Central*, see: “Sentencia del Tribunal de Imprenta de la Audiencia de Puerto Príncipe contra el periódico titulado *El Ferrocarril Central* de Santiago de Cuba,” *Boletín Oficial del Arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba*, no. 6 (XVIII): 120-122.

language and complicated canonical and historical references that made up his pastorals for terms the average layperson could better grasp. The mandates contained in the document were thus delineated in clear, separate points to recruit the faithful in his fight against contagion. All publications within the archdiocese that spoke of Rationalism, Protestantism, Materialism, Spiritism, Freemasonry, Socialism, or any other doctrine hostile to Catholicism, the edict reiterated, were prohibited among the faithful and ecclesiastics, alike. Whoever among those listening was subscribed, or possessed copies of publications that exhibited these traits, should cancel their subscription and hand existing copies to their priest. No one, he cautioned, should believe themselves safe to read them without putting their faith and their morals at risk. To avoid any confusion regarding the banned publications, the edict contained instructions for the laity to recur to their corresponding priests, who were required to guide them in matters of orthodoxy. Should there be any hesitation among those listening, the edict ended with a reminder to the faithful of the need submit themselves to ecclesiastical authority.<sup>377</sup>

That same month, Archbishop Martín de Herrera wrote to the Spanish Nuncio in Madrid. His long letter contained a detailed account of his exploits during the past year, with news of the scandal at the convent and its aftermath, along with all he had done to stop it from getting worse and to prevent a reoccurrence. The letter included a copy of the above edict, and a separate document taken from Baracoa-based paper *Don Claridades*, which contained a long and detailed list of all active masonic lodges across Cuba.<sup>378</sup> In it, the archbishop had underlined the ones

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<sup>377</sup> “Edicto prohibiendo varios periódicos y otras publicaciones,” *Boletín Oficial del Arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba*, no. 4 (XVIII): 73-78.

<sup>378</sup> Martín de Herrera, *José María [...] to [...] Rampolla del Tindaro*, ASV, *Nunziatura di Madrid*, Box 549, Titolo X, Rubrica II, No.5. For information on *Don Claridades*, see: Isidro Sánchez Sánchez, “La prensa como fuente de información en torno al 98,” in *Un siglo de España: centenario 1898-1998*, ed. José G. Cayuela Fernández (Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1998), 96.

active in his archdiocese, and added notes as to how these congregated under the civil officials' noses, along with an indication that the list was moreover incomplete, for there were lodges not recorded in the document. The letter also contained four December issues from *El Ferrocarril*—all published after the murder of Gil de Báez—with similar underlines and comments along the phrases the archbishop judged to be the most damaging.<sup>379</sup>

The Nuncio responded in May with a letter of congratulations to Martín de Herrera on a job well done and one hundred copies of the Papal Encyclical pronounced that past April 20<sup>th</sup> at the Vatican, “Humanum genus,” a passionate attack and condemnation of all the damage Freemasons had done to the Catholic Church and Catholicism across the world, with instructions to distribute them in the parishes throughout his archdiocese.<sup>380</sup> The same was also later published in the *Boletín Eclesiástico* for Santiago, Havana, and Puerto Rico.<sup>381</sup> In August, Cardinal Jacobini, the Vatican Secretary of State, communicated to the Spanish Nuncio that Pope Leo XIII had been made aware of the situation in Cuba, as well as Martín de Herrera’s efforts to contain Freemasonry in the island. There is no letter on record to indicate whether this information reached the archbishop. Likewise, there is no additional correspondence with which to pursue later lawsuits that might have been filed against the publications in Santiago. For the

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<sup>379</sup> Martín de Herrera, *José María [...] to [...] Rampolla del Tindaro*, ASV, *Nunziatura di Madrid*, Box 549, Titolo X, Rubrica II, No.5.

<sup>380</sup> For response, see: *Ibid.* On Pope Leo and Freemasonry, see: Owen Chadwick, *A History of the Popes, 1830-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 304-307. On “Humanum genus,” see: Leo XIII, [http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_18840420\\_humanum-genus.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_18840420_humanum-genus.html), accessed October 20, 2019.

<sup>381</sup> See: *Boletín Oficial del Arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba*, no. 11 (XVIII): 175-182. *Boletín Eclesiástico de la Diócesis de Puerto Rico*, no. 11 (XXVI): 121-128. It was appended to the *Boletín Eclesiástico del Obispado de La Habana* as a separate document. See: *Boletín Eclesiástico del Obispado de La Habana*, no. 8 (IV): 117.

remainder of Martín de Herrera's tenure as Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, however, no more sentences were reproduced in the *Boletín Eclesiástico*.

### 3.3 Conclusion

When Archbishop Martín de Herrera complained about the press and the elaborate intrigues he believed it to be plotting, he did so in the context of the tenuous peace achieved after the defeat of the Ten Years' War and the Guerra Chiquita that had been fought in the eastern provinces around Santiago. He did so amid the claims for autonomy and more extensive freedoms pursued by the newly-admitted Partido Autonomista Liberal, and the concurrent expansion of secular publications across Cuba, many of them anticlerical, in accordance with the liberal and reformist ideas their editors espoused.

Martín de Herrera's fears and complaints were not particular. It had been a defining characteristic for prelates in the Antilles ever since the wars for independence throughout Spanish America had been fought, to raise the alarm regarding the constant risk of losing the last remaining Spanish possessions in the Americas. In the prelates' eyes, godlessness had been a causal factor in past strivings for independence, and it was their mission to maintain a strong faith and a unified Spain, in consequence. This was made manifest when in 1868, separatist cries in Cuba and Puerto Rico turned out to have been planned by Freemasons.<sup>382</sup> Such fears about political deviance and what it might result in had likewise been augmented after the Pope came

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<sup>382</sup> Carlos Manuel de Céspedes and Ramón Emeterio Betances, the intellectual authors of the Grito de Yara and the Grito de Lares in Cuba and Puerto Rico, were both Freemasons and leaders in their respective lodges. See: Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, *Guerra de los diez años, 1868-1878* (La Habana: Cultural, SA, 1950), 61. See also: Francisco Moscoso, *La revolución puertorriqueña de 1868: El grito de Lares* (San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 2003), 48.

under siege in 1870, rid of his temporal power and attending landholdings throughout the Italian peninsula by patriots that sought to integrate its collection of autonomous states into a constitutional monarchy, all under the banner of Vatican-repudiated liberalism. The unification of Italy—to the detriment of the Pope and his traditional prerogatives—had left the Catholic Church and Catholics the world over in a profound state of shock, denial, and fear. Political ideas that implied change and further losses for the Church became suspect and prone to condemnation. Under these conditions, supplicant and alarmist entreaties to the Spanish administration demanding intervention and better resources to tend to the faithful were not new for the Metropolitan of such a precarious region as the Spanish Antilles.

What differentiated Archbishop Martín de Herrera’s protests regarding the activities of the press and Freemasons in his archdiocese was that this represented the first time the archbishop had garnered such concrete threats to his person, subordinates, and church—at least beyond the tumultuous years of the first separatist conflict, between 1868 and 1878. After the riot at the convent, the vague menace of godless individuals and non-Catholic sects wishing to harm the Catholic Church—and in consequence, the Spanish Empire—had materialized at home. With little hope of direct intervention from the corresponding authorities, this was also the first time the archbishop found himself having to recur to the temporal means of censorship and persecution to combat the archdiocese’s enemies.

Out of the publications sued, the *Revista de estudios psicológicos* complied, with Serret opening a second Spiritist journal, *La Redención*, in which he lamented the suspension mandate.<sup>383</sup> Beyond this, the effects of the sentences produced in the Tribunal de Imprenta de Puerto Príncipe against the Santiago-based publications are difficult to ascertain—that is,

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<sup>383</sup> Francisco Serret, “A los suscriptores de la *Revista de estudios psicológicos*,” *La Redención*, no.1 (I): 1.

whether or not the journals acquiesced to their sentences and stopped publishing for the prescribed time and whether or not the populace handed in their own numbers and stopped reading them—for the publications themselves are lost and the few examples that exist come from Church archives, the lack of further prosecution efforts after the initial spate of sentences published between 1883 and 1884 stands out. Beyond that, the simple effort to contain these publications and their influence, offers insight as to how the local public sphere developed, with the topics that animated it and the obstacles it encountered. In this sense, it also helps uncover aspects of quotidian life for this period in the history of Santiago, through the reigning discourse of the time, as it was present in the press and during mass. This was, in other words, what people were hearing and talking about, at home and on the street. In examining the repercussions of this discourse amongst Spanish subjects and the Catholic faithful, the case presented here likewise serves to understand how the global drama then unfolding in the Catholic Church and in the Spanish Empire was experienced at the local level. Assuming the Spanish soldier that killed journalist Gil de Báez became absorbed with news of the scandal and the fearsome tirades pronounced by the archbishop, the chapter also provides a picture of the material consequences this discourse—and ultramontane militancy—could have.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Pious Works:**

#### **Catholic Initiatives in the Public Square**

This chapter traces the initiatives of Havana and Puerto Rico Catholics to raise and defend monuments of pro-Spanish Catholicism before the public and claim a space for their faith in the heated political landscape of late nineteenth-century Cuba and Puerto Rico. Whereas Chapter 2 showed Catholic editors and writers engaging in a discursive war to defend Spain and Catholicism via the press, and Chapter 3 examined the material consequences of this conflict via direct action from Church officials seeking punishment for their detractors, here, I explore approaches involving ecclesiastics, but lead by laymen and women, whose actions went beyond discourse and fear-mongering, and into politics. The chapter thus concentrates on the efforts of the urban middle and upper class laity, who had the most riding on the vision of a unified Spanish Empire, and who had the financial, social and cultural capital to enter electoral politics, donate funds and organize for their collection, and appeal directly to high-ranking civil and religious authorities for intervention on local matters. Informed by their faith, they sought to influence political decisions that would be favorable to the survival of a Spanish, Catholic Cuba and Puerto Rico, organizing around causes that would exalt Catholicism as a crucial element in maintaining a peaceful, lasting relationship between the metropole and its colonies. In showcasing these actions, the chapter posits that this organized and active faithful acted as unofficial missionaries for the Church and served as a bolster for its weakened infrastructure,

whose priests and prelates alone were not enough to sustain the faith across the colonies and advocate for it as a deterrent to revolution.<sup>384</sup>

To do so, the chapter analyzes two instances in the history of Catholic organizing during the 1870s and 1880s, both centering on the construction and defense of monuments to Catholic piety in Havana and San Juan, and which their champions put forward as an argument for Catholicism's vital role in politics and public life. The first example centers on the 1876 fight to build a mausoleum for the recently deceased Spanish Bishop of Havana and retain his remains on Cuban soil. The second case focuses on a conservative-liberal confrontation that spanned 1871 to 1886, and was aimed at protecting the sole Jesuit school in Puerto Rico against the advances of secular education. For their advocates, both the mausoleum in the Havana Cathedral and the Jesuit school in San Juan represented tangible signs of piety that stood to inspire further acts of faith in their communities. Though seemingly disparate, both instances stand out as exemplary cases via which Catholics sought to convince the authorities and the public that Catholicism could not be divorced from politics and that its inclusion in public life was critical for the procurement of good governance.

Front and center for the case of Puerto Rico are the actions of the *incondicionales*, as members of the conservative, pro-Spanish Partido Incondicional were called, and who were largely behind the efforts to safeguard Jesuit education on the island. In examining their actions, the chapter endeavors to shed light upon the religious aspects of conservative electoral politics in Puerto Rico, departing from discussions of the *incondicionales*' Catholicism that, when

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<sup>384</sup> The idea of a Church that was low on capital and clergymen is discussed in Chapter 1.

acknowledged, depict it as a mere extension of their loyalty to Spain.<sup>385</sup> Their fight to protect the Jesuits from liberal reforms that would see them gone from the island points to the fact that Catholicism and its defense—though never an explicit article in the *incondicionales*' constitution—was not a casual cultural reference for the Partido Incondicional, but rather, an active part of its political platform and its members' identities. To do so, this section of the chapter analyzes a series of discussions printed in the *Boletín Mercantil*, official newspaper of the Partido Incondicional. Given that copies of their rival publications are unavailable for the years in question, this section attempts to reconstruct the debates over religion and public life that preoccupied liberals and conservatives, citing, when available, material that the *Boletín Mercantil* reprinted from these rival publications, and supplementing with letters submitted to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities.

In the case of Cuba, the chapter does not examine the actions of its electoral counterpart, the Partido Unión Constitucional. Instead, it centers, for the most part, on the Asociación de Católicos de la Habana and high-ranking members of the Havana Diocese in their attempts to persuade the public that to build a mausoleum and keep the remains of the Havana Bishop therein, rather than sending them to Spain, would have an immediate and positive impact upon the ongoing separatist war.

Altogether, both cases stand to challenge the literature on the late nineteenth-century political scene across the colonies that pays scarce attention to Catholicism and fails to account for genuine religious belief as a motivating factor behind conservative politics.<sup>386</sup> The chapter is

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<sup>385</sup> See, for example: Ángel Quintero Rivera, *Conflictos de clase y política en Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1976), 19-24.

<sup>386</sup> See, for example: Luis Martínez-Fernández, *Torn Between Empires: Economy, Society, and Patterns of Political Thought in the Hispanic Caribbean, 1840-1878* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994). See also: Quintero Rivera, *Conflictos de clase y política en Puerto Rico*. In his doctoral dissertation, historian Jaime Pérez Rivera examines Spanish identity and loyalism in late nineteenth-century Puerto Rico, with members of the Partido

not making a case for Catholicism as the driving force behind conservative politics. The threat of abolition (enacted in Puerto Rico in 1873 and in Cuba in 1886) and related economic preoccupations of the moneyed *hacendados* who produced tropical commodities for the metropole were central and strident components of the argument for colonialism. Accompanying the rhetoric of a unified Spanish empire, however, was not just talk of financial ruin and miscegenation, but also a discourse laden with references to the Catholicism that made one a good son and daughter of Spain. Catholicism was regarded as both the grantor and keeper of the familial and cultural ties between Spain and its colonies, and as such, it was meant to be protected. In turn, Catholicism and the Church cast a protective veil that was meant to secure peace and propel the upright Christian morals that would ward off further upheaval. This chapter excavates that idea, asking the reader to take the religious references of its subjects as more than rhetoric and aiming to fix this oversight in the literature. Focusing on the actions of laymen and women, the chapter likewise seeks to diverge from histories of Catholicism that focus on the institutional responses to the challenges of liberalism and ignore the laity that most often acted as a first line of defense for the Church and its interests.<sup>387</sup> In this manner, the cases examined here contribute to an understanding of the Church and Catholicism that gives due credence to the faithful in its continuation and speaks to the lived experiences of religion. Along with the actions of the poor and rural faithful explored in Chapter 1 and those of the Catholic publishers explored

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Incondicional featuring heavily among his analysis. Pérez Rivera examines Catholicism as a source of identity to be protected, though largely via the celebration of patron saints, as tied to regional—i.e. Asturian or Galician—Spanish identities. See: Jaime Pérez Rivera, “Asociacionismo, prensa y cultura entre los inmigrantes españoles de San Juan, 1871-1913,” (PhD Dissertation, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras, 2002).

<sup>387</sup> For examples of these more institutional-leaning histories of Catholicism facing off with liberalism, see: Samuel Silva Gotay, *Soldado católico en guerra de religión: Religión y política en España y Puerto Rico durante el siglo XIX* (Río Piedras: Publicaciones Gaviota, 2012). See also: José Manuel García LeDuc, *Intolerancia y heterodoxias en Puerto Rico (Siglo XIX): Protestantes, masones y espiritistas-kardeccianos reclaman su espacio social (cc. 1869-1898)* (San Juan: Isla Negra Editores, 2009).

in Chapter 2, the lay efforts presented here—encompassing the raising of funds, advocating before the civil authorities, and defending the Church and its ecclesiastics from liberal attacks—serve to illustrate parishioners’ endeavors and determination to maintain their faith in light of the Church’s limited capacity to attend them.

#### 4.1 The Death of a Bishop and the Birth of a Saint

Bishop Apolinar Serrano Diez died in Havana on June 15, 1876. He was forty-three and had lead the Havana Diocese a scant five months before succumbing to yellow fever. A Spaniard, he had contracted the “endemic disease” some three months after arriving to Havana, and managed to keep working through it during the following months.<sup>388</sup> Except for a small note in the *Diario de la Marina* announcing his disembarking in January 1876, there are no surviving records to tell of his welcoming to the Diocese.<sup>389</sup> One can presume, however, that his initial appointment and subsequent arrival had been much awaited, especially among the Catholic faithful, after the *cuervo de voluntarios* had chased his predecessor, Fray Jacinto María Martínez y Sáez, out of Cuba in 1869 and denied him entry upon his attempted return in 1871.<sup>390</sup> Though Fray Jacinto held the title of Bishop until his death in 1873, his prolonged absence from the Havana Bishopric meant that the seat had been vacant for close to seven years before Apolinar was appointed to it. Between 1869 and 1876, the Cathedral Chapter and the Ecclesiastical

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<sup>388</sup> See: “EPD,” *Diario de la Marina*, June 16, 1876, 2. On his contracting the disease, see: Monseñor Ramón Suárez Polcari, *Historia de la Iglesia Católica en Cuba, Vol. 2* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 2003), 46-47.

<sup>389</sup> See: “Desembarco del Excmo. Sr. Obispo,” *Diario de la Marina*, January 19, 1876, 1. The *Revista Católica* is likely to have covered his arrival, but numbers for the journal going from February 1875 to January 1876 are missing from the archival record.

<sup>390</sup> The conflict between Fray Jacinto and the *cuervo de voluntarios* is briefly covered in the introduction to this dissertation. For a detailed recount of the dispute, see: Rigoberto Segreo Ricardo, *Iglesia y nación en Cuba (1868-1898)* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 2010), 65-116.

Governor ensured the Diocese's affairs kept running, but without a Bishop, the faithful in Havana and its environs had lacked the crucial spiritual leadership needed to guide them through the then ongoing Ten Years' War (1868-1878). With a God-fearing population proclaimed as a guarantee against discord and evil in popular Catholic teaching, at the time, Havana was most in need of a leader that would steer the Church, labor to strengthen the faith, and provide the words of comfort and Christian teachings that would help put an end to the separatist conflict.<sup>391</sup> Under the circumstances, his arrival must have been a welcome relief for the faithful and the most deferential of ecclesiastics within his Diocese. For the sincere believers in the placating power of religion among them, it must have also represented hope for a coming era of peace in Cuba and in the Diocese.

By all accounts, Bishop Apolinar did not disappoint. Taking over as Bishop eight years after the outbreak of war, he preached against disorder and revolution, seeking a return to law and order and aiming to keep his congregation from giving in to separatist and otherwise rebellious ideals.<sup>392</sup> After his predecessor's pleas for mercy on behalf of the separatist rebels and the priests that joined them had generated friction between him and the civil authorities, such an unequivocal stance against the insurgents must have been a welcome relief.<sup>393</sup> Bishop Apolinar was also close to the faithful, reportedly tending to the sick, making charitable donations to the

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<sup>391</sup> For more on the idea that a pious population acted as a guarantee against disorder, see: Richard Kagan, in "A World Without Walls: City and Town in Colonial Spanish America" in *City Walls: The Urban Enceinte in Global Perspective*, ed. James D. Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 128. This is also an idea that I explore further down the text.

<sup>392</sup> See: Segreo Ricardo, *Iglesia y nación en Cuba*, 232. See also: Juan Martín Leiseca, *Apuntes para la historia eclesiástica de Cuba* (Habana: Talleres tipográficos de Carasa, 1938), 181.

<sup>393</sup> On Fray Jacinto and his defense of rebel priests, see: Rigoberto Segreo Ricardo, *Iglesia y nación en Cuba (1868-1898)* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 2010), 66-72.

poor, and visiting the different parishes throughout his Diocese.<sup>394</sup> Two weeks before his death, he had been conducting a pastoral visit in the neighboring province of Matanzas, which a letter writer to the *Revista Católica* recounted, remarking upon his lively sermons and “unflagging apostolic zeal” (*celo apostólico incansable*).<sup>395</sup> Just a few days after returning from Matanzas, he headed to Guanabacoa, where he preached among the residents and religious orders established in the town.<sup>396</sup> News of his death, though he had been sick for some time, came as a surprise.<sup>397</sup>

In the wake of his passing, eulogies quickly turned to hagiographies. To all who wrote about Apolinar, he was a saint (*santo varón*) whose illness had come as a consequence of his great dedication to the office of the Bishop, seeing to his duties in a manner exceeding human capacity and jeopardizing his own health in the process. As one contributor to the *Revista Católica* put it, Apolinar had “sacrificed his own existence for his people’s salvation.”<sup>398</sup> This was poor solace for the same writer, however, who also saw in his untimely death an act of punishment and a harsh lesson to be procured. According to the *Revista* writer and the host of mourners whose sentiments he echoed, the people of Havana had brought this on themselves—and on Apolinar—because of their sinful behavior.<sup>399</sup> As yet another writer put it, having failed

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<sup>394</sup> See: Monseñor Ramón Suárez Polcari, *Historia de la Iglesia Católica en Cuba*, Vol. 1 (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 2003), 47.

<sup>395</sup> “Correspondencia,” *Revista Católica*, June 10, 1876, 313.

<sup>396</sup> “EPD,” *Diario de la Marina*, June 16, 1876, 2. “La muerte de un santo,” *Revista Católica*, June 24, 1876, 365.

<sup>397</sup> According to that reported in the *Revista Católica*, his initial diagnosis, up until two days before his death, had presented itself “with a benign character” that had made everyone around Apolinar hopeful about his recovery. See: “A nuestros lectores,” *Revista Católica*, June 17, 1876, 321.

<sup>398</sup> “A nuestros lectores,” *Revista Católica*, June 17, 1876, 322. The sentiment was likewise echoed by non-Catholic publications like the *Diario de la Marina*, which waxed poetic about his heroic virtues and ultimate sacrifice. See: “EPD,” *Diario de la Marina*, June 16, 1876, 1.

<sup>399</sup> Original reads: “...todos, por fin, declaran considerar esta pérdida como un castigo del cielo, debido a nuestras prevaricaciones y pecados...” See: “A nuestros lectores,” *Revista Católica*, June 17, 1876, 322.

to follow his example, the people of Havana had shown themselves to be underserving hosts for the living saint and would now have to suffer his loss.<sup>400</sup>

Their words, though evocative of the vague assertions about widespread vice and correlated penalties that were common to Catholic discourse at the time—as discussed in Chapter 3—might also be read in light of continuing hostilities among the insurgents and Spanish troops. In view of persistent separatist revolt, which Apolinar had once alluded to as a crime akin to murder, the devout writers' words become a protest against the continuation of the armed struggle, for which the Bishop had given up his life.<sup>401</sup> The eulogizers' words were also an expression of sorrow over the incomplete project the ill-fated prelate had left behind.

His death had cut short what the first contributor to the *Revista Católica* described as the “spiritual resurrection” of the Diocese. Under his guidance, the *Revista* writer stated, priests had been better respected and religion better loved, church attendance was up, and “good deeds proliferated.”<sup>402</sup> A rich future had awaited the Havana Diocese, one in which “everything, the individual, family, [and] society, had been about to be restored, [and] had been about to be reborn.”<sup>403</sup> The truncated nature of the Havana Catholics' aspirations was laid bare with their

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<sup>400</sup> Original reads: “El Señor dispuso llamarlo, porque así nos convenía. Y nos convenía como castigo, que castigo y grande es perder a un santo que entre nosotros vivía y cuyos consejos no quisimos seguir, de cuyas indicaciones no quisimos hacer caso.” See: “La muerte del pastor,” *Revista Católica*, June 24, 1876, 352.

<sup>401</sup> In a March 14, 1876, pastoral letter that Rigoberto Segreo Ricardo invites readers to read in consideration of the ongoing war and efforts to pacify the island, Apolinar speaks about eternal justice and how imagining the punishments to come in the afterlife would be enough to take “el hierro de las manos del asesino y la tea de las manos del incendiario,” with his use of the word “tea” being a reference to the insurgents who had been setting sugar plantations on fire. See: Segreo Ricardo, *Iglesia y nación en Cuba*, 232.

<sup>402</sup> “La muerte del pastor,” *Revista Católica*, June 24, 1876, 352.

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.*

emphasis on that which had been about to take place – close, but out of reach.<sup>404</sup> In the same vein, and as another writer in *La Voz de Cuba* put it, Apolinar had brought about a “revival of religious principles” across the Diocese. For them, these principles were a prerequisite for the reinstitution of good morals, whose apparent recovery was itself indispensable for the future of Cuba.<sup>405</sup> Without strong Catholic pillars to uphold it, without Apolinar, their lament implied, Cuba would not be able to right its present course.

A multitude of mourners at his funeral confirmed the case for collective heartache presented in the *Revista*. After lying in repose at the Bishopric for two days, Apolinar’s body was escorted to the Havana Cathedral in a procession that included, among a host of civilians and minor government officials and ecclesiastics, the Governor General, the Cathedral Chapter, a military band, children and students from local orphanages and Catholic schools, confraternities and brotherhoods, the Asociación de Católicos, and the *cuerpo de voluntarios*. The well-attended procession was captured in a centerspread sketch published in the periodical, *La Sombra*, and drawn by artist Víctor Patricio de Landaluze. As illustrator for the now-defunct satirical and anticlerical periodical, *Juan Palomo*, Landaluze had been behind the 1869 caricatures of Fray Jacinto that aided the civil authorities’ campaign against him.<sup>406</sup> That Landaluze rendered this

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<sup>404</sup> Ramón de Araíztegui also expressed his lament over his and his fellow Catholics’ dashed hopes after Apolinar’s passing, stating: “¡Cuántas esperanzas, cuántos proyectos, cuántos deseos defraudados acaso para siempre con su muerte!” See: “¡Era un San Francisco de Sales!,” *Revista Católica*, June 4, 1876, 355.

<sup>405</sup> The writer described Apolinar’s tenure as: “...la época memorable en que ha empezado entre nosotros el renacimiento de los principios religiosos, que han de restaurar los morales, de los cuales depende el provenir de esta sociedad...” The article was copied in the *Revista Católica*. See: “Muerte de un santo,” *Revista Católica*, June 24, 1876, 361.

<sup>406</sup> Landaluze had also drawn the images of the crucified Carlos de Borbón that had so provoked the *Revista Católica* in 1874. For more on Landaluze and his anticlerical caricatures, see Chapter 2. On Landaluze, see also: Manuel Barrero, “Orígenes de la historieta española, 1857-1906,” *ARBOR: Ciencia, pensamiento y cultura CLXXXVII 2 EXTRA (2011)*: 15-42. For the 1869 *Juan Palomo* images of Fray Jacinto, see: “Dice el refrán que por todas partes se va a Roma,” *Juan Palomo*, November 28, 1869, 28. For more on the images of Fray Jacinto and their

pictorial tribute to Apolinar thus speaks to both the widespread public acceptance of and the grief felt for the Bishop among the residents of Havana. Interred in a mausoleum within the Havana Cathedral, his tomb was to be adorned with a marble monument that depicted him kneeling in prayer, a tribute from his congregants, arranged for by a group of well-to-do Havana women, who also lead the collection towards financing the memorial.<sup>407</sup> Not long after his burial, crowds gathered at the site, leaving flowers, medallions, and images, as offerings to Apolinar.

Yet marble monuments at which to gather and elaborate funeral processions were not enough comfort for Havana Catholics, who were reluctant to let the spiritual restitution that Apolinar had undertaken become stagnant. As had happened at the Havana Diocese between 1873 and 1876, it was not uncommon for a Bishopric to sit vacant for an indefinite number of years. Against the prospect of another unoccupied episcopate, Havana Catholics spurred to action. In a letter sent to the Governor General and forwarded to the Ministro de Ultramar in Madrid, the same group of Havana women that were then collecting donations for his mausoleum led the charge. The supplicants presented themselves as suffering and concerned mothers, and asked the Governor to intercede on their behalf, volunteering their candidate for Bishop to the King – responsible as he was for nominating prelates across the Spanish Empire and presenting them to the Pope. The petitioners had chosen Melchor Serrano Diez, Apolinar's older brother, and then Canon at the Valladolid Cathedral, to succeed him. As his brother, they

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escalation of the conflict between the Bishop and the civil authorities, see: Segreo Ricardo, *Iglesia y nación en Cuba*, 101.

<sup>407</sup> An announcement seeking donations to cover the costs of the statue published in the *Revista Católica* lists names for 14 women in the “Junta Directiva” for the initiative, who were all authorized to receive donations. Among them, Ángela Echaniz de Araíztegui, likely wife to Ramón de Araíztegui, Matilde Troncoso de Oiz, a prolific poet and novelist and frequent contributor to the *Revista Católica* under the pen name Raquel, and Corina Jovellar de Montes, wife to Nicasio Montes Sierra, a high-ranking military official stationed in Cuba. See: “Variedades,” *Revista Católica*, July 1, 1876, 395-396.

reasoned, Melchor must have possessed the same virtues that made Apolinar so well-loved, rendering him the ideal choice to follow in his footsteps. The group underlined the need to safeguard the Christian values that Apolinar embodied, taking care to express their concerns and motivations in terms that the Governor would better understand. In their view, to have Melchor succeed Apolinar was of utmost importance for the sake of good governance. Addressing the Governor directly, the group pointed out how doing so, was, above all, “for the good of this Island, which Your Excellency knows better than anyone, is at present being torn apart (*se halla desgarrada*) by a civil war (*guerra intestina*) in which brothers against brothers, and fathers against sons, [...] battle fiercely, and for which the most efficient remedy is Christian charity.” For the Governor to ensure a quick and fitting succession would be, under the present circumstances, an act of patriotism.<sup>408</sup>

Framing their appeal as one that had concrete and immediate political implications, perhaps greater than the somewhat intangible references to the need for spiritual counsel that was standard among Catholics (discussed in Chapter 2), allowed them to establish common ground with the Governor – and to the same extent, the King, who would be informed of their request. Placing the war at the forefront of anxieties that might have otherwise seemed too feminine and religious showed them as informed, political citizens, with license to demonstrate to the civil authorities how religion—and the Church itself—could not be divorced from the current political situation. Through their letters and their bestowing of gifts—addressing the Governor General with their vision for the Diocese and spearheading the construction of a monument to Apolinar—the women situated themselves in the ongoing war effort and argued for the consideration of

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<sup>408</sup> Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN), *Ultramar, Gracia y Justicia*, Legajo 1836, Expediente 7.

religion in its resolution.<sup>409</sup> The supplicants were caring mothers troubled over the fate of their families, but this just so happened to coincide with that of Cuba, which so depended upon having a good Christian foundation to overcome the present warfare and to secure lasting allegiance to Spain. Cuba had a strong political leader in the Governor, but it needed a Bishop, just as much.

The Havana mothers' plea concluded with nine pages of their own signatures and was accompanied by a collection of further signatures from the Asociación de Católicos, the Conferencia de San Vicente de Paul, the Cathedral Chapter, and the Congregantes de Nuestra Señora de la Anunciata, along with others from otherwise unaffiliated Havana residents (*vecinos*) – with the Asociación de Católicos and the Conferencia de San Vicente de Paul representing a collection of the middle and upper class citizens of Havana.<sup>410</sup> Their letter to the Governor was also published in the *Revista Católica* and the initiative publicly applauded by the editors of the newspaper *La Sombra*.<sup>411</sup> The Spanish Papal Nuncio in Madrid was likewise on the receiving end of a telegram where the Havana mothers begged him to “embrace their plea” and influence the nomination; whether he responded is not to be found in the archival record.<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> The women of the Paraguayan elite relied on a similar approach amid the War of the Triple Alliance (1864-1870). Prevented from going into the battlefield to defend their young nation, the women penned letters to the President and sent him gifts that would both inspire confidence and fund the war. The gifts evidenced their patriotic sentiment and served as a “palliative to the impossibility of integrating the Paraguayan army.” See: Delphine Demelas, “Con el objeto de adherirse al laudable pensamiento: El Libro de Oro y el sistema de obsequios durante la Guerra Grande (Paraguay, 1864-1868),” *Anuario IEHS* 34 no. 2 (2019): 172-173.

<sup>410</sup> Other than the overseeing clergy, speakers at the Asociación de Católicos' 1874 inauguration included lawyers, judges, writers, and publishers. For more on the Asociación de Católicos, see Chapter 2. For the case of Mexico, Silvia Arrom has done an extensive study of the Conferencia de San Vicente de Paul, where she notes the middle and upper classes as founding members. The Conferencia was active in Cuba and preceded its Mexican counterpart. See: Silvia Arrom, *Volunteering for A Cause: Gender, Faith, and Charity in Mexico from the Reform to the Revolution* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016), 3-4.

<sup>411</sup> See: “Exposición de las señoras de La Habana,” *Revista Católica*, July 8, 1876, 413. See also: “Conversación,” *La Sombra*, June 15, 1876, 307.

<sup>412</sup> The undated telegram appears among various other telegrams appended to an unrelated 1886 letter. The contents of the telegram, however, leave no room for doubt as to its provenance. See: Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV), *Nunziatura di Madrid*, Box 549 Titolo X, Rubrica II, Sez. I, No. 13.

Evident, however, is that Melchor did not follow Apolinar. In a letter addressed to the Havana public and published in the *Revista Católica*, Melchor made a compelling case for his gratitude: he would love nothing more than to renounce his present station and honor their wishes, so indebted did he feel to the citizens of Cuba for all the love shown to his brother. Yet he could not accept, for he felt unworthy of the charge, and incapable of replacing his righteous sibling.<sup>413</sup> As expected, the Bishopric would remain vacant until 1880, when Ramón Fernández de Piérola arrived from Madrid to take over as Bishop of Havana.<sup>414</sup>

Even so, perpetuating Apolinar's legacy was still in reach. For a lack of successor, commemoration would do to extend his influence. In their *Revista Católica* article presenting the initiative to build a marble monument to show their respect for Apolinar, Matilde Troncoso de Oiz, spokesperson for the Catholic mothers of Havana and frequent contributor to the journal, mused to the director, among a series of rhetorical questions that reflected upon God's will and sought an answer for his death: "Who knows whether the death of the illustrious Bishop has done more good in our society than his preaching and his faultless existence?" To better explain her point, Matilde went on to elucidate: "A saints' death is always precious and brings about great gifts," for now the saint could intercede on their behalf.<sup>415</sup>

To believe that housing Apolinar in Havana might bring such advantageous consequences was not an overstatement. For devout Catholics, the retention of Apolinar's relics was much more than a hopeful political maneuver. Belief in the spiritual benefits inherent to saints' relics was foundational to the Catholic Church, which had long wielded their perceived

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<sup>413</sup> Melchor Serrano Diez, "Dos cartas," *Revista Católica*, August 12, 1876, 531-532.

<sup>414</sup> Segreo Ricardo, *Iglesia y nación en Cuba*, 265.

<sup>415</sup> Raquel, "La muerte de un santo," *Revista Católica*, June 24, 1876, 363-368.

power to evangelize among new converts, anoint churches, and sustain the faith, making them a central point of religious veneration from the time of Early Christianity and into the Middle Ages.<sup>416</sup> For third and fourth century prelates and rulers spread across the new lands then claimed for Catholicism, the distribution and bestowing of relics among allies and recently organized dioceses was “a powerful means to further their own political agendas,” but it was rooted in the conviction that the saints’ bones and associated paraphernalia would act as “powerful supernatural defenders” for the places—and people—that housed them.<sup>417</sup>

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this practice came to be replicated in the Americas. In 1578, for example, Jesuits in Rome sent a coffer of relics to their brethren friars stationed in the just-conquered Mexico.<sup>418</sup> In 1616, the remains of martyred Franciscan missionaries killed by indigenous populations hostile to conversion were collected and distributed among recently settled territories “in need of their sacralizing power.”<sup>419</sup> It was believed that venerable personae—and their remains—imbued the place with divine protection. While not all American territories imported, or acquired their own relics, faith in the power of the divine for protection was widespread and enacted all throughout the conquest and colonization of the Americas. Writing about the construction of fortresses and walled cities as a central aspect of Spanish colonialism, historian Richard Kagan points out that alongside these urban structures, “spiritual walls” were another crucial element among a town’s defenses.

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<sup>416</sup> Holger A. Klein, “Sacred Things and Holy Bodies: Collecting Relics from Late Antiquity to the Early Renaissance,” in *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, eds. Martina Bagnoli, Holger A. Klein, C. Griffith Mann, and James Robinson (Baltimore: The Walters Art Museum, 2010), 55-67.

<sup>417</sup> Klein, “Sacred Things and Holy Bodies,” 59-60.

<sup>418</sup> Antonio Rubial García, *La santidad controvertida: Hagiografía y conciencia criolla alrededor de los venerables no canonizados de Nueva España* (México DF: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999), 45.

<sup>419</sup> Rubial García, *La santidad controvertida*, 45.

Notwithstanding fortifications or even the presence of armed men to safeguard the new settlements, religion—be it embodied in the presence of convents, monasteries, or relics—acted as the better guarantee towards the settlers’ protection. This was based on a verse from the Book of Isaiah, whereupon the prophet called on the people of Jerusalem to name their gates and walls as “Salvation” and “Praise,” a misinterpretation that “was taken to mean that it was religion, not walls, that offered the city its best protection.”<sup>420</sup> As Kagan continues: “In other words, it seems to have been widely understood that a city with walls but with little faith was as good as lost.”<sup>421</sup> This was the protection that Apolinar would afford Cuba. Given the time immemorial, undisputed power of relics, and as the Havana mothers mused in the *Revista Católica*, Apolinar might indeed better serve the Diocese dead than alive.

Though the kind of intricate religious practice—outward, visual devotion expressed through material or corporeal means—that relic veneration alluded to had seen a decline among Catholics in recent decades, with a portion of the faithful now opting for a more subdued, private kind of religious life, both traditions coexisted and combined.<sup>422</sup> In the words of historian Caroline Bynum, relic veneration was the product of “an intense concern [...] with materiality” that characterized Catholic practice in the late Middle Ages. As Bynum describes it: “Distinctions between living and dead, body and thing, presence and mimesis, part and whole, animate and inanimate tended to blur; all of creation could convey and reveal God.”<sup>423</sup> And

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<sup>420</sup> Kagan, “A World Without Walls: City and Town in Colonial Spanish America,” 128.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid*, 128.

<sup>422</sup> On the decline of this more visual and corporeal Catholicism, see: Pamela Voekel, *Alone Before God: The Religious Origins of Modernity in Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

<sup>423</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2011), 267.

while the faithful of Havana might not have intended to hark back to medieval forms of religious observance, the idea that “the sacral [was] manifested and contained in matter” endured.<sup>424</sup> When the people of Havana lamented the death of Apolinar and fretted over the fate of Cuba, their fears were based upon long-held Catholic teachings that told them that without a Bishop—and without the manifestation of living faith that Apolinar, in this case, represented—the island was devoid of the spiritual protection it so badly needed. First without a Bishop, and then threatened without the consolation that his relics would affect to consecrate and guard the place against sinfulness and against rebellion, Cuba would not make it out of the present conflict. It did not matter how much the Governor General and the Spanish troops labored to repel the insurgents, for without the mantle of religion to envelop the place, Cuba was unprotected before the godless forces that threatened to overtake her. Through Apolinar, instead, God was present in the island.

The women of Havana labored to attain this. In their article, the Havana mothers contemplated how keeping his memory alive could benefit the citizens of Cuba, perhaps as a form of securing donations for their monument. Yet their rhetorical musings might have provided the Cathedral Chapter—the group of clerics that advised the Bishop and managed the Diocese in his absence—some consolation in sight of the unsure succession to follow. When the Governor General received a letter from Apolinar’s younger brother, Nicolás Serrano Diez, asking for his remains to be returned to their family, the Cathedral Chapter denied his request – and as a consequence, that of the Governor, who had redirected the original message along with a note as to how he thought the petition worthy of consideration. In their response, the Cathedral Chapter made clear that, although it understood the family’s motivation, it was unable to grant their wishes. The ecclesiastics explained that to house Apolinar filled Havana with great pride.

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<sup>424</sup> Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 269.

There, his remains would be paid dutiful reverence, as well as serve as a continuous source of evangelizing among its congregants. The same response, published in the *Revista*, mentioned that the family had sent an additional telegram repeating their request, an occasion that the Chapter seized to reiterate their stance, assuring the reading public that the family would soon retract its intentions, “for the good of the faithful, for whom his death would be as much an eloquent lesson” as his life had been.

The Cathedral Chapter’s response, while calculated, was also a reflection of that which had already been taking place. In a non-coincidental note to follow the ecclesiastics’ response in the *Revista*, its director, Ramón de Armas Ojeda, celebrated the numerous visits then being paid to Apolinar’s mausoleum, declaring it a place of “pilgrimage for the residents of Havana.”<sup>425</sup> With his death, Apolinar had become a saint, an appellation with which his admirers praised him in life but which could only be rendered true with his passing. So sure was Asociación de Católicos’ member and frequent *Revista* contributor, Ramón de Araíztegui, of his sainthood, for example, that he avidly spoke about having asked Apolinar for his intercession and of having kept the blood-stained pillow upon which the Bishop had rested his head on his deathbed.<sup>426</sup> That which Apolinar had once touched could now, in effect, be considered a relic. That his burial site was now a place of pilgrimage, moreover, confirmed the sacred nature, not just of that which had once belonged to him, but of his remains, as well, rendering them relics of an even higher order — ones not in the private possession of a devotee like Araíztegui, but placed under the careful watch of the Cathedral Chapter and now belonging to the people of Havana.

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<sup>425</sup> “Variedades,” *Revista Católica*, June 24, 1876, 372.

<sup>426</sup> Ramón de Araíztegui, “¡Era un San Francisco de Sales!,” *Revista Católica*, June 24, 1876, 354.

At least as far as the Cathedral Chapter was concerned, this was a closed matter. The remains of Saint Apolinar, as both his followers and his relatives had taken to calling him, were not allowed to leave Havana.<sup>427</sup> Declaring Apolinar a saint and treating his remains as relics had transformed the act of visiting his gravesite from one of simple mourning or respect to one of veneration. To guard within the Havana Cathedral a potential pole of attraction for new devotees, a medium with which to strengthen Catholicism, and to bolster church attendance—as his presiding over Mass had done when alive—meant that the ecclesiastics now in charge of running the Diocese would indeed be ill-disposed to let Apolinar go.

Nicolás Serrano Diez, however, sought other avenues by which to press the issue further, writing to the *Revista* director numerous letters in which he entreated them and their readership to help sway the decision on his and his parents' behalf. In the missives, Nicolás variously emphasized their appreciation, as well as their pain, especially that of the parents, who wished to inter Apolinar in the same chapel where he was baptized and eventually be buried alongside him – on this last point, calling on the mothers of Havana to empathize with his own suffering mother.<sup>428</sup>

Notwithstanding Nicolás' impassioned pleas, the *Revista* director stood behind the Cathedral Chapter. The exchanges between him and Nicolás were all published, perhaps to better convince the Havana public of the valuable nature of the remains and of the benefits that caring for them would bring about. The director claimed to speak on behalf of the faithful—including

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<sup>427</sup> On Saint Apolinar, see: Nicolás Serrano, “Dos cartas,” *Revista Católica*, August 12, 1876, 530. See also: Eduardo Llanas, “Nuestra opinión,” *Revista Católica*, August 26, 1876, 25.

<sup>428</sup> See, altogether: Nicolás Serrano, “Carta del Sr. D. Nicolás María Serrano, hermano de nuestro inolvidable Sr. Obispo, al Director de la Revista,” *Revista Católica*, July 15, 1876, 433-434. Nicolás Serrano, “Nueva carta de D. Nicolás María Serrano,” *Revista Católica*, August 5, 1876, 503. Nicolás Serrano, “Dos cartas,” *Revista Católica*, August 12, 1876, 529-531.

the group of mothers that Nicolás had directly appealed to—and pleaded back with the family not to “seize that which the Havana Diocese considered a precious treasure.”<sup>429</sup> Here, Armas Ojeda likewise grabbed onto a phrase that Nicolás himself had used, whereupon he had called his brother a martyr who had to die for others’ salvation, and returned it as yet another reason to refuse his request. Cuba, he agreed, was indeed in need of martyrs. Since it needed martyrs, it also needed their relics. As the *Revista* director put it: “This Island, we will add, [...] also needs the remains of the Good Shepherd, who knew to give up his life for his flock.”<sup>430</sup> At most, Armas Ojeda told him, Cuba would be willing to part with some of his remains, as consolation for his grieving parents. This offer was extended twice, but whether the family accepted is unknown.

The discussion over Apolinar’s burial site had turned into a dispute over rights to the sacred remains. It was also one about just where the remains would have the greater impact. The way that the Cathedral Chapter saw it—and in turn, the Asociación de Católicos behind the *Revista*—the pain felt by Apolinar’s family did not surpass theirs. The love that Nicolás made a show of in his letters was a filial and parental sort of love, wholly human and profane, compared to the attachment and pain felt across the Havana Diocese, whose congregants had lost a veritable father and the much-needed spiritual guidance he provided. As one *Revista* writer put it, the people of Havana were now “orphaned.”<sup>431</sup> Adding to their sense of grief was also the core belief that Apolinar had died not just for them, but also because of them. If his death had been

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<sup>429</sup> “Breves reflexiones sobre la carta anterior,” *Revista Católica*, July 15, 435.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>431</sup> “Exposición de las señoras de La Habana,” *Revista Católica*, July 8, 1876, 413.

punishment for their moral failings, then retaining and paying due homage to his body was a way for the sinners of Cuba to atone.

To be sure, though, there were also temporal implications regarding custodianship of the remains weighing on the Cathedral Chapter and on the Asociación de Católicos. When Armas Ojeda wrote to Nicolás, he pointed out to him how much the people of Havana had done to honor Apolinar and how sumptuous a funeral and burial they had given him. In doing so, Armas Ojeda meant to showcase their appreciation for his departed brother, but also to remind Nicolás that Havana Catholics had spent a considerable amount of resources on Apolinar. In short, Apolinar had now become an investment for them – one that would draw ever more churchgoers to the Havana Cathedral and bolster the faith across the Diocese.

Though the Bishop had not yet been—nor ever, it seems—the subject of an official beatification campaign before the Vatican, continued references to him as a saint and the undeniable cult that Havana Catholics were fostering around him hinted at the conviction that it was only a matter of time before Apolinar turned from *de facto* to *de jure* saint. This conviction also carried with it the hope that devotion to Saint Apolinar expand beyond Havana and into the rest of Cuba, with his gravesite poised to become a place of pilgrimage for people from all over the island—and, perhaps, the greater Spanish Empire. When this happened, the ecclesiastics at the Havana Diocese would be the ones to manage his cult, and the faithful of Havana boast a special relationship to the saint that now blessed their colonial capital.

When it came to claiming rights over the towering figure of Apolinar, it was clear to a forceful and vociferous portion of the Havana faithful that the Bishop belonged to them. Whether the greater love that Havana Catholics held for Apolinar was reason enough for his family to relinquish their claim did not truly matter, for there was no denying that it was in Havana where

his remains would do the greater good. Spain had enough saints of its own, whereas Cuba had none.

Apolinar was, in other words, the saint that Cuba lacked. While former Spanish colonies like Peru and Mexico had gotten their own saints and *beatos* little over a hundred years after their initial conquests—Peruvian Santa Rosa de Lima, canonized in 1671, and Mexican Fray Felipe de Jesús, beatified in 1627—Cuba—and Puerto Rico, for that matter—lagged behind. From a political standpoint, the initial cult around both figures aimed to reinforce ties to Spain in the American viceroyalties and evince the triumph of Catholicism in the region.<sup>432</sup> That Cuba, the biggest and most important of the remaining Spanish colonies in the Americas, did not have venerable personages of its own—with its pressing need to strengthen the colonial church and its links to Spain—stood out as a glaring omission. Indeed, Santa Rosa had risen to fame at a time when the people of greater Peru lived in fear of constant indigenous rebellion, with her first hagiographers fashioning her as protectress for the fearful settlers and Spanish interests in the area.<sup>433</sup> At a time when Cuba was fighting off separatist insurrection, the potential spiritual and political advantages of having Saint Apolinar in Havana must not have been lost to the decision-making ecclesiastics in the Cathedral Chapter. Just as well, though the mourning Havana Catholics who eulogized Apolinar in the press did not express it in such precise terms, the idea that Saint Apolinar could help to subdue the rebellion—as he had intended in life—must have weighed on their mind. Cuba needed a martyr and it needed a saint. That Apolinar was a

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<sup>432</sup> On Santa Rosa, see: Ronald J. Morgan, *Spanish American Saints and the Rhetoric of Identity, 1600-1810* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2002), 68. On Fray Felipe, see: Cornelius Burroughs Conover V, “A Saint in the Empire: Mexico City’s Saint Felipe de Jesús, 1597-1820” (PhD Dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 2008), 163-165.

<sup>433</sup> Morgan, *Spanish American Saints*, 88.

Spaniard made him, furthermore, the ideal candidate to hold the dual title. In the cases of Mexico and Peru, Fray Felipe and Santa Rosa had both been *criollos*, whose cults gave the locals powerful religious figures to imbue with an imagined national character in the waning years of Spanish imperialism.<sup>434</sup> Though their role in encouraging independence movements within their home countries should not be exaggerated, given the present upheaval in the Spanish colonial enterprise, to have given Cuba anyone but the most pious and loyal proponent of political union with Spain as a prospective saint would have introduced too much of a liability in its then tenuous relationship to the metropole.

Apolinar, in turn, would not succumb to such interpretations. Fostering a cult around him was a conscious attempt to exalt a Spaniard—a Spanish Bishop who had come to Cuba in the midst of war, had condemned rebellion and preached for peace—as a moral paradigm from both Spanish and pro-Spanish Catholics in the island. The saint housed in the Havana Cathedral would be at once Spanish and Cuban, and a sure sign of enduring Spanish rule over Cuba.

His presence therein, moreover, would complement that of another, unofficial saint in the Catholic imagination. Besides Apolinar, the Havana Cathedral also served as the final resting place for Christopher Columbus. Columbus' remains had been translated there from Santo Domingo in 1795, when the Spanish government ceded what is now the Dominican Republic to France.<sup>435</sup> Whether the residents of Havana at the time embraced them with either patriotic or religious zeal is difficult to know, for there is little information to be had about their initial

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<sup>434</sup> See: Morgan, *Spanish American Saints*, 68. See also: Conover, "A Saint in the Empire," 283.

<sup>435</sup> On Columbus' remains, see: Christopher Schmidt-Novara, *The Conquest of History: Spanish Colonialism and National Histories in the Nineteenth Century* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 69. On the Spanish-French cession, see: Frank Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic: A National History* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998), 98.

reception.<sup>436</sup> By the 1870s, however, it had become an unquestionable honor to be responsible for guarding Columbus' remains.<sup>437</sup> According to historian Christopher Schmidt-Novara, Columbus had undergone a revival in Spain and in the Americas beginning in the 1860s, when Spain sought to foster admiration for the explorer to "reassert its presence [...] as commercial and cultural leader" across its former colonies, as well as in Cuba and Puerto Rico.<sup>438</sup> It would seem that this secular exaltation had an effect upon certain Spanish ecclesiastical circles, where it would also be safe to assume that it reinvigorated talk of sainthood for Columbus, an old prospect for Spaniards who saw in his conquest of the Americas a great contribution to the whole of Christendom. In December 1875, for example, the *Revista Católica* had reproduced an article from "one of the foremost Catholic journals," listing the causes for Columbus' beatification.<sup>439</sup> This was published in open support of the initiative, which the *Revista* continued to push for in subsequent numbers. Writing in January 1876 upon commemoration of Columbus' 1795 translation to Havana, *Revista* writers expressed their hopes to one day be able to honor his memory with "an even more solemn act than the one we just performed, befitting a glorious

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<sup>436</sup> For a bureaucratic description of his 1796 translation to Havana, see: Guadalupe Chocano and Anunciada Colón de Carvajal, eds., *Cristóbal Colón: Incógnitas de su muerte, 1506-1902. Primeros almirantes de las Indias: Apéndice documental, Vol. 2* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1992), 173-174.

<sup>437</sup> On the reimagining of his figure, see: Schmidt-Novara, *The Conquest of History*, 55-77.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>439</sup> The quote from the 1875 article was copied in another 1876 *Revista Católica* number. See: Armas Ojeda, "Breves palabras con motivo de una carta," *Revista Católica*, August 19, 1876, 2. *Revista* numbers ranging from February 1875 to January 1876 are missing from the repository at the Cuban National Library. Though unnamed, the journal referenced in the original article was likely the Madrid-based *La Cruz*, which had earlier that year published an article on the same issue. See: "Sobre la canonización de Cristóbal Colón," *La Cruz*, 1875, Volume I, 206-208.

resident of Heaven,” and posing an open call to ecclesiastics and other influential Catholics to advance Columbus’ cause before the Pope.<sup>440</sup>

When Apolinar got to Havana, it seems that the commotion of the first few months in office, paired with his subsequent sickness, prevented the faithful—as well as the Bishop—from organizing further around the matter. Once Apolinar passed, the issue became yet another one on the list of good deeds that had been about to materialize under his leadership. In August 1876, the *Revista* director lamented as much, declaring that one of the major disillusionments to arise from his short tenure was that the Diocese never got to move forward with its intent to campaign for Columbus’ beatification.<sup>441</sup> If Spanish or Havana Catholics ever did so after the fact, the *Revista Católica* did not report it. Neither did I encounter related documents at the Vatican Archives. Columbus’ cause, however, was popular among Catholics of different nations and old news among the ecclesiastics in charge at the Vatican.<sup>442</sup> In 1877, the Sacred Congregation of Rites—a now-defunct Vatican office charged with, among other liturgical concerns, the canonization of saints—denied an examination of Columbus, for though his conquest of the Americas had done much good for Catholicism, his great extent of personal sins was also common knowledge.<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>440</sup> The January 1876 quote was also copied in the abovementioned August 1876 article of the *Revista Católica*. See: Armas Ojeda, “Breves palabras con motivo de una carta,” *Revista Católica*, August 19, 1876, 2.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid.

<sup>442</sup> Italians, for example, disputed ownership over Columbus with the Spanish. See: Schmidt-Novara, *The Conquest of History*, 65-68. In 1877, coincidentally, the Italian Bishop of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic announced to the world that construction workers had discovered Columbus’ true remains underneath a vault in the Santo Domingo Cathedral. While a boon to Columbus’ cause for beatification, it was likewise read as an affront to Spain in the ongoing battle to claim Columbus as their own. See: Ibid, 69-75.

<sup>443</sup> Diego Barros Arana, “El proyecto de canonizar a Cristóbal Colón,” *Anales de la Unviersidad de Chile*, January 1, 1892, 53-87.

Yet in late 1876, when the people of Havana were encouraging a cult around Apolinar and holding out hope for an eventual beatification of the Spanish Bishop, they still did anticipate that Columbus would be beatified. Should both come to pass, Havana would become a shining beacon of Spanish imperialism, a place of pilgrimage for staunch loyalists, who saw in Columbus an ambassador for the once conquering and still enduring Spanish Empire and in Apolinar a modern defender of its now precarious jurisdiction. It would likewise become a sacred site for devout Catholics, who regarded both figures as bold missionaries for the Catholic Church. Via Columbus and Apolinar, politics and religion were set converge upon the Havana Cathedral. In this sense, the cult around Apolinar was not just about stamping out rebellion in the immediate context of the Ten Years' War, but also about securing a lasting union between Cuba and the metropole, cementing the island as a piece of true and unwavering Spanish soil.

For all their initial momentum, the group of women that had promoted the construction of his marble monument and mused about the benefits that his internment in Havana might bring eventually spoke up in disagreement with the Cathedral Chapter's decision to retain Apolinar. After Nicolás' letters pleading to have his brother back were made public, the mothers of Havana proved partial to his entreaties and authored a letter expressing their remorse, published in the journal *El Recreo de las Damas*. In their letter, the women apologized for causing Apolinar's mother additional pain and offered to donate the funds collected for his monument to be put towards the family's own mausoleum. The Cathedral Chapter, however, ignored their proposal and the Asociación de Católicos disparaged it in the *Revista*, jumping at the chance to further speak on behalf of the faithful and defend their position. Keeping Apolinar in Havana, as Eduardo Llanas put it, corresponded both to "a true religious necessity" and "the natural desire of

its residents to preserve what is left of the father that so loved them.”<sup>444</sup> Regarding the funds collected for his monument, sending them to the family would be unwise, for the people who had cooperated with the collection would be reluctant to see the funds used in any other way.

When the Palencia newspaper, *La Propaganda Católica*, published another of Nicolás’ letters seeking to persuade the women of Havana to give them back Apolinar, the *Revista Católica* answered on their behalf. In an apparent attempt to undo the damage caused by the Havana mothers’ publication in *El Recreo de las Damas*, the *Revista* writer claimed that Apolinar’s family did not know how much taking him away would hurt the mothers of Havana, who thought that the pain of his passing would kill them, and who then wept and laid flowers at the foot of his tomb, as they hoped that their own children and grandchildren would continue to do so in the future.<sup>445</sup>

This was the last entry on the matter for the *Revista Católica*. If Nicolás and the Havana mothers further corresponded, their letters must have been private and do not figure as part of the archival record. In January 1879, Apolinar’s monument in the Havana Cathedral was finished and unveiled, with his brother Melchor in attendance.<sup>446</sup> Apolinar remains interred in the Havana Cathedral and the marble monument of his likeness atop his mausoleum still stands. Cristopher Columbus was never beatified and upon Cuban independence from Spain, his body was moved to the Cathedral of Seville.

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<sup>444</sup> Eduardo Llanas, “Nuestra opinión,” *Revista Católica*, August 26, 1876, 26.

<sup>445</sup> The *Revista Católica* published both the original *Propaganda Católica* letter and its response in separate numbers. See: “Tiernas palabras de la *Propaganda Católica* de Palencia,” *Revista Católica*, September 2, 1876, 59-61. “Respuesta a una súplica,” *Revista Católica*, September 9, 1876, 84-88.

<sup>446</sup> “Sección piadosa,” *Revista Católica*, January 3, 1879, 516.

## 4.2 In Defense of Jesuit Education for Puerto Rico

In 1886, a decade after the Asociación de Católicos de la Habana fought to retain Apolinar, Catholics in Puerto Rico found themselves in a battle over the expansion of civil education on the island, and what this might mean for the future of Puerto Rico and the fate of Catholicism therein. The conflict had been the culmination of over ten years of back and forth between conservative, pro-Spanish Catholics and liberal reformers on the island, and it would be one of the last bastions upon which the fight to preserve a Spanish, Catholic Puerto Rico would be fought.

In 1858, the Bishop of Puerto Rico had invited a group of Spanish Jesuits to the island to oversee the education of would-be *criollo* ecclesiastics in the Seminario Conciliar.<sup>447</sup> Theirs became a pivotal and much more public role soon after, however, when the Governor General asked them to take on secondary education male students alongside the seminarians.<sup>448</sup> With the exception of a few private tutors imparting their own classes, the Jesuits went on to have virtual control over secondary schooling in Puerto Rico via their transformed Seminario-Colegio until 1873. That year, the Diputación Provincial debated a proposal to form the Instituto Civil de Segunda Enseñanza (henceforth Instituto Civil), a government-run school whose curriculum would include, among other subjects—and as the Seminario-Colegio did, too—History, Mathematics, English, Philosophy, Chemistry, and Religion.<sup>449</sup> Though lessons at the Instituto Civil would happen in tandem with those of the Jesuits, whose own school would remain in

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<sup>447</sup> Álvaro Huerga, *Los obispos de Puerto Rico en el siglo XIX* (Ponce: Pontificia Universidad Católica de Puerto Rico, 1994), 159.

<sup>448</sup> Antonio López de Santa Anna, *Los jesuitas en Puerto Rico de 1858 a 1886* (Santander: Taller de artes gráficas de los Hermanos Bedia, 1958), 24-25.

<sup>449</sup> For the full curriculum, see: Cayetano Coll y Toste, *Historia de la instrucción pública en Puerto Rico hasta el año de 1898* (San Juan: Taller Tipográfico del Boletín Mercantil, 1910), 113.

operation, instruction at the Instituto Civil was to be placed in the hands of lay teachers, and its inauguration facilitate civic competition on the matter of secondary education. The Diputación Provincial approved the proposal and the Instituto Civil opened its doors in November 1873.<sup>450</sup>

This was a big blow for Catholics in Puerto Rico. Intentions to create the Instituto Civil had been disputed ever since the idea was first presented to the Diputación in 1871.<sup>451</sup> The initiative for the Instituto Civil had come from the reform-minded representatives that occupied the Diputación after the 1868 liberal coup against Queen Isabella II allowed for the creation of political parties on the island, and the Partido Liberal Reformista was formed in 1870; its members now elected to local office.<sup>452</sup> Or so thought the conservative, pro-Spanish writers behind the *Boletín Mercantil*, the official mouthpiece of what was then known as the Partido Conservador and would later become the Partido Incondicionalmente Español (henceforth Partido Incondicional).<sup>453</sup> The 1871 proposal to establish the Instituto Civil was cited in the *Boletín Mercantil*, who relied on its liberal advocates' own words to denounce it, as the Instituto was meant "to consolidate [their] political, economic and administrative reforms, which, facilitating the commerce of ideas, [will] shine a light on horizons that have thus far been overcast."<sup>454</sup> To the writers at the *Boletín Mercantil*, this was a veiled attempt at secularizing the whole of secondary education on the island, and they decried what they anticipated would

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<sup>450</sup> Coll y Toste, *Historia de la instrucción pública*, 116.

<sup>451</sup> The *Boletín Mercantil* made a reference to the 1871 debate over the Instituto Civil in a later, 1874 number. See: "El Instituto," *Boletín Mercantil*, May 10, 1874, 2.

<sup>452</sup> "Liberal Reformist Party," in *Encyclopedia of Latin America: Amerindians through the Age of Globalization*, eds. John C. Fredriksen, J. Michael Francis, and Monica Rankin (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010), 187.

<sup>453</sup> On the *Boletín Mercantil* and the Partido Incondicional, see: Antonio S. Pedreira, *El periodismo en Puerto Rico: Bosquejo histórico desde su iniciación hasta el 1930, Vol. I* (La Habana: Imprenta Úcar, García y Cía, 1941), 68.

<sup>454</sup> "El Instituto I," *Boletín Mercantil*, May 10, 1874, 2.

become a war against the Jesuits, in which the liberal press would lead a defamation campaign that would ultimately empty the Seminario-Colegio of students and force the Jesuits to abandon the island.<sup>455</sup>

In 1873, when liberal members of the Diputación Provincial renewed the effort to create the Instituto Civil, Pablo Ubarri, President of the Partido Incondicional, wrote to fellow conservatives at the Spanish Parliament for help in opposing it, citing both economic reasons—the Jesuit school was self-sustaining whereas the Instituto Civil was publicly-funded—and political motives to block its approval—for the spirit of reform behind the project would only lead to increased calls for greater political freedoms, and eventually, independence.<sup>456</sup> On May 18, 1873, the San Juan Catholic newspaper, mouthpiece of the Asociación de Católicos de Puerto Rico, *La Verdad*, published an article railing against the satirical journal *Don Severo Cantarino*, whose director had penned a column requesting that the Jesuits teaching at the Seminario be expelled from the island. In their denunciation, it was all too clear that Don Severo—the pseudonymous character represented in the paper—could not be Puerto Rican, for he failed to recognize the benefits the Jesuits brought to the island.<sup>457</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> Their second editorial on the matter reads: “...al ver que de lo que se trataba aquí no era de proveer a Puerto Rico de un Instituto de Segunda Enseñanza, porque ya existía uno con más elementos que el nuevo, sino de secularizar aquella, de hacer aquí innecesarios los profesores eclesiásticos, atacamos desde el principio la instalación del Instituto reformista.” For the full quote, and more on their anticipated defamation campaign, see: “El Instituto II,” *Boletín Mercantil*, May 13, 1874, 2.

<sup>456</sup> On Pablo Ubarri, see: Lidio Cruz Monclova, *La educación en Puerto Rico en el siglo XIX* (San Juan: Editorial Ultra, 2006), 67. On the Jesuit school being self-sustaining, see: “El Seminario-Colegio,” *Boletín Mercantil*, December 20, 1872, 2. On the incondicionales’ position on reforms, see: Labor Gómez Acevedo, *Sanz, promotor de la conciencia separatista en Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Ediciones de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1956), 177.

<sup>457</sup> “Palabras que se lleva el viento,” *La Verdad*, May 18, 1873, 2.

Their worries, however, dispersed when José Laureano Sanz was named Governor General of Puerto Rico in February 1874.<sup>458</sup> A sympathizer of the Partido Incondicional who had served a first term as Governor General of Puerto Rico in the wake of the failed Grito de Lares and the outbreak of the Ten Years' War in Cuba, between 1868 and 1870, he had sought to suppress all manner of dissent and potential sources of rebellion for fear that the Cuban uprising would lead to further unrest in Puerto Rico.<sup>459</sup> In 1874, with the Ten Years' War still in the backdrop and a vigilant Bourbon Crown restored in the Peninsula, Sanz acted upon the dictates of the Ministro de Ultramar to make sure that all teachers would instill in their students respect for the authorities and the homeland (*patria*), preventing them from fostering separatist sentiments and other dangerous politics.<sup>460</sup> In May, he dissolved the Instituto Civil on the basis that formal proceedings for the approval of educational institutions were breached in its establishment, and handed its students over to the Seminario-Colegio.<sup>461</sup>

When the Instituto Civil closed, the members of the Partido Incondicional celebrated in the pages of the *Boletín Mercantil* with a larger reflection on the dangers of secular education. Their May 13, 1874 editorial on the matter declared that modern schooling—i.e. public and secular—was devoid of moral principles, and governments that tried to “banish the Church from schools” were blind to its repercussions. In the places where education had been taken from the Church, the editorial continued, revolution had arisen. Associating the empire-wide expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767 to the outbreak of the Spanish-American Wars of Independence, the editorial

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<sup>458</sup> Gómez Acevedo, *Sanz*, 185.

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid*, 106-107.

<sup>460</sup> Coll y Toste, *Historia de la instrucción pública*, 116.

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid*, 118-125. For a contemporary discussion of the faults found with the Instituto Civil, see: “El Instituto I,” *Boletín Mercantil*, May 10, 1874, 2.

pointed out how “50 years after the Society of Jesus was expelled from Spanish America, the sons of secular education tossed the Castilian flag from Columbus’ continent.”<sup>462</sup> The editorial further expanded upon the idea, declaring that the constant revolts that had besieged the former Spanish colonies since their independence were a direct result of them having expelled religion from their lands, contiguous with their rejection of Spain. With these words, the Partido Incondicional made it clear that it allowed for no such meddling with religion. To challenge it at all was an affront to Spain – and Spain and Catholicism were linked irrevocably.

Notwithstanding that the Instituto Civil included Religion among its curriculum, it was evident to members of the Partido Incondicional that the topic, left in the hands of laymen—and thus potentially contaminated with unorthodox and possibly sacrilegious views—would make for a null spiritual instruction. Only ecclesiastics could be trusted to teach the word of God, and only Spanish ecclesiastics such as the Jesuits could be trusted to keep the young men in their care from falling prey to insurrectionist and iconoclastic ideas.

This was a win for hardline, Catholic conservatives. Alternation between conservatives and liberal reformers in local politics, however, meant that the prospect of reviving the Instituto Civil was never too far in the horizon, and the *Boletín Mercantil* found itself in constant need of defending the Seminario-Colegio against recriminations from the liberal press and continued calls for the need to sponsor civil education initiatives on the island. Upon the latter occasion, *Boletín* contributors would take the chance to remind its readers—and Puerto Rico—that demands for civil education concealed larger aspirations to get rid of the Seminario-Colegio altogether.<sup>463</sup> The Seminario-Colegio had become an emblem of pro-Spanish sentiments for the

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<sup>462</sup> “El Instituto II,” *Boletín Mercantil*, May 13, 1874, 2.

<sup>463</sup> “Como siempre,” *Boletín Mercantil*, December 7, 1879, 2.

Partido Incondicional, who would seek to bolster it through both discourse and material means. In 1876, the Bishop of Puerto Rico asked the Jesuits to vacate the Seminario Conciliar and gave its direction over to the Padres Paules, declaring his intention to maintain seminarians and regular students separate from each other—the latter being a bad influence upon the first.<sup>464</sup> Upon hearing of their need for a new locale, the same Pablo Ubarri who had sought to block the Instituto Civil in 1873, then Vice President of the Diputación Provincial and landowner in the neighboring *barrio* of Cangrejos (now Santurce) donated land for the construction of a new school and spearheaded a proposal for the use of public funds to pay for its construction. The Jesuit school, now unaffiliated with the Seminario Conciliar, was to be called the Instituto Provincial de Segunda Enseñanza.<sup>465</sup> (In the spirit of continuing with its old designation, however, the school was most often referred to as the Colegio-Instituto, and will be the name adopted henceforth.)<sup>466</sup> The Diputación Provincial approved the proposal for its construction, moreover giving the ecclesiastics and their itinerant school provisional lodgings in one of its own buildings while the proposed establishment in Cangrejos was completed.<sup>467</sup>

To conservative Catholics, the now renamed Colegio-Instituto was, as the admiring words the *Boletín* would often heap upon it, “the beacon of truth that guides us forward through the dark night that has thus far enveloped us.”<sup>468</sup> And they would fight to keep that way. Their

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<sup>464</sup> López de Santa Anna, *Los Jesuitas en Puerto Rico*, 80-82. See also: Huerga, *Los obispos de Puerto Rico*, 191-192. For a contemporary reference to the Bishop’s petition, see: “El Instituto de Segunda Enseñanza,” *Boletín Mercantil*, July 7, 1876, 2.

<sup>465</sup> This is based on the name used in official government publications, like the *Gaceta de Puerto Rico*, though references to the Jesuit school can also be found under Colegio Instituto, Colegio de Cangrejos, and Colegio San Ignacio.

<sup>466</sup> This is the name most used to refer to the Jesuit school in the *Boletín Mercantil*.

<sup>467</sup> López de Santa Anna, *Los Jesuitas en Puerto Rico*, 88-90.

<sup>468</sup> “Dos horas en el Instituto de Cangrejos,” *Boletín Mercantil*, March 31, 1880, 2.

praise, though unprovoked, was a preemptive measure against the persistent criticism to which the Jesuit school was subjected, as well as a strategy to keep the Colegio-Instituto and its undeniable benefits on the public's mind. In the struggle to save Jesuit education, the *Boletín Mercantil* would serve as the medium by which Catholics in Puerto Rico voiced their opposition to plans that would further civil education on the island, and a crucial component of their fight to salvage the Colegio-Instituto from its would-be attackers.

In 1881, facing the prospect of a new Instituto Civil—with progressive members of the Diputación having voted to reinstitute it in 1880—the editor responded to apparent accusations from an unnamed source that the Partido Incondicional had appealed to the King to have the motion denied. The Partido Incondicional had done no such thing. Yet with this public refusal, the editor went on to denounce the latest liberal attempt at reviving the Instituto Civil as an initiative that “harbored (*que entraña*) the suppression of the Jesuits.”<sup>469</sup> Religious admonitions against the Instituto Civil were not all that the Partido Incondicional had to go on, however. On top of this, the Partido Incondicional could not, in good conscience, support the Instituto Civil, for it was a much costlier venture than what the taxpayers of Puerto Rico had ever spent on the Jesuit school, costing “seven times” more than what the Colegio-Instituto had ever extracted from public coffers. Making matters even worse, the Instituto Civil would only offer educational opportunities to the limited number of would-be pupils that lived in San Juan. Unlike the Colegio-Instituto of the Jesuits, the Instituto Civil would not offer accommodations to students who might need them, meaning that young men from outside San Juan would not be able to attend. Concerned families, the editor continued, would have no other choice but to send their children out to “live in an inn (*fonda*),” where the young men would be “perverted in favor of an

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<sup>469</sup> “Instituto Civil,” *Boletín Mercantil*, April 29, 1881, 2.

education inferior to that being offered by the Jesuits.”<sup>470</sup> It was an impossible choice, and one that the upstanding families of the island would not consent to. The Colegio-Instituto already educated a larger number of pupils than the Instituto Civil could ever aspire to enroll. The project was thus not only unnecessary, but also exclusionary and discriminatory.

Members of the Partido Incondicional, for all the rigidity its name implied, thought of themselves as educated and modern men capable of participating in political debate and engaging in civic discourse. Militants in the Partido Incondicional were also capable of opposing an undertaking like the Instituto Civil on the simple, practical terms that its costs far outstripped its potential gains. Their politics, as well, were certainly undergirded by exploits beyond religion, or that of civil *versus* ecclesiastical education, such as their own economies, many of them being wealthy landowners who had opposed abolition before it was passed in 1873, and were concerned about the economic fallout that both further liberal reforms and independence from Spain might bring. Defending Catholicism was not part of the Partido Incondicional’s constitution.<sup>471</sup> Yet religious anxieties likewise come up again and again as justification for the *incondicionales’* politics. To the Partido Incondicional, Catholicism was more than just a rhetorical device. As much as its members relied on economic arguments and appeals to fairness to declare the Instituto Civil a pointless venture, the galvanizing force behind their quest to stop it from going forward was the religious devotion that they regarded as inseparable from their love of Spain. In the same *Boletín Mercantil* column where the editor elucidated upon their financial arguments against the Instituto Civil, the selfsame conviction that without a firm Catholic education, revolution would take over, resurfaced. To approve the Instituto Civil would

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<sup>470</sup> Ibid.

<sup>471</sup> See: *Credo y constitución del Partido Incondicionalmente Español* (San Juan: Impresora El Comercio, 1886).

be an ill-fated decision. Referencing the Cuban Ten Years' War (1868-1878), the editor reminded its readers "that the Cuban uprising [had] recruited its principal henchmen (*secuaces*) in the civil institutions [schools] founded by [Governor] General Dulce in 1861." In contrast, not one of the students at the Jesuit Colegio de Belén in Havana "had joined Céspedes' ranks."<sup>472</sup> Yet for all the available antecedents, the Governor General of Puerto Rico dared to consider the proposal that would bring back the Instituto Civil, while also knowing full well that it had come from the mind of liberal and godless *diputados*.<sup>473</sup> As the editor's closing words implied, however, those concerned and disappointed with the Governor need not fret, for the *Boletín* would always speak up in defense of the nation's best interests.<sup>474</sup>

On November 1882, with the new Instituto Civil approved and awaiting inauguration, majority members of the Partido Liberal Reformista at the Diputación Provincial authorized a proposal that would charge the Jesuits at the Colegio-Instituto 300 pesos a month for use of the facilities the Diputación had built them in Cangrejos. The approved proposal also entailed eliminating the 6,000 pesos in annual subsidies that the Diputación had been giving them since

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<sup>472</sup> The author of the *Boletín Mercantil* piece was referring to Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, intellectual author of the 1868 Grito de Yara, which started the Cuban Ten Years' War. When referring to General Dulce, the author—though he slipped on the year—was likely alluding to his 1863 Plan de Estudios, which led to the establishment of secondary education *institutos civiles* in Havana, Matanzas, Puerto Príncipe, and Santiago. See: Enrique Sosa Rodríguez and Alejandrina Penabaz Féliz, *Historia de la educación en Cuba, Vol. 9* (La Habana: Ediciones Boloña, 2001), 86-87.

<sup>473</sup> Their reference to liberal *diputados* is a clear allusion to Manuel Fernández Juncos, journalist and *diputado* who had signed onto the 1879 proposal presented before the Diputación Provincial to bring back the Instituto Civil. At the time, Fernández Juncos was not only a member of the Diputación Provincial, but was also at the helm of the liberal newspaper *El Agente*, with which the *Boletín Mercantil* continually bickered over issues not limited to the Colegio-Instituto. See: Pedreira, *El periodismo en Puerto Rico*, 109-112. For the original 1879 proposal, see: "Sesión ordinaria celebrada el día 7 de noviembre de 1879," *Gaceta de Puerto Rico*, 1-2.

<sup>474</sup> The original reads: "...a saber, que el *Boletín* defiende siempre sinceramente los intereses del país..." See: "Instituto Civil," *Boletín Mercantil*, April 29, 1881, 2.

1874.<sup>475</sup> The November 9 decision was announced—and denounced—in the pages of the *Boletín Mercantil* on November 10, under the title “Too Much Already” (“Ya es mucho”). As the title to the column suggests, the writer saw the decision as a tipping point that would determine the future of the island. With it, political debate in Puerto Rico had ceased to revolve around “reformers and conservatives,” and was now to be between conservatives and “revolutionaries.”<sup>476</sup> The writer demanded reparations, lest the Jesuits see themselves forced to abandon Puerto Rico. Complaint letters from concerned readers started being directed to the Governor General, the President of the Diputación Provincial (then the conservative, or *incondicional*, Don Justo Skerrett), and the direction of the *Boletín Mercantil*. Letters from fathers and landowners in the towns of Toa Baja, Lares, and Juana Díaz were all published in the *Boletín*. For the most part, the letters aimed to strike a conciliatory tone. All conceded that education—both civil and ecclesiastical—was a welcome venture that gestured towards the progress and wellbeing of the island. Yet they also pointed out that charging rent to the Jesuit fathers would hurt students like their sons, who did not live in San Juan.<sup>477</sup> These were the same fears that the Partido Incondicional had brandied about in 1881, made more tangible for the coming inauguration of the Instituto Civil and the menace of seeing the Jesuits destitute of their privileges. The signatories from Toa Baja, however, found it difficult to present their anxieties

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<sup>475</sup> On the proposal to eliminate the subsidy, see: López de Santa Anna, *Los jesuitas en Puerto Rico*, 122. Father Garzón explains that the Diputación had approved the sum after the first Instituto Civil closed and the Seminario Colegio was obliged to take in its students. His original explanation in a *Boletín Mercantil* article reads: “Desde esa época la Excm. Diputación nos asignó, lo que muchas veces había prometido el gobierno, sin darlo una sola, 6,000 pesos, como honorarios por la enseñanza oficial.” See: Francisco Garzón, “Colegio de San Ignacio,” *Boletín Mercantil*, April 25, 1886, 2.

<sup>476</sup> The original Spanish reads: “Y conste, también, que la cuestión no es ya de reformistas y conservadores, sino de estos con revolucionarios...” See: “Ya es mucho,” *Boletín Mercantil*, November 10, 1882, 2-3.

<sup>477</sup> See: “Protesta,” *Boletín Mercantil*, December 22, 1886, 2-3. “Exposición,” *Boletín Mercantil*, December 22, 1882, 3. “Exposición,” *Boletín Mercantil*, December 29, 1882, 2.

under the guise of such logistical queries, falling back upon the tried and tested fears of the dire moral repercussions that would follow such a decision, and accusations of godlessness against the liberal reformers behind it. The Partido Liberal Reformista, which had long ago “declared their hate” towards the Jesuits, was dead set on their disappearance, and charging them rent was a poorly disguised attempt at kicking them out. The Governor General should heed their words and override the *diputados*’ decision. To do so, in their estimation, would be a great service to both religion and homeland (*patria*).<sup>478</sup>

Though no such intervention from the Governor General followed their pleas, the Colegio-Instituto managed to withstand the 300 pesos charge and the initial termination of its subsidies, after the 1884 reinstatement of the much-reduced sum of 2,000 annual pesos. With conservative, Catholic intervention made implausible at the local level, the Jesuits’ headmaster at the time, Father Mariano Rodríguez, petitioned the King for assistance in covering the expense, and the allowance was mandated by order of the Ministerio de Ultramar in June 1884.<sup>479</sup> Yet for all the material support that aimed to secure their continued presence on the island, Catholic fears came to pass in 1886. That year, the Jesuits at the Colegio-Instituto were faced with an onslaught of antagonistic liberal-authored writings that would finally succeed in pushing them off the island. The attacks themselves might not have been new, but they were novel in their vehemence and accusations. Or so they were depicted by the *Boletín Mercantil* and the Jesuits’ headmaster himself, who thought it necessary to respond to their allegations.

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<sup>478</sup> “Protesta,” *Boletín Mercantil*, December 22, 1882, 2-3.

<sup>479</sup> “Negociado 1º,” *Gazeta de Puerto Rico*, June 28, 1884, 2-3. On Mariano Rodríguez, see: López de Santa Anna, *Los Jesuitas en Puerto Rico*, 159.

In April 1886, *El Clamor del País*, the liberal-lead newspaper that had succeeded the now shut *El Agente*, began publishing a series of articles accusing the Colegio-Instituto of having outfitted its library and science laboratories with misbegotten public funds, to the detriment of the Instituto Civil, that lacked both a library and scientific equipment with which to teach.<sup>480</sup> Though the articles are no longer available in the archival record, the responses recorded in the *Boletín Mercantil* allow us to gain enough insight into their accusations. On April 18, the then Jesuit headmaster, Father Francisco Garzón, replied to *El Clamor* with a long letter sent for publication to the *Boletín Mercantil*. As Father Garzón explained, his response could not be sent to *El Clamor* itself, for the publication had been suspended after its allegations of virtual stealing against the Jesuits had come to light.<sup>481</sup>

In his letter, Father Garzón accused publications like *El Clamor* of believing that freedom of the press indicated the freedom to spread lies (*calumnias*). What *El Clamor* had published was a falsehood, and Father Garzón demanded a retraction, or he would go to the tribunals for further censure. Such baseless libel, in his opinion, was a result of wide-ranging hatred for the Jesuits, who were constantly degraded by people and publications like *El Clamor*, “because we dress in clerical garb (*sotana*) and teach the moral of Catholic catechism as the principal course in all our schools.” The accusations were to be expected. Yet Father Garzón would have *El Clamor* know—as well as all the people reading his letter—that the Jesuits in Puerto Rico held no special privileges. In fact, they had been badly mistreated during their stay, withstanding insults and injuries, not limited to accusations like the one in question, after first accepting to fulfil the

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<sup>480</sup> On *El Clamor* and *El Agente*, see: Pedreira, *El periodismo en Puerto Rico*, 107, 118.

<sup>481</sup> The April 18 letter was published in the *Boletín Mercantil* on April 25. See: “Los reverendos padres jesuitas,” *Boletín Mercantil*, April 25, 1886, 2.

government's own request for them to take over secondary education, and then having their meager subsidies taken away as the result of political and "antireligious passion." This marked the first time in over a decade of liberal attacks against the Jesuits and their school that the ecclesiastics pronounced themselves on the matter. Following their initial expulsion from the Spanish Empire in 1767 and a similar 1868 order following the overthrow of Queen Isabella that saw them cast out of the Peninsula, where the order had just been allowed to come back, the Jesuits at the Colegio-Instituto might have expected—and been used to—gratuitous insults from the likes of self-denominated freethinkers, as well as certain pushback from local government, but it seems that accusing them of robbing the State had crossed a line.<sup>482</sup> Just as the Colegio-Instituto often enrolled poor students for free and at the ecclesiastics' own cost, as Father Garzón included in his response, the Jesuits had also been obliged to outfit their school with their own limited income.

Father Garzón's words were accompanied by those of the *Boletín*'s editor, who counterattacked in less diplomatic terms. The way he saw it, reformers such as those behind *El Clamor* had always gone to great lengths to provoke the Jesuits, this due to the fact that the Jesuits had for so long focused their energies on fighting "democrats and freethinkers." The *Boletín Mercantil* and the Partido Incondicional only followed in their footsteps. Referencing both the Jesuits and their Colegio-Instituto, the editor further stated: "As Catholics and Spaniards, [we] cannot but come out in defense of an institution that is eminently Catholic and eminently Spanish." Much like the *Revista Católica* had done in Havana, the *Boletín Mercantil* presented itself as the legitimate representative of public opinion in Puerto Rico, whose

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<sup>482</sup> On the Jesuits' 1868 expulsion from Spain, see: Manuel Revuelta González, *La Compañía de Jesús en la España contemporánea: Supresión y reinstalación (1868-1883)*, Vol. I (Bilbao: Ediciones Mensajero, 1983), 25-30.

inhabitants it depicted as both good Catholics and loyal citizens of the Spanish Empire.<sup>483</sup> As such, it would continue to express their distaste over the Jesuits' relentless persecution and labor to safeguard the Colegio-Instituto and the ecclesiastics' continued presence on the island.

As previously discussed, freethinking had long been regarded as a dangerous "sophism" that Catholics equated with anticlerical, liberal politics and alternative doctrines, such as Freemasonry and Spiritism. To be a freethinker was to turn your back on Catholicism, and in conservative Catholics' view, this was the same as renouncing God altogether. When the *Boletín Mercantil*'s editor uses the words "democrats and freethinkers" to describe those who would harm the Jesuits he points us to the *incondicionales*' polarized vision of their rivals in the Partido Liberal Reformista, not as self-proclaimed autonomists, but rather, as impious separatists who aimed to break with the Spanish Empire and the Catholic Church. As the *Boletín* had proclaimed in 1882, and again emphasized in 1886, to the Partido Incondicional, the fight over the state of Jesuit education in Puerto Rico was no longer a contest between conservatives and reformers, but rather, between God-fearing conservatives and godless revolutionaries.

When *El Clamor*, now under the guise of *El Agente* (a hat it had donned once again to get around the decreed suspension) punched back against Father Garzón and the *Boletín Mercantil*, its unnamed interlocutor wasted no time in affirming their judgement. His aim was, indeed, to "fight head on against all the power of Jesuitism."<sup>484</sup> As the *Boletín* put it, these were not the words of a mere liberal reformer. They were, moreover, "the biggest insolence" (*el mayor*

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<sup>483</sup> On the *Revista Católica* as the representative of public opinion in Havana, see Chapter 2.

<sup>484</sup> Quotes from *El Agente* reproduced in the *Boletín Mercantil*. See: "Los PP. Jesuitas y *El Agente*," *Boletín Mercantil*, April 30, 1886.

*descaro*) the press had ever directed at the Jesuits in Puerto Rico.<sup>485</sup> The fight had now ceased to be about the use of public funds and the need for increased educational opportunities across the island. The editors behind *El Clamor* and *El Agente* had finally laid their cards out on the table and openly declared war against the Jesuits, just as the *Boletín Mercantil* had forewarned a decade prior and been operating under the assumption of ever since.

Yet the *Boletín* hoped it might be able to stop it. Rumor had it that the writer behind the condemned article that appeared in *El Clamor* and the subsequent columns published in *El Agente* was a member of the Partido Incondicional. The writer, whose last names the *Boletín Mercantil* revealed to be Álvarez Pérez, was both a card-carrying member of the *incondicionales* and a teacher of Latin at the Instituto Civil. On the surface, the affiliations were not incompatible. Ignacio Díaz Caneja, fervent member of the Partido Incondicional and then current director of the *Boletín Mercantil*, had been the Philosophy teacher at the ill-fated first Instituto Civil.<sup>486</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2, the notion that Christians could embrace the kind of modern progress of which the Instituto Civil was emblematic was, after all, accepted wisdom in learned Catholic circles.<sup>487</sup> What was inconceivable about the situation was that a presumed member of the Partido Incondicional venture to attack the Jesuits. Díaz Caneja, at the helm of the *Boletín*, advised the presumed Álvarez Pérez: he would love to be proven wrong, “for the good of the

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<sup>485</sup> “Los PP. Jesuitas y *El Agente*,” *Boletín Mercantil*, May 2, 1886, 2.

<sup>486</sup> On Díaz Caneja having taught at the Instituto civil, see: Coll y Toste, *Historia de la educación en Puerto Rico*, 115. Díaz Caneja had taken over the *Boletín Mercantil* in 1881, see: Pedreira, *El periodismo en Puerto Rico*, 178.

<sup>487</sup> Between 1856 and 1870, celebrated French preacher, Célestin Joseph Félix, pronounced a series of sermons on the notion of Christian progress that were embraced by Catholic publishers in places like Havana. For more, see Chapter 2.

author, the institute to which he belongs, and even the Partido Incondicional.”<sup>488</sup> Concealed in his statement were vague threats about expulsion from the party, lest he publicly recant.

On the next issue, Caneja disclosed that *El Agente* had denounced them for having revealed the name of their most recent contributor. Yet, given the new terms of the debate, the *Boletín* was now willing to play dirty. As a response, it further criticized that it had to find out it was Álvarez Pérez from hearsay, rather than from the author himself, who was too scared to show his face – a cowardice that was well-informed, as Díaz Caneja implied.<sup>489</sup> Affiliation with the *incondicionales*, he continued, carried with it the promise to defend and propagate Catholicism. On top of this, Álvarez Pérez’s transgressions were rendered ever more reprobate, for he had previously shown himself—one might presume, before other members of the Partido Incondicional—to be sympathetic towards the Jesuits. In this case, wishing to “fight against Jesuitism” could be nothing less than masonic influence having found its way to Álvarez Pérez. As Díaz Caneja put it, words such as his were clear “masonic aspirations,” and it was the *Boletín*’s responsibility to unveil and to combat them.

For Catholics such as those active in the Partido Incondicional, the spirit of progress that pushed forth establishments like the Instituto Civil was not the problem. Neither was the idea of progress regarded as inherently corrupt. After all, both *incondicionales* and liberals agreed that the island needed further educational institutions. What was to be condemned and resisted was an ill-interpreted notion of progress that did not take the Church and Catholic catechism into the equation. In this sense, they partook in the same notion that the vociferous Catholic publishers of

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<sup>488</sup> Los PP. Jesuitas y *El Agente*,” *Boletín Mercantil*, May 2, 1886, 2.

<sup>489</sup> Original reads: “...hay que distinguir si lo escribe [...], por ejemplo, uno, que no se atreve a dar la cara, y él sabrá por qué...” See: “Los PP. Jesuitas y *El Agente* IV,” *Boletín Mercantil*, May 5, 1886, 2.

Havana—discussed in Chapter 2—were then laboring to make clear: progress was all well and good, but it was unthinkable if what passed for progress aimed to leave the Church behind. The concerned fathers whose letters were published in the *Boletín Mercantil* upon the Jesuits being dictated to pay rent were likewise clear: civil education was not the issue. It was that the proponents of the Instituto Civil had resolved to make religious education obsolete. Given Álvarez Pérez’s public renunciation of the *incondicionales*’ values and longtime Jesuit cause, a change of heart presumed to have been born off his affiliation with the Instituto Civil, it was now also evident that neither its proponents nor the education offered at the Instituto Civil could be trusted.

Escalation over the issue of secular *versus* religious education was taking place within a context of heightened tensions and worsening relations between liberals and conservatives on the island. In his second response to the continued attacks in *El Agente*, Father Garzón stated that the current debate over the Jesuits’ instructional materials was an offshoot of much older disputations, in which “the illustrious Pérez Moris had battled against the enemies of Religion, who are not often friends to the Jesuits.”<sup>490</sup> This was a reference to the late José Pérez Moris, assassinated in September 1881, when he was director of the *Boletín Mercantil*. Pérez Moris had been a staunch *incondicional*. Not only had he fought against liberals in the press; in 1873, he had rallied against the proposed first Instituto Civil as a member of the Diputación Provincial, much in the same paranoid manner that Pablo Ubarri had done.<sup>491</sup> In 1881, he had again run for—and won—a seat in the Diputación Provincial. His win, however, was contested, with liberals claiming irregularities in the election. According to accounts leading up to the event,

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<sup>490</sup> Francisco Garzón, “Vindicación,” *Boletín Mercantil*, May 8, 1886, 2.

<sup>491</sup> Cruz Monclova, *La educación en Puerto Rico*, 66-67.

tensions ran high – in part, fanned by Pérez Moris himself, who liked to boast about his disputed win. Not long after the election, he was stabbed on his doorstep and later died of his wounds. The perpetrator—a hired hand—was soon arrested, but the intellectual authors behind the crime were never uncovered.<sup>492</sup> Díaz Caneja, who went on to succeed Pérez Moris at the *Boletín* and was with him at the time of his stabbing, quickly depicted him as a martyr who had died for his beliefs. On the first issue to be printed after news of his death became public, Díaz Caneja announced that his assassination had been “counterproductive, for the saintly ideal of the homeland that filled the illustrious victim’s spirit is immortal; [and] because the great Partido Incondicional, having learned a lesson after such a mournful experience, will find a new and stronger zeal with which to fulfill, once and for all, its sacred credo.”<sup>493</sup> While his death was not often brought up in the *Boletín* in subsequent years, it would have likely weighed on Díaz Caneja and the members of the Partido Incondicional, as it did for Father Garzón, when thinking about the intent behind proposed liberal reforms and their position on the Colegio-Instituto.

Come 1886, tensions between liberals and conservatives in Puerto Rico had only further escalated. Since the early 1870s, liberalism in the Antilles had been threading two paths: that of assimilation (which sought equal laws and governance for the colonies, which were to be treated as provinces in the Peninsula) and that of autonomism (a position that recognized the Antilles’ unique circumstances and called for self-governance and the freedom to enact their own laws in accordance with their distinct needs).<sup>494</sup> While both political currents co-existed, the Partido

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<sup>492</sup> See: Pedreira, *El periodismo en Puerto Rico*, 114-115. See also: Cayetano Coll y Toste, *Boletín Histórico de Puerto Rico*, Vol. 11 (San Juan: Tipografía Cantero, Fernández & Co, 1924), 124.

<sup>493</sup> “La muerte de D. José Pérez Moris,” *Boletín Mercantil*, October 2, 1881, 2.

<sup>494</sup> For more, see: Antonio S. Pedreira, *El año terrible del 87: Sus antecedentes y sus consecuencias* (San Juan: Editorial Biblioteca de Autores Puertorriqueños, 1945), 17-21. See also: Ignacio Díaz Caneja, *La autonomía de las Antillas: Su historia, sus principios, sus errores, sus tendencias y su porvenir, ante la razón, ante el derecho y ante el patriotismo* (Puerto Rico: Imprenta del Boletín Mercantil, 1887), 5-18. See also: Luis Miguel García Mora, “La

Liberal Reformista had embraced the assimilationist approach since its inception, and had ratified its commitment to it up until its 1883 General Assembly. The Puerto Rican Partido Liberal Reformista and the Cuban Partido Liberal were not on the same page, however. In 1880, the Cuban Partido Liberal, which in 1878 had been constituted as assimilationist, exchanged assimilation for autonomism, and in 1881 solidified its vision when it published its new credo in the Havana-based newspaper, *El Triunfo*.<sup>495</sup> In Puerto Rico, in 1885, *El Clamor del País*—the same paper that in 1886 would take to attacking the Jesuits in unprecedented fashion—reprinted the Cuban credo. With this action, its editors had publicly broken away from the party line and created a schism that further settled the liberal split into two camps.<sup>496</sup> For conservatives, this new autonomist faction made liberalism an ever more substantial force with which to contend. Autonomism, notwithstanding that it sought to maintain the colonies' political union with Spain, was viewed as one step too close to independence, and could not be given a voice in politics, nor control of the Instituto Civil.

In 1885, Díaz Caneja published a monograph that examined the different arenas of government administration in the Antilles. The text, *La cuestión ultramarina*, was a conservative, pro-Spanish treatise that reflected, from the standpoint of Puerto Rico, upon good governance and developments to beware of in their present and future political trajectories, were Cuba and Puerto Rico to remain Spanish. His impression that civil education was a nest of Freemason conspiracies, as his supposition about Álvarez Pérez points to, had been presented in

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fuerza de la palabra: El autonomismo en Cuba en el último tercio del siglo XIX,” *Revista de Indias* no. 223 (2001): 733.

<sup>495</sup> See: Pedreira, *El año terrible del 87*, 21. For more on *El Triunfo*, see Chapter 2.

<sup>496</sup> The autonomism camp in Puerto Rico would eventually form its own party, the Partido Autonomista, in 1887. This led not only to political upheaval, but also to violence and widespread repression. See: Pedreira, *El año terrible del 87*.

no uncertain terms within his chapter on education. In it, he put out a call for better education, one that provided “solid instruction” on moral and religious principles, and that was moreover “patriotic.” The ideal instruction, he continued, would “instill [...] virtue and strip the seed of future vices, [...] teaching us to adore that sacrosanct religion, which our mother Church preaches.” He went on: “We want education that sanctifies and elevates love for the homeland, because we cannot conceive of a State that sustains and pays the same workers that labor towards the ruin of its institutions.” With this last point, Díaz Caneja further called for the government to demand more of its educators, who had to be able to guarantee that the “religious-political-social ends” of their mission were met, clarifying that this did not include “Freemason teachers, nor Spiritist professors, nor ones belonging to any other association prohibited by our laws and condemned by the Church.”<sup>497</sup> The Instituto Civil, at least in its present iteration, and as it was clear in his remarks, had become a hotbed of sedition.

In 1882, to make matters worse for Catholics preoccupied over the state of education on the island, a monarchical Real Orden that applied to both the peninsula and the colonies had decreed that all secondary education institutions were to be modeled after the official *institutos civiles*. This meant that curricula at the different religious and otherwise private schools throughout Spain, Cuba and Puerto Rico, was to coincide with that being taught at the *institutos*. Final examinations and the conferring of diplomas for all students was likewise to be carried out by the faculty of the local *instituto civil*.<sup>498</sup> While this was a decision that came from above and not initially an issue that the *incondicionales* crusaded against, in the volatile climate of 1886—

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<sup>497</sup> Ignacio Díaz Caneja, *La cuestión ultramarina: Bosquejo crítico e histórico, político y gubernativo, administrativo y económico* (Puerto Rico: Imprenta del Boletín Mercantil, 1885), 310-311.

<sup>498</sup> López de Santa Anna, *Los jesuitas en Puerto Rico*, 120-122.

with new, bolder accusations against the Jesuits putting pressure on Catholics and the Partido Incondicional—it would take on new meaning and become emblematic of the supposed conspiracies formulated against the Jesuits by liberals on the island and, above all, the now confirmed, Freemason teachers at the Instituto Civil.

On June 28, after almost two months of silence regarding the Colegio-Instituto, the *Boletín Mercantil* dedicated its entire number to the Jesuits once again. The editorial for June 28<sup>th</sup> began with the announcement that rumors about the Jesuits preparing to leave the island, 28 years after their 1858 arrival, were credible and cause for valid concern. After the adoption of the more radical autonomist stance among local liberals, public quarrels with the teachers at the Instituto Civil, and a series of attacks in the press, it seems, the Jesuits had had enough. Ignacio Díaz Caneja presented his readers with a call to arms. The cruel, libelous propaganda campaign that had been waged against the Jesuits, he declared, had succeeded in its goal to push them out of the island, counter to the wishes of the people of Puerto Rico, who loved them and were grateful for their services. The editorial mourned for all that would be lost with their departure—the moral and religious schooling, the Catholic values instilled in its students, and their charitable work—and heralded the consequences that would result from such a loss. The present was filled with “a thousand dangers” and the young men of Puerto Rico would now find themselves devoid of a school that would bestow them with the necessary religious foundations to resist its myriad sophisms and transgressions. Invoking the common good, Díaz Caneja called again upon the people of Puerto Rico to fight against the ignorance and rancor that conspired against their best interests. Forgetting that Pérez Moris had once expressed indignation on the pages of the *Boletín Mercantil* at the idea of petitioning the King for intervention on local matters, Díaz Caneja

appealed to the government in Madrid—as well as the Diputación Provincial—to hinder the Jesuits' departure.<sup>499</sup>

A second article simply undersigned by “un vecino” further echoed this and that published by Díaz Caneja in his 1885 book. The Jesuits could not be allowed to leave the island, for it was common knowledge that there was little religion to be found among civil teachers and it was not infrequent to find among them “those who disdain religion,” who would seek to reproduce that disdain among school age students. The Jesuits' exit was, moreover, a bad omen, for whenever the order had been pushed out of a country, it had always been under the veil of “heightened revolutionary frenzy.” The author ended with a question: Would it be possible that the Jesuits be forced to depart from Puerto Rico, “a Spanish province whose inhabitants [were] in large part Catholic?”<sup>500</sup>

Heeding this call, a group of 71 San Juan women—Pablo Ubarri's wife among them—addressed the Governor General in a letter signed that same 28<sup>th</sup> of June and published in the *Boletín Mercantil* the following day. While the signatories considered themselves “strangers to politics,” as concerned mothers, as well as Spanish and Puerto Rican Catholic women, they could not remain indifferent to the plight of the Jesuits and the “grave damages” their leaving would incur for Puerto Rico. Claiming to speak on behalf of the people of Puerto Rico, much like the Catholic mothers of Havana, the women implored the Governor General to intervene and impede the ecclesiastics from abandoning them and their children.<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>499</sup> “Los Jesuitas I,” *Boletín Mercantil*, June 28, 1886, 2.

<sup>500</sup> “Los Jesuitas II,” *Boletín Mercantil*, June 28, 1886, 2.

<sup>501</sup> López de Santa Anna, *Los jesuitas en Puerto Rico*, 131-132.

Neither the Partido Incondicional, the concerned heads of households across the island, nor the Catholic mothers of San Juan, could conceive of the Jesuits leaving, for their presence served to sustain the ideal of a Spanish, Catholic Puerto Rico. The establishment of a religious order in a given locale did not only imply divine protection for those around it; it also furnished the place and its patrons with what historian Kathryn Burns calls “spiritual capital.” In her book on the different female religious orders established in colonial Cuzco, Burns uses the term to describe the social, political and economic significance of convents across Spanish Peruvian society. From the 16<sup>th</sup> to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Spanish and *criollo* families of Peru used—and invested in—their local convents as places that would provide an education for their daughters and create “culturally Spanish young women.” Going on to form Catholic, Spanish households, the convent-educated women would thus help secure the reproduction of “Spanish dominance” in Peru.<sup>502</sup> While Burns uses this concept of social reproduction via the convent to explain how Spaniards and *criollos* sought to Hispanicize their *mestiza* daughters, the same notion can also be applied to understand the way that Catholics in Puerto Rico regarded their relationship to the Jesuits and the Colegio-Instituto.

The Jesuits in Puerto Rico provided spiritual guidance to the young men under their care, in a way that attending Sunday mass, or the pious teachings of a Catholic mother at home, could not. The Jesuits’ curricula provided the young men with a formal education that presented them with a knowledge of Catholic doctrine and values that would dictate their approach to the world and their role in society thereafter. This was an assurance as to the continuation of a certain kind of life. To send your son for schooling to the Colegio-Instituto in San Juan was a way of

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<sup>502</sup> Kathryn Burns, *Colonial Habits: Convents and the Spiritual Economy of Cuzco, Peru* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 27-30.

preserving familial links to Spain and of making it a tangible reality for those born on Antillean soil. Catholics in Puerto Rico had banked on the Jesuits—literally and figuratively—to ensure that the dream of a unified Spanish Empire and a Spanish Puerto Rico would survive. In the short term, this meant avoiding revolution – after all, as Pérez Moris so assuredly professed in the pages of the *Boletín Mercantil*, no students of the Jesuits in neighboring Havana had joined Céspedes in his calls for independence. In the long term, it meant the continued reproduction of Spanish, Catholic families that would make up the realm and determine its course.

Just as Instituto Civil teachers would seek to reproduce their disdain for religion among their students, the Jesuits would stand to do the opposite, instilling their love of Spain and the Catholic Church onto their charges. The teachers at the Colegio-Instituto were, moreover, all Spaniards. Having come to Puerto Rico as missionaries for the Queen, who was responding to the appeals of the Bishop of Puerto Rico, the Jesuits stood as the paragon of Spanish piety, and an embodiment of the island’s entrenched links to the metropole. For Puerto Rico Catholics, to tend and protect them was to honor their ideal of Spain.

Save for the above June 28<sup>th</sup> letter from the concerned San Juan mothers, which appeared in the June 29<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Boletín Mercantil* and was quoted in *Los jesuitas en Puerto Rico*, further examples of Puerto Rico Catholics writing to the authorities or otherwise organizing around the Jesuits’ defense are difficult to come by in the local archival record. Issues of the *Boletín Mercantil* for the remainder of 1886 are unavailable. Neither are mentions of the situation found in official correspondence records for the Diocese or the Governor General. Evidence of subsequent attempts from Catholics across the island and members of the Partido Incondicional to retain the ecclesiastics in Puerto Rico, however, can be found in the Vatican

Archives and the Archivo Histórico Nacional in Madrid, where their pleas addressed to the Spanish Papal Nuncio and the Ministro de Ultramar, respectively, are now stored.

On June 28, for example, Pablo Ubarri penned a letter to the Ministro de Ultramar begging for his intercession on the matter. The letter sought to highlight for the Ministro the Jesuits' role in "perfecting" their students' morals and emphasized how this was of special importance "in the subtropical regions, where teachings on patriotism, religion, and the true social sciences [were] so beneficial." The message closed with 8 pages of signatures—among them that of Ignacio Díaz Caneja—and asked for the restitution of the Jesuits' capacity to administer final exams and diplomas and gain independence from the 1882 Real Orden that made their curriculum adhere to that of the *institutos civiles*.<sup>503</sup>

On August 6, 1886, Pablo Ubarri paid for four telegrams to be sent from San Juan to the Spanish Papal Nuncio in Madrid. Sent one after the other, with time stamps going from 11:25 am to 12:00 pm, the messages were all undersigned by him, and sent both for himself and as a representative of the various Catholic societies—Hijas de María, Corte de María, and Corazón de Jesús—whose members dreamt of intervention from the top putting a stop to the Jesuits' departure. The short messages, in essence, all asked the Nuncio to wield his influence and protect the ecclesiastics. If a longer letter akin to the one sent to the Ministro de Ultramar preceded them, there is no record of this in the archive. Given that written to the Ministro de Ultramar, however, we might surmise that appeals to the Nuncio likewise emphasized the need to restore the Jesuits' independence. On August 9, with no response forthcoming, Ubarri paid for a fifth

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<sup>503</sup> Pablo Ubarri, "Instancias pidiendo que los jesuitas continúen labor docente," Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN), *Ultramar, Gracia y Justicia*, Legajo 422, Expediente 22.

telegram—paying in advance for its answer, as well—begging the Nuncio to get back to them. The Nuncio replied on August 12, lamenting that it was impossible to act upon their entreaties.

Though there is little to go on as to what had transpired between late June and early August regarding the Jesuits, an August 10<sup>th</sup> letter addressed to the Vatican Secretary of State from the Spanish Papal Nuncio, where the latter recounted what Father Garzón had told him in a separate, now unavailable communication, helps shed light on the thought process behind his choice to withdraw the order from the island. In his letter—private and for the eyes of one of the highest-ranking members of the Church—Father Garzón ventured to state all that he could not, or would not, dare to state in his replies to *El Clamor* and *El Agente*. The way he presented it to the Nuncio, the Jesuits' existence in Puerto Rico had been peaceful until the 1868 outbreak of the Ten Years' War in Cuba, after which an autonomist party was formed – the Cuban Partido Liberal, which he attributed to the Freemasons. Though this entailed problematic consequences for the Jesuits in Puerto Rico, the order had handled them without too much trouble, at least up until the most recent installation of the Instituto Civil. This had been the doing of liberals in local government (or the “Partido Autonomista,” as Father Garzón asserted, though, of course, the Partido Liberal Reformista on the island had not yet officially embraced autonomism). Since then, Instituto Civil teachers, lacking in religious principles and seeing the Jesuits as rivals, had been working to instill among their students the “biggest aversion towards the Jesuits.” Instituto Civil teachers supposed to administer final exams at the Colegio-Instituto had delayed their examinations for 24 days, after which many of the Jesuits' students had gotten failing grades. Concerned parents had begun to take their children out of the Colegio-Instituto as a result, having gone from 100 to 7 students in the span of two years, forcing them to close. Outside attempts at maligning them in the press, Father Garzón further accused “either the Partido

Autonomista or the Freemasons” of having paid a woman to declare that she had sustained “illicit relationships” with two of the priests at the school. All this prompted various of the religious associations on the island to send the above telegrams and petition the Nuncio on the Jesuits’ behalf. As Father Garzón manifested, he hoped that this would result in “an offer” that would support the permanence of the Jesuits in Puerto Rico, adding, as a final note of appeal, that the island was “much perverse” and badly needed their presence.

Neither the Ministro de Ultramar, the Nuncio nor the Vatican extended an offer of support to Father Garzón, with the Jesuits departing from Puerto Rico on August 16, 1886.<sup>504</sup> Though no reason was provided for their denial, the truth is that short of a sizeable cash donation or a direct petition from the Pope to Father Garzón to keep his school open—which any ecclesiastic would have presumably suffered through with missionary fervor—there was little the Nuncio or even the Pope could do in the form of politics that would either overturn a Real Orden, make the Diputación Provincial adopt a resolution that would make it more feasible for the Jesuits to remain, or that would get the supposed Freemasons bent on disparaging them from leaving them be. Such an intervention might have even made their plight worse. Yet appeals of the kind demonstrate how Puerto Rico Catholics had mobilized around the issue, first at the level of local politics and discourse—through their voting at the Diputación Provincial and their dictums in the press—and going the length of attempting to gain the intervention of higher civil and ecclesiastical authorities, to safeguard the Jesuits and their school, an institution they regarded as a living symbol of Spain among them, as well as theirs’ and Puerto Rico’s undeniable Spanish roots. After the Jesuits departed, Catholics in Puerto Rico were left with one less emblem of the religion that united—and kept—them bound to Spain, in a place where such

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<sup>504</sup> López de Santa Anna, *Los jesuitas en Puerto Rico*, 133-134.

visible, physical representations of Catholicism had been scarce, as well as one less ally to turn to in their ongoing battle with ideas that—they feared—sought to break ties with Spain and destitute Catholicism from civic and public life.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

Calls for both the permanence of the Jesuits in Puerto Rico and for Apolinar to remain in Havana embraced the same objective: to protect Cuba and Puerto Rico from godlessness and revolution. In both cases, Havana and Puerto Rico Catholics turned their distress and trepidation at the prospect of losing the ecclesiastics and the figure of the beloved Bishop into action, filling in for a lack of official response to protect them, critical as they were in securing the colonies' peaceful union with Spain. To do so, they sought to secure for Catholicism a prominent place in public life and political thought, persuading both higher authorities and the public that Catholicism be considered an effective shield against war and separatism. Considering the scarce institutional representation for the Catholic Church across Cuba and Puerto Rico, such visible, tangible signs of Catholicism as the mausoleum honoring Apolinar in the Havana Cathedral and the Colegio-Instituto in San Juan would stand in representation of the Church—and continue to evangelize—among its inhabitants. Unwilling to see their faith deteriorate, diverse groups of Catholics and Spanish loyalists—concerned mothers and fathers, local *diputados*, writers and editors—came together in their defense. To convince the Governor General of Cuba to act quickly on the matter of succession for the Havana Diocese, convince the Cuban public that retaining Apolinar's remains was in their best interests, and convince the Ministro de Ultramar and the Spanish Papal Nuncio to intervene in maintaining Catholicism as the guiding principle in Puerto Rico's schools, was more than a foolish hope on the part of its proponents. That

Catholicism had the power to placate and prevent the outbreak of separatist conflict across Cuba and Puerto Rico was a conviction that guided their actions. Apolinar's remains and consequent sacred presence in Havana would help Cuba to right its course, and the Jesuits' religious instruction would keep Puerto Rico from going astray. The colonies' ultimate union with Spain and peaceful governance would come as the result of Catholic values and their representatives being tended and protected.

## Conclusion

The cases examined throughout this dissertation have sought to answer how political conflict, the rise of secularism, and the spread of alternative religious organizations, affected the life of the Church and its parishioners in Cuba and Puerto Rico. From this central problem emerged two successive questions: how the militant attitude coming from high-ranking members of the Church, condemning of change that would see the institution further displaced from public life and anticipating the godless future that political independence might engender, resonated with the faithful; and how the faithful, whether receptive or not to this message, responded to a Church that had limited resources to care for them.

In response, the stories interwoven throughout the chapters have captured a speech that was common throughout Cuba and Puerto Rico, for its clergymen and among the urban, middle and upper class faithful whom it reached best: that of a Manichean worldview in which Catholicism, whose survival was contingent upon the colonies' continued union with Spain, provided the only guarantee of salvation. Spain and Catholicism were inextricable. And while some manipulation of this discourse would have been useful to prop up conservative politics that likewise harbored fears of economic collapse should the colonies gain further freedoms or become independent, the stories here have also shown that anxieties about the loss of their religion—and attendant cultural identity—were a real component of Spanish loyalism.

Although Pedro Cavaller and Eduardo Llanas delighted in their diatribes against Spiritists, Freemasons, satirists, and anticlerical writers of all sorts, and the *Boletín Mercantil* in Puerto Rico was first and foremost the outlet for the fanatical pro-Spanish Partido Incondicional, their talk of evil and defense of the Church was not mere pantomime. The prospect of losing

their religion was present for the embattled priests and the learned members of the Partido Incondicional, as well as for their readers and followers. When talking to power and their fellow citizens, they sought to make clear that Catholicism was crucial for peace and social order. This is evident in calls to make the Havana Cathedral Apolinar's final resting place and in petitions to have the Ministro de Ultramar intercede on behalf of the Jesuits in San Juan, as much as it is in the prelates' pleas to the king in the lead up to the Constitution of 1876. Catholicism was forced to become a political position. Archbishop Martín de Herrera was paranoid that Freemasons were plotting to overthrow the Catholic Church, but he was also reeling from anticlerical challenges to his authority and the effects of separatist war upon his archdiocese. For these actors, seeking to convince the higher civil authorities to intercede in their favor was meant to improve their immediate circumstances. To intervene in the world of print, both in establishing Catholic publications and looking to censure others, was meant to convince the public that the Church still had a role to play in public life.

While omnipresent for ecclesiastics and certain sectors of the laity, this vision of a Catholic and imperial order that went hand-in-hand was unsuccessful in reaching the faithful for whom bishoprics, archbishoprics, and the metropole, were a distant notion. At the same time that the Asociación de Católicos de La Habana was hosting its inaugural session and conservative members of the Diputación Provincial in San Juan secured public funds for the Jesuits' allowance, poor, often rural parishioners were clamoring for better priests and petitioning for the establishment of chapels and churches closer to their communities. Their concerns were material in nature, but were often expressed in terms of their would-be catastrophic results: should their spiritual needs continue to be neglected, their souls would be wasted. The homegrown responses adopted to counteract this spiritual corrosion—fostering their own cults, complete with illicit

chapels and religious services; the formation of sanctioned or unsanctioned religious associations; and laboring to bring or retain those they perceived as good priests—underscores the significance of religion in their lives, irrespective of it not being understood in overly political terms.

Yet contrasting their experience of Catholicism to that of the organized and militant faithful points to a common theme among the laity: against a backdrop of political upheaval and a scarcity of institutional resources, laypersons across the board took it upon themselves to support the Church and tend to their beliefs. For some, this meant defending it against detractors and mobilizing around causes that would exalt it and its place in the public sphere. For others, this meant making sure that fellow residents in untended parishes did not go without observing and celebrating their devotions, with or without a priest. This reveals a common preoccupation with religion as an organizing force in their daily lives, and heralds them and their actions as having sustained the Church through this time of crisis.

Demonstrating how Catholicism became a public and political position and how the faithful worked to bolster the Church is constitutive of a larger history of belief and its significance, for political debate as for quotidian life, in late nineteenth-century Cuba and Puerto Rico. This dissertation presents a narrative of Catholic militancy that enriches our understanding of debates over liberalizing reforms and political independence for the island colonies, as well as an account of enduring faith under pressing circumstances. Doing so, it puts forth the Catholic faithful and the Church hierarchy as influential historical actors, and argues for the inclusion of religious belief in the social, political, and intellectual histories of the late Spanish Empire in Cuba and Puerto Rico.

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