

WORLD CHRISTIANITIES PRIZE ESSAY

# *The Creation of a Latin American Catholic Church: Vatican Authority and Political Imagination, 1854–1899*

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*The principal aim of this article is to analyse the rise of a Latin American Catholic identity during the mid- to late nineteenth century. It examines the institutionalisation of this collective project via the foundation of the Latin American College in Rome in 1858 and the initiatives that led to the Latin American Plenary Council in 1899. This article also explores how this collective religious identity was imagined and how its limits were drawn. In doing so a new insight into how religions contributed to the imagining and defining of geographical spaces is offered.*

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**W**hy speak of a Latin American Catholic Church? Why gather Churches with traditions, economic resources, peoples and histories as diverse as those of Peru, Mexico and Argentina under one umbrella? Why was the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM, 1955) the first multi-national Catholic conference? When was the concept of a Latin American Catholic Church first deployed? How did such an idea evolve, and what were the social, political, cultural and institutional consequences? In essence these questions can be summed

AASC= Archivo del Arzobispado de Santiago de Chile; ANC= Archivo Nacional de Chile; CELAM= Latin American Episcopal Conference

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up by asking why the socially constructed idea of a Latin American Catholic Church is taken as a given?

The principal aim of this article is to analyse the rise of this collective enterprise during the mid- to late nineteenth century. To this end the focus will be on the discourse and initiatives which sought to create and strengthen the bonds between Latin American Catholics. That is, how this Latin American Catholic community was imagined. At the same time, we will see how these projects were materialised and institutionalised, simultaneously contributing to the formation of a Latin American consciousness. In this regard two aspects are of particular interest: the creation of the Pontifical Latin American College in Rome in 1858, and the first Latin American Plenary Council in Rome in 1899.

This article also has a more ambitious aim: to demonstrate how diverse religions contribute to the imagining and defining of geographical spaces. Recent studies have pointed out ‘the conventional and constructed nature of the fundamental ideas of global geography, while yet denying that they are nothing but social constructs’.<sup>1</sup> Grand territorial classifications do not correspond to a geographical base: rather they are the product of histories. In the configuration of such cultural constructs religion has played a key role. For example, even though highly problematic from an historical viewpoint, Christianity has been seen to be a central element when it comes to defining the West against the East. Geographical constructions were not born of innocence. They had political connotations and served to justify political and imperial projects. Even cartographic practices themselves were not objective as they responded to the legitimisation of Western domination, its practice being reserved to the Europeans and North Americans who mapped the regions inhabited by ‘irrational’ and ‘despotic’ peoples.<sup>2</sup>

In line with this, Latin America does not, in essence, correspond with any geographical reality: rather, it bears the definition of a space which accords with its cultural criteria and in opposition to the other, ‘Anglo-Saxon’, America. Religion played a central role when it came to identifying these two Americas as denying the existence of other faiths and religious traditions. Latin American Catholicity appeared unquestionable and defining. Nor were there doubts about the religious attachment of this region within the Protestant sphere. Rather, differences arose when it came to defining it as missionary territory. Thus, in the preparations for the

<sup>1</sup> M. W Lewis and K. Wigen, *The myth of continents: a critique of metageography*, Berkeley, CA 1997, 17.

<sup>2</sup> M. H. Edney, *Cartography: the ideal and its history*, Chicago 2019, 121. See also James R. Akerman (ed.), *The imperial map: cartography and the mastery of empire*, Chicago 2009, and James R. Akerman (ed.), *Decolonizing the map: cartography from colony to nation*, Chicago 2017.

World Missionary Conference, held in Edinburgh in 1910, it was decided – not without controversy – to exclude Latin America from its missionary purview as it was considered already Catholic and therefore a part of Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

### *Thinking Latin America*

The origins of the idea of Latin America are political. Following the crisis of the Spanish monarchy there were calls for a confederation of Latin American states, calls which culminated in Simón Bolívar's frustrated attempt at the Panama Congress of 1826. At the same time a diffuse project arose for a revival of a Peninsular liberal tradition, and the defence, insofar as it were possible, of a constitutional community of Hispanic nations. However, this discourse was limited to, and only articulated by, a *criollo* liberal elite.<sup>4</sup>

Following a clear retreat between 1830 and 1840, this discourse re-emerged in the 1850s, articulated again around the idea of a 'Latin America'. There have been many debates regarding the origin and nature of that concept. While some theorists, such as Walter Mignolo, have seen a colonial input, others such as Michel Gobat have shown that its main driver was within a discourse against US expansionism.<sup>5</sup> In both cases, nevertheless, the authors agree in highlighting an elitist and *criollo* imprint, deployed externally against the US and internally against peoples of indigenous and African descent.

Another question which has generated an intense historiographical debate concerns where it was first mooted. Some authors place its birth in the France of the 1860s as part of the imperialist project of Napoleon III who, in the face of the growth of the British Empire and the 'Anglo-Saxon race', exalted the idea of Latin-ness which encompassed the countries of southern Europe and 'Ibero-America'. In fact, it appears that the first references to the 'Latin' character of America can be traced to the work of a French diplomat in the US and Mexico, Michel Chevalier, who, in his *Lettres sur l'Amerique du Nord* (1836), compared a 'Latin' with an 'Anglo-Saxon' race.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> J.-P. Bastian, *Protestantismos y modernidad latinoamericana: historia de unas minorías religiosas activas en América Latina*, Mexico City 2013; B. Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference: Edinburgh 1910*, Grand Rapids, MI 2009, 49–72, 303–7.

<sup>4</sup> J. E. Rodríguez, *El nacimiento de Hispanoamérica: Vicente Rocafructe y el hispanoamericanismo, 1808–1832*, Mexico 1980.

<sup>5</sup> W. D. Mignolo, *The idea of Latin America*, Malden 2005, 59–89; Michel Gobat, 'The invention of Latin America: a transnational history of anti-imperialism, democracy, and race', *American Historical Review* cxviii (2013), 1345–75.

<sup>6</sup> Enrique Ayala Mora, 'El origen del nombre América Latina y la tradición católica del siglo XIX', *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social* xl–xli (2013), 213–41.

The first references to the concept of ‘Latin America’ came from within a circle of American emigrants resident in Paris during the 1850s.<sup>7</sup> The filibustering campaigns of William Walker in Nicaragua and Costa Rica between 1855 and 1857, which could count on support and recognition from the United States, were widely rejected within the Latin American public sphere. In this context, in 1886, the Colombian Jose Maria Torres Caicedo, one of the fathers of Americanism, deployed the phrase ‘Latin America’ in order to draw a comparison with ‘Anglo-Saxon America’. This concept was not only linked to an alliance against US and European expansionism, but also to an idea of republican democracy on the South American continent. In fact the driving forces behind this idea were dedicated to the radical democratisation of South American societies and were manifestly against the conservative governments which controlled its respective countries.<sup>8</sup>

If the concept of ‘Latin-ness’ allowed for the incorporation of other ‘Americas’ such as the Portuguese and the French, it also demonstrated its racial limitations by the exclusion of Haiti on account of its being predominantly African. The Brazilian empire remained on the edge of this initiative: for some Brazil should not be included as it was not a part of the ‘Spanish heritage’ and, furthermore, a sizeable proportion of its population was also of African descent; for others the problem was the monarchical character of the state. Thus, part of the elite which supported the Latin American project welcomed the proclamation of the Brazilian republic in 1889 and saluted the entry of Brazil into the imagined community; at the same time, Brazilian elites began to represent themselves as ‘Latin Americans’ as part of an attempt to ‘whiten’ their African origins.<sup>9</sup>

Although they would never materialise, such proposals were evidence of the articulation of a sentiment of belonging to a supranational community which saw itself as under threat from an increasing US presence in the region. In the nineteenth century the reach of the idea of ‘Latin America’ was fairly limited: reduced in essence to various intellectual circles which never managed to bring any of their proposals to fruition. However, despite numerous setbacks, Latin American identity and its projects not only managed to perpetuate themselves through that period but also to broaden their base.

As Roberto Di Stefano has recently noted, the term ‘Latino’ was not only a cultural, but also a religious construction in which Catholicism reigned

<sup>7</sup> M. Quijada, ‘Sobre el origen y difusión del nombre “América Latina” (o una variación heterodoxa en torno al tema de la construcción social de la verdad)’, *Revista de Indias* lviii/214 (1998), 596–615; P. Estrade, ‘Del invento de “América Latina” en París por Latinoamericanos (1856–1889)’, in Jacques Maurice and Marie-Claire Zimmerman (eds), *Paris y el mundo ibérico e iberoamericano*, Paris 1998, 179–88.

<sup>8</sup> Gobat, ‘Invention’, 1345–75. <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

without opposition, almost absolutely.<sup>10</sup> However, despite the extraordinary academic attention dedicated to the origins of Latin America, the Catholic contribution has scarcely been mentioned.<sup>11</sup> The articulation of a Catholic Latin America ran in parallel with the previous projects although, in its formulation, seeking alliances in the face of regalism, Protestantism and laicism. If the Latin American Catholic project also had a limited reach, it nevertheless managed to manifest itself in the first Latin American institution in history: the Pontifical Latin American College in Rome.

### *The Latin American College in Rome*

In November 1855 Pope Pius IX held a private audience with a young and promising Chilean clergyman, José Ignacio Victor Eyzaguirre, in which he welcomed his essay *El catolicismo en presencia de sus disidentes*, saluted by Catholics on both sides of the Atlantic as the perfect complement to the ‘apologetic’ works of Jaime Balmes against Protestantism. In addition, the pope encouraged him to propose something that he had long had in mind: the creation of a college in Rome which would shape the future Latin American ecclesiastical elite.<sup>12</sup> The idea of creating an educational institution in Rome had been put forward in 1825 by the Mexican Jesuit and confessor to Gregory XVI, José Ildefonso Peña. His plans, however, were thwarted for lack of resources. Subsequently, in 1853, the Mexican José Villaredo went to Rome with aim of founding a college for the clergy but it too failed to materialise.<sup>13</sup> The details of these projects and their reach is not known: specifically whether they were to be for Mexico alone or for the whole South American continent as well.

Pius IX asked Eyzaguirre to travel around Latin America to try to convince prelates to support the establishment of a college. In order for the mission to have the greatest possible chance of success the Secretary of State provided Eyzaguirre with papal accreditation alongside official letters for the apostolic delegates in Mexico and Colombia.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Eyzaguirre carried a printed letter in which prelates were

<sup>10</sup> R. Di Stefano, ‘Le Processus historique de sécularisation et de laïcité en Amérique latine’, in Arnaud Martin (ed.), *La Laïcité en Amérique latine*, Paris 2015, 11.

<sup>11</sup> Ayala Mora, ‘El origen del nombre’; M. Tenorio-Trillo, *Latin America: the allure and power of an idea*, Chicago 2017, 51–2.

<sup>12</sup> ANC, colecciones privadas, conde Jaime Eyzaguirre, vol. xxx, fo. 156.

<sup>13</sup> G. Decorme, *Historia de la Compañía de Jesús en la República mexicana durante el siglo XIX, I: Restauración y vida de secularización, 1816–1848*, Guadalajara 1914, 301–2, 356–9; M. E. García Ugarte, ‘Proyectos de formación eclesiástica en México (1833–1899)’, *Lusitania Sacra* xxvi (2012), 25–54; L. Medina Ascensio, *Historia del Colegio Pío Latino Americano (Roma: 1858–1978)*, Mexico 1979, 28–9.

<sup>14</sup> Medina Ascensio, *Historia del Colegio*, 34.

informed as to how they should act towards the young men whom they would send to Rome, and another clearly stating that the Holy Father wished to establish a seminary to make uniform the opinions and discipline of the clergy in America.<sup>15</sup>

Before leaving Rome Eyzaguirre met Cardinal Antonelli and Francesco Gaude, cardinal of Santa Maria, in Aracoeli.<sup>16</sup> The advice of the latter was of great value given that in 1853 he had been first Rector of the Pontifical College in Rome, the institution charged with educating the most brilliant young students of the papal states. In this light it is worth remembering that the foundation of the Latin American college was an element in Vatican strategy for the education in Rome of national ecclesiastical elites, with the aim of homogenising and Romanising their respective Churches. In this period, for example, the national colleges of Belgium (1844), France (1853) and the United States (1859) were created. However, it was only the Latin American college which had a supranational reach – a fact which, in turn, revealed that the Holy See considered Latin America to be a unity.<sup>17</sup>

Eyzaguirre's journey became a veritable odyssey. Aside from deficient communications and geographical accidents there was political instability and armed confrontation, which placed the traveller's life in danger. In fact, his mission became further complicated given that in some countries the republican authorities refused to recognise his credentials as papal envoy, considering the travelling around their country of an agent of Rome to be an act of aggression against their sovereignty. Such problems not only considerably delayed Eyzaguirre but also limited his success. None the less he came into contact with thirty-one prelates from Brazil to Mexico, along with other political and religious players, and in doing so managed to gather close to 30,000 *pesos*.<sup>18</sup> Eyzaguirre became the centre of a transatlantic web stretching from Rome and across Latin America, all the while contributing to the density of the networks which already connected the different American countries and Europe.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> AASC, fondo general, correspondencia, vol. 158 cartas al S. Arzobispo, 1857–8, fos 29–30.

<sup>16</sup> ANC, colecciones privadas, fondo Jaime Eyzaguirre, vol. xx, fo. 150.

<sup>17</sup> J. D. Durand, 'Les Papes et le Séminaire pontifical français de Rome, 1878–2003', in Philippe Levillain, Philippe Boutry and Yves-Marie Fradet (eds), *150 ans au coeur de Rome: le Séminaire français, 1853–2003*, Paris 2004, 69–71; L. M. Edwards, *Roman virtues: the education of Latin American clergy in Rome, 1858–1962*, New York 2011, 23–38.

<sup>18</sup> Medina Ascencio, *Historia del Colegio*, 35.

<sup>19</sup> F. J. Ramón Solans, 'Bis ans Ende der Welt: transatlantische ultramontane Netzwerke zwischen Lateinamerika und Europa', in Olaf Blaschke and Javier Ramón Solans (eds), *Weltreligion im Umbruch: transnationale Perspektiven auf das Christentum in der Globalisierung*, Frankfurt 2019, 308–37.

Almost four years after Eyzaguirre's meeting with Pius IX, on 21 November 1858 the Latin American college opened its doors with eighteen students. Despite the difficulties experienced during its first decades it played a central role in the education of an ecclesiastical elite, bringing it closer to a more highly Romanised Catholicism whilst encouraging a certain collegiate feeling within the Latin American hierarchy. Between 1858 and 1950 the college educated 1,500 priests, 173 of whom were raised to the episcopate, and seven became cardinals. It was not by chance that many ex-alumni were behind demonstrations of loyalty to the Holy See and ardently defended papal infallibility.<sup>20</sup> At the outset the institution was called the 'American Seminary' or the 'College of South America'. However, after a petition by the college's students in 1867 the pope gave it its current name: Pius Pontifical Latin American College.<sup>21</sup>

### *Catholic interests in America*

In 1859, shortly after the college opened its doors, the observations of Eyzaguirre on the religious situation in Latin America appeared in Paris. *Los intereses católicos en America* came to be a reference work for nineteenth-century American Catholics. The book opens with the evocative image of the powerful river Amazon which unites numerous Latin American countries and which 'demonstrates to us the realisation of a belief which would give the States of America the respectability and influence which today they do not have' because 'The interests of all are one, one, too, their origin and the beliefs of its individuals, these people are called to live intimately united, to form a league which, sheltering them from any external aggression, assures their independence and their nationality.'<sup>22</sup>

*Los intereses católicos en America* had a considerable impact within the continent as it was one of the first attempts to offer Latin American Catholics an interpretive framework for their recent history. Eyzaguirre analysed the social situation of each country that he visited. For him the problems that

<sup>20</sup> K. P. Serbin, *Needs of the heart: a social and cultural history of Brazil's clergy and seminaries*, Notre Dame, IN 2006, 92–4; Edwards, *Roman virtues*, 1.

<sup>21</sup> Medina Asensio, *Historia del Colegio*, 51–2; Pietro Galletti, *Memorie storiche intorno alla provincia romana della compagnia di gesù*, II: (1849–1870), Rome 1939, 610–11.

<sup>22</sup> 'Nos está indicando la realización de un pensamiento vastísimo que daría a los Estados de América la respetabilidad e influencia que hoy no tienen ... siendo unos mismos los intereses de todos, uno también el origen y unas las creencias de sus individuos, están estos llamados a vivir íntimamente unidos, formando una liga que poniéndoles a cubierto de cualquier agresión extranjera, les asegure su independencia y su nacionalidad': José Ignacio Víctor Eyzaguirre, *Los intereses católicos en América*, i, Paris 1859, 5–6.



beset Latin America were the same everywhere: anarchy, despotism, lack or excess of liberty and so on. Americans had forgotten religion and ‘through half a century of bloody revolutions Providence gives a terrible lesson to America, that America which seeks to wither the faith that it received from its elders, and emancipate itself from the Church which gave it all the gifts of civilisation’.<sup>23</sup> Although it does not contain the expression ‘Latin America’, *Los intereses católicos en America* covered all the countries of the region and was the seed of a Latin American Catholic identity. It contains a clear condemnation of United States expansionism: its success was based on Latin American disunity. Eyzaguirre yearns for the means which will ‘unite all these great territories that independence has titled “Republics” within a confederation which would place them in a state to be able to defend each other’.<sup>24</sup> Clearly, for the Chilean, a union of the republics would occur through their drawing close to Rome. Moreover, Eyzaguirre called for Catholics to join together to stem the excesses brought on by independence:

With history in view we have said a thousand times that no state can be securely established except on the basis of religion, and now we wish to repeat that only religion can save Spanish America from the abyss toward which it is being driven by the excesses of its sons. A religious reaction is today the great need of Hispano-Americans. And yet, in order for this reaction to be fruitful it is necessary that it begin by making itself felt through political authority, and in its relationship with the Church.<sup>25</sup>

Eyzaguirre’s idea of a religious reaction was probably inspired by the famous speech by Juan Donoso y Cortés in 1849 on the revolutionary wave which had shaken Europe and obliged Pius IX to take refuge in Gaeta. A supporter of Spanish military intervention in Rome, Donoso y Cortés maintained the need for a ‘religious reaction’ which would allow for the re-establishment of social and political order after a half century

<sup>23</sup> ‘Medio siglo de sangrientas revoluciones es la terrible enseñanza que la Providencia da a la América, a esa América que pretende ajar la fe que recibió de sus mayores y emanciparse de la Iglesia que le dio todos los bienes de la civilización’: *ibid.* i, p. iv.

<sup>24</sup> ‘De unir todos esos grandes territorios que la independencia llamó “repúblicas” en una confederación que las pusiese en estado de defenderse mutuamente’: *ibid.* ii. 328.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Mil veces hemos dicho con la historia a la vista que ningún Estado puede afianzarse sólidamente sino sobre la base de la religión, y ahora queremos repetir que sólo la religión puede salvar a la América española de ese abismo dónde la condujeron los excesos de sus hijos. Una reacción religiosa es pues hoy la gran necesidad de los hispanoamericanos; pero para que esa reacción sea fructuosa, es preciso que comience por hacerse sentir en la marcha de la autoridad política y en sus relaciones con la iglesia’: *ibid.* ii. 443.



of revolutions.<sup>26</sup> According to Eyzaguirre, in order for this religious response to take place in Latin America, the Church had to be free, and herein lies one of the central tenets of his thought: his critique of patronage.

The very title of Eyzaguirre's work references Charles Montalambert's famous critique in *Les Intérêts catholiques au XIXe siècle* (1852) of the negative effects of adherence of the Catholic Church to the cause of an interventionist monarchy such that of Napoleon III. This critique of Gallicanism in all its forms entailed a defence of direct contact with the pope and, as such, a reaffirmation of Ultramontanism as the only way of achieving the independence and development of the Catholic Church. Catholics need 'to be able to receive directly and without hindrance the orders of the universal Pastor of Catholicism, and to be guided by the pastoral crozier without any foreign power regulating, or intervening in, its activities'.<sup>27</sup> Eyzaguirre was, again, paraphrasing Montalambert in order to assert that 'there is no royal patronage, nor Gallican liberties, nor is there a Hispanic Church; all Governments and all peoples are Catholic and the children of the same Catholic Church'.<sup>28</sup>

The second most important threat, after that of the chains of republican patronage, was that of the democratic movements which arose in the heat of the events of 1848. Eyzaguirre states that it is not religious intolerance which is inhibiting progress and the arrival of Protestant immigrants, but revolutions and political instability. To this end he draws comparisons between Paraguay where, despite having freedom of worship, there are no foreign immigrants, and Chile where there is no freedom of worship yet the Germans had installed themselves in Valdivia due to the security granted by the government.<sup>29</sup> Thus, Eyzaguirre shows himself to be a supporter of a moderate liberal political solution for Latin America: 'we have never advocated dictatorship, nor have we ever defended despotism. On the contrary, out of conscience and character we have always been on the side of liberty'.<sup>30</sup> His work was ultimately an attempt to reconcile Catholicism and modern freedoms within a Catholic republican project.

<sup>26</sup> *Discours de M. Donoso Cortès, marquis de Valdegamas, prononcé le 4 janvier 1849, dans la chambre des députés d'Espagne*, Brussels 1850.

<sup>27</sup> 'Recibir directamente y sin trabas de alguna especie las disposiciones del Pastor universal del catolicismo y ser dirigido por el báculo pastoral, sin que ningún poder extraño regle o intervenga en los movimientos de aquel': Eyzaguirre, *Los intereses*, ii. 445–6.

<sup>28</sup> 'Ya no hay patronato regio, ni libertades galicanas ... ni hay ya Iglesia hispana; todos los gobiernos y los pueblos son católicos, e hijos todos de una misma Iglesia católica': *ibid.* i. 287–8.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* i. 236–7.  
<sup>30</sup> 'Jamás hemos abogado por la dictadura, ni hemos defendido jamás el despotismo; al contrario, por conciencia y por carácter hemos estado siempre al lado de la libertad': *ibid.* i. 239.

In this attempt to reconcile the modern world with Catholicism he takes as a reference point Balmes and his demonstration that ‘liberty was not a new doctrine and the glory of the Gospel and its propagation of liberty could not be disputed, as modern socialists have sought to do’.<sup>31</sup>

In Eyzaguirre’s work *New Granada* appears as a model for how Catholicism should develop after the revolutionary storm. There, the Church was ‘emancipated from the oppression in which it been held’ by patronage, but also emancipated from the restraints of the material wealth that it possessed, and from the support of the state. In this critical situation, the Church ‘saw its means of action multiply as it became increasingly free, and an increase too in the faith of its believers in proportion to its greater independence from earthly power through which it was able to carry out its august ministry’.<sup>32</sup>

Although a certain sympathy toward the separation of Church and State can be deduced – or at least an evaluation of its positive effects – Eyzaguirre never publicly declared his support for it. In this light the apostolic delegate Ledochowski’s confessions to Eyzaguirre – in which he put forward, for the first time, the idea of accepting a separation of Church and State as a valid solution for Latin America – gain in importance. In a letter of 25 March 1860 Ledochowski complained bitterly about the ‘excessive and daily growing dependence of the spiritual authority in this republic [Peru], the introduction and daily increasing abuses of ecclesiastical discipline motivated by the excessive, and I will say, almost unlimited interventions on the part of the political authorities’ and considered whether separation, such as in *New Granada* and the United States, would not be better. Although the apostolic delegate was fully aware that ‘the Church has always condemned and detested such irreligious divorce within Catholic nations’, he points out that ‘it is not my intention to directly promote and favour separation, but not to be hostile towards it if should it be suggested by others, to receive and accept it without resistance should it be offered to us’.<sup>33</sup> Following his expulsion from Colombia in 1861 Ledochowski wrote a lucid report to the

<sup>31</sup> ‘Que la libertad no era una doctrina nueva y que no podía disputarse al Evangelio la gloria de haberla propagado, como pretendían negar los socialistas modernos’: *ibid.* ii. 454.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Vio multiplicarse sus medios de acción a medida que era más libre, y aumentarse también la fe de sus creyentes en proporción de la mayor independencia del poder de la tierra con que podía desempeñar su augusto ministerio’: *ibid.* ii. 196–7.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Excesiva y cada día creciente dependencia de la autoridad espiritual en esa república, de los abusos que se han introducido y que cada día aumentan en la disciplina eclesiástica, por motivo de las intervenciones excesivas y diré casi ilimitadas de las autoridades políticas’; ‘la Iglesia ha siempre condenado y detestado tal irreligioso divorcio en naciones católicas’ and ‘no es mi idea promover directamente y favorecer la separación, más tan solo no hostilizarla si ella fuese sugerida por otros, y acogerla o aceptarla sin resistencia cuando nos fuese ofrecida’: ANC, colecciones privadas, fondo José Ignacio Víctor Eyzaguirre, vol. xiii, fo. 668.

Secretary of State, Cardinal Antonelli, in which he again highlighted the positive experience of separation in Colombia and the possibilities that it had opened up for the development of Catholicism in the region.<sup>34</sup>

*The union of the Latin American episcopate*

During his papal audience Pius IX had shown Eyzaguirre ‘several files which existed and initiatives on the subject ... private communications from several nuncios in America’.<sup>35</sup> Amongst the reports probably mentioned was one that the archbishop of Santiago de Chile, Rafael Valentín Valdivieso, sent to the papal diplomat in New Granada, Sebastiano Buscioni, in August 1850. In this the archbishop pointed out that the gains achieved by the alliances of German and Austrian bishops have given him the idea that ‘a united American episcopate, a united and corporate body, would be no less happy to break the chains which Spanish regalism has bequeathed to democratic governments’.<sup>36</sup>

Even though Valdivieso’s project remained unfulfilled the contacts that he established during those years contributed to the nurturing of union within the Latin American episcopate. Moreover, although there is no explicit reference to the proposal, it might well find an echo in Mariano Casanova, then a brilliant young seminarian in Santiago de Chile and one of Valdivieso’s *protégés*. As archbishop of Santiago, Mariano Casanova would be a significant force behind the plenary Latin American council which would, almost fifty years after Valdivieso’s proposal, gather together the Latin American episcopate in Rome.

The nature and evolution of this particular initiative can be understood *via* Valdivieso’s correspondence. Two years after writing to Buscioni, Valdivieso used the travels of the Chilean priest Joaquín Llarraín Gandarillas through Europe to gather information regarding contacts between prelates and what means they were employing in the struggle against their enemies.<sup>37</sup> In addition to the reports that he could send from Europe, Llarraín Gandarillas was a direct witness to one of the most important events within the US Catholic Church: the celebration in

<sup>34</sup> E. Luque Alcaide, ‘Libertad eclesial y separación Iglesia-Estado en Colombia: opción del Delegado Apostólico Mons. Mieczyslaw Ledochowski’, *Boletín de historia y antigüedades* dcccxxviii (2005), 23–44.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Varios expedientes que existen e iniciados sobre la materia ... comunicaciones reservadas de diversos nuncios de América’: ANC, colecciones particulares, fondo Jaime Eyzaguirre, vol. xx, fo. 156.

<sup>36</sup> ‘El episcopado americano unido y formando cuerpo, no sería menos feliz para romper las cadenas que el regalismo español ha dejado por herencia a nuestros gobiernos democráticos’: AASC, fondo general, correspondencia, cartas del Prelado Valdivieso, vol. cclxxxiii (1850–1), fo. 50.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* vol. cclxxxiv (1851–4), fos 30–1.

Baltimore of the first national council in May 1852 which he attended as theologian to the bishop of Richmond, John McGill.<sup>38</sup> The national council of Baltimore was not only influential in the articulation of a programme for a meeting of the Latin American episcopate designed by Valdivieso but also a point of reference for the plenary council of 1899.

Between 1856 and 1869, in addition to contacting other Latin American prelates in order to gather reports on the situation of the Church within their dioceses, Valdivieso informed them of the need to unite against their enemies. Particularly elucidating on the motives for such a union was the letter sent to the auxiliary bishop of Lima, Francisco Orueta, in 1856: 'it is convenient above all to the interests of the Church not only that we are related but that we, the bishops of Latin America, should be united in our march'. Such a union would respond, furthermore, to a transnational threat, given that 'as the enemies of the Church are joined together in their perverse plans, so the defence against them should be carried out in concert even more so since in all the countries of our race the type of adversaries and their tactics are the same'.<sup>39</sup>

In a letter to the recently appointed bishop of Panama, Francisco Vázquez, Valdivieso stressed the perverse effects of republican regalism and underlined how the need for union amongst the Churches of Latin America ran in parallel with the political projects put forward since independence: 'If America, since her emancipation, yearns for a close alliance in order to promote her temporal interests, why should the Church not do the same for spiritual interests which are of such greater importance?'<sup>40</sup>

In 1858 Valdivieso took the opportunity of the opening of the Latin American College in Rome to try to get Eyzaguirre to transmit his ideas to the Holy See. Valdivieso's project was much more defined and, in fact, for the first time in the history of the Latin American Church, explicit:

a meeting of a national council of America, or at least of South America, presided over and directed by a delegation from the Holy See with detailed instructions which would contribute towards co-ordinating the activities of the episcopate

<sup>38</sup> AASC, fondo general, correspondencia, cartas del obispo Larraín Gandarillas al Obispo Salas, vol. cl, fo. 32.

<sup>39</sup> 'Conviene sobre manera a los intereses de la Iglesia, no solo el que estemos relacionados sino que combináramos nuestra marcha los obispos de la América Española ... así como los enemigos de la Iglesia se dan la mano en sus perversos planes, la defensa debía hacerse con el mismo concierto, tanto más, cuanto que en todos los países de nuestra raza la calidad de los adversarios y sus tácticas son idénticas': AASC, fondo general, correspondencia, cartas del Prelado Valdivieso, vol. xxxlxxvi (1855–60), fo. 112.

<sup>40</sup> 'La Iglesia ha sufrido más de sus protectores coronados que de sus perseguidores ... ¿si la América desde su emancipación suspira por una alianza estrecha para promover sus intereses temporales; porque la iglesia no ha de hacer otro tanto por los espirituales que son de tanto mayor importancia?': *ibid.* fo. 192.

and systematising the defence of the rights of the Church. As the causes of evils are substantially the same in all these countries the remedy ought to be uniform, and nobody can doubt but that uniformity adds strength.<sup>41</sup>

Valdivieso implicitly asserted the existence of a supranational entity, a community which shared 'a single origin, language, habits, interests and propensities'.<sup>42</sup> Valdivieso also took inspiration from the example of the German episcopate which had met at Würzburg in 1848 and which, from then until German unification in 1871, maintained contacts despite not being part of a single political entity. It may also have contributed to the idea of a supranational episcopal meeting based on a cultural community, such as that which once formed part of the Spanish monarchy. Although in Valdivieso's mind such a gathering did not imply a Latin American political union, the idea of a specifically Latin American Catholic Church revealed a certain nostalgia for the religious unity lost when the various states gained political independence.

Furthermore, a union of the Latin American episcopate was strategic, given that it would introduce a new voice into the various national discourses. For Valdivieso the protests 'of one or several bishops, themselves subjects of a state, directed to their own government, lose something of their force', while protests from 'a body comprising numerous bishops from different states' would convey quite 'another dimension of respectability and strength'. At the same time

The vexations which we now have to bear in secret would gain considerable publicity and would take the form of a general accusation by the whole Catholic body and would figure in the programmes of liberties which are proclaimed more or less efficiently by the organs of American Catholicism.<sup>43</sup>

During his stay in Rome in 1860 Valdivieso tried to put this idea to Pius IX. Whether he achieved this, or whether he was rejected is not known. In

<sup>41</sup> 'La reunión de un Concilio nacional de la América, por lo menos del Sur, presidido y dirigido por un delegado de la Santa Sede con instrucciones detalladas, contribuiría a uniformar la marcha del episcopado y a sistematizar la defensa de los derechos de la Iglesia. Como las causas de los males son sustancialmente en estos países las mismas, el remedio debía ser uniforme y nadie puede dudar que la uniformidad robustece la acción': *ibid.* fos 308–11.

<sup>42</sup> 'Un mismo origen, idioma, usos, intereses y propensiones': *ibid.* vol. xxlxxxix (1866–72), fo. 253.

<sup>43</sup> 'De uno o varios obispos súbditos de un Estado a su gobierno pierden algo de su fuerza ... un cuerpo numerosos de obispos de distintos estados ... otro carácter de respetabilidad y fuerza ... las vejaciones que ahora tenemos que soportar en secreto adquirirían una publicidad resaltante y formarían el carácter de una acusación general del cuerpo católico y figurarían en los programas de libertades que se proclaman con más o menos eficacia por los órganos del catolicismo americano': *ibid.* vol. cclxxxvi (1855–60), fos 308–11.

either case the project continued to have the backing of prominent Latin American prelates such as the bishop of Arequipa, Bartolomé Herrera, who agreed with Valdivieso's reasoning and with 'the necessity of forming a true Episcopal body which would inspire respect from governments and would employ prudent and well concerted measures in the defence of the violated rights of the Church, and for the conservation of the faith which daily weakens among the populations of our race'.<sup>44</sup>

For Valdivieso, the idea of a council or an assembly in which the American episcopate would meet was a stage in the struggle against the limitations imposed on the development of the Church by royal patronage. It was necessary to create networks of solidarity between Catholics, ranging from diocesan to national synods, including the Latin American episcopal assembly.

### *In search of the origins of Latin America*

A brilliant Uruguayan student at the Latin American College, Mariano Soler, contributed through his work to a further definition of a Latin American Catholic identity. Soler arrived in Rome on the eve of the First Vatican Council. His stay in Rome coincided with the return in May 1874 of the college's founder Eyzaguirre. Eyzaguirre was about to set off on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but before he left students of the college offered him a poetic homage. The students included a number who had just been ordained and/or had just received doctorates from the Gregorian University and who were to go on to play central roles in Latin American Catholicism at the end of the nineteenth century, such as the Brazilians Eduardo Duarte e Silva, future bishop of Goiás, and Joaquim Arcoverde, future archbishop of Rio de Janeiro and the first Latin American cardinal.

Mariano Soler was chosen to take the leading role in offering the homage. In his speech 'Rome and America', in addition to praising Eyzaguirre, he highlighted the civilising dimension of a Catholicism emanating from its centre to the rest of the world. After distancing themselves from Rome through revolution, the American republics had returned to the path of civilisation thanks to Eyzaguirre, who 'saw the necessity of placing America in intimate contact with the Cathedral of St Peter, the civiliser of the world'.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> 'La necesidad de que formen un verdadero cuerpo episcopal, que inspire respeto a los gobiernos y emplee medios prudentes y bien concertados para la defensa de los derechos vulnerados de la Iglesia, y para la conservación de la fe, que cada día se va debilitando más en los pueblos de nuestra raza': *ibid.* vol. clix (1859–63), fo. 170.

<sup>45</sup> 'Vio la necesidad de poner la América en relación íntima con la Cátedra de Pedro, la civilizadora del mundo': *Roma y América: ensayo poético que en prenda de gratitud ofrecen y*

On his return to Montevideo Mariano Soler was proactive in local Catholicism, particularly in the promotion of the activities of the laity and the press.<sup>46</sup> The bishop of Montevideo, Jacinto Vera, granted him numerous ecclesiastical responsibilities within the diocese. With the rise of political tensions due to the implementation of secularising measures on the part of the government of Máximo Santos, Mariano Soler was sent to Rome to take advice on how to act with regard to civil marriage.<sup>47</sup>

There, conscious of the fragile economic situation of the Latin American College, Leo XIII proposed that he travel through Latin America in order to gather funds and to report back to Rome on the situation. Shortly before his departure Soler prepared a *Memorial sobre el gran instituto eclesiástico de la América Latina* (1887), where he wrote that the college 'is the most beneficial and glorious that the Pontiff has erected in Rome, the centre of Catholicism, supportive of the Latin American Church'.<sup>48</sup> Soler pointed out that the seminary would contribute to tightening 'the links between American prelates and the Holy See in the matter, so supremely important, of the education of the clergy; as such, secondarily, this will be highly effective in achieving the cherished ideal of union between the Latin American peoples'.<sup>49</sup> It is interesting that Soler put forward the college as an instrument to unite Latin American Catholics both with each other and with the pope.

On February 1886 Soler disembarked at New York and after a brief tour of the US travelled through Mexico, Cuba, Santo Domingo, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile and Argentina.<sup>50</sup> In December 1887 he departed for Rome to present his report and to preside over the commission which would represent Uruguay at the sacerdotal jubilee of Pope Leo XIII. Shortly after his arrival in Rome, in February 1888, Soler submitted a largely pessimistic report to Cardinal Carlos Laurenzi

*dedican a su benemérito fundador monseñor José Ignacio Víctor Eyzaguirre protonotario apostólico y prelado de SS. los alumnos del colegio Pío Latino Americano*, Rome 1874, 18.

<sup>46</sup> S. Monreal, 'El club católico de Montevideo (1875–1890): presencia de Mariano Soler', in María del Rosario Griego, Susana Monreal, Ana María Scala, Juan Villegas and Carlos Yelpeo, *Monseñor Soler: acción y obras*, Montevideo 1991, 241–370.

<sup>47</sup> P. Gaudiano, 'Mons. Mariano Soler, Primer Arzobispo de Montevideo y el Concilio Plenario Latino-Americano', unpubl. PhD diss. Pamplona 1997, 147–56.

<sup>48</sup> 'Es el monumento más benéfico y glorioso que el Pontificado ha erigido en Roma, centro del catolicismo, en pro de la Iglesia latinoamericana': *Memorial sobre el gran instituto eclesiástico de la América Latina dedicado al venerable clero de la Iglesia latinoamericana*, Montevideo 1887, 5.

<sup>49</sup> 'La comunión de los prelatos americanos con la Santa Sede en el asunto tan importante y trascendental de la formación del Clero; así como lo segundo será sumamente eficaz para lograr el acariciado ideal de unión entre los pueblos latino-americanos': *ibid.* 9.

<sup>50</sup> Medina Asensio, *Historia del Colegio*, 65–9; Ana María Scala, 'Viajes de Soler', in Griego, Monreal, Scala, Villgas and Yelpeo, *Monseñor Soler*, 199–239.



describing the wholly decadent state of Catholicism in Latin America. From this he excluded only Argentina, Chile and Uruguay and, to a lesser extent, Ecuador and Colombia, countries in which there was a palpable Catholic reaction. Amongst the principal problems that Soler highlighted were the lack of seminaries, priests of minimal education and doubtful morals, the decadent old religious orders (compared with the new orders that he considered to be on the cutting edge of re-Christianisation) and an episcopate which was not up to the task given that appointments were dependent on regalist, liberal and Masonic governments.<sup>51</sup>

Mariano Soler went on to publish an extensive ethnological work on pre-Columbian America which began with a eulogy on the discovery of America and especially of Christopher Columbus who, 'through his genius, his religiosity and invincible constancy, brought the light of Christianity, and with it civilisation, to beautiful America'.<sup>52</sup> His eulogy was an element in the campaign for the canonisation of Columbus and, more generally, in the exaltation of the Catholic contribution to the development of human civilisation *via* the discovery of America.<sup>53</sup> For Soler the discovery of America was one of the greatest ever contributions to progress in that it 'profoundly moved the human spirit' and inaugurated 'that cosmopolitan character of all the modern institutions which today move around the world in the footsteps of Magallanes and Sebastián Elcano'.<sup>54</sup> This led him to hope for a promising future for Latin American Catholicism given that

Asia lies prostrate in its fatalism and Europe is rotten; only America is young, and only these virgin and vigorous peoples, even though they are barbarous, are those destined by Providence to carry with glory the standard of human regeneration and civilisation. May Christianity continue to inspire American institutions, a religion of progress and essentially civilising, with a perpetual moral base. And there will be perhaps not a century before America is seen to be adored by the entire world.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Gaudiano, 'Mons. Mariano Soler', 410–24.

<sup>52</sup> 'Por su genio, su religiosidad e invencible constancia, trajo la luz del cristianismo y con ella la civilización a la América hermosa': Mariano Soler, *América precolombina: ensayo etnológico basado en las investigaciones arqueológicas y etnográficas de las tradiciones, monumentos y antigüedades de América indígena*, Montevideo 1887, 42.

<sup>53</sup> Francisco Javier Ramón Solans, 'La fiesta de las Banderas: hispanoamericanismo católico en Santiago de Chile, Zaragoza y Buenos Aires (1887–1910)', *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* xlvii/2 (2017), 229–47.

<sup>54</sup> 'Profundamente el espíritu humano' e inaugurar 'ese carácter cosmopolita de todas las instituciones modernas que hoy se pasean dando la vuelta al mundo tras las huellas de Magallanes y de Sebastián Elcano': Soler, *América precolombina*, 317.

<sup>55</sup> 'Asia yace postrada por su fatalismo y Europa está carcomida; solo es joven América, y solo los pueblos vírgenes y lozanos, aunque sean bárbaros, son los destinados por la Providencia para conducir con gloria el estandarte de la regeneración y civilización humanas. Que siga el cristianismo inspirando las instituciones americanas,

Above all, the work of Mariano Soler was an attempt to insert America into biblical history. In the light of this it is appropriate to recall that the Mormons had tried to solve the problem of the absence of biblical references to America *via* the publication of texts revealed to its founder, Joseph Smith, in which it was said that America had been populated by two great civilisations that originated in the Holy Land. Similarly, Soler tried to make a connection between American and biblical populations. He travelled many times to Palestine and began numerous projects in Jerusalem in the name of the foundation of the sanctuary of *Hortus Conclusus*. During his journey from Baghdad in 1893 he observed to his right-hand man in Montevideo, Nicolás Luquese: ‘you know why I take such pleasure in visiting Caldea. It is because according to highly authorised opinion amongst Americanists the earliest American civilisation came from these regions, from the ancient Accades and Sumites, from the Low Caldea’.<sup>56</sup>

*The Plenary Latin American Council (1899)*

Historiography has often viewed the Plenary Latin American Council as marking the rise of a ‘consciousness of union within the American episcopate’.<sup>57</sup> However not only was the idea of bringing together the episcopate already established, but after the 1850s the Latin American Catholic hierarchy maintained close contacts, exchanged ideas and references, travelled the world and gathered in Rome and elsewhere. The growing internationalisation of the Latin American clergy had led toward a certain sense of collegiality which translated into communal initiatives.

Again, the promotion of a Latin American consciousness was driven from both sides of the Atlantic. The idea of a council was proposed by the archbishop of Santiago de Chile, Mariano Casanova, in October 1888 in a letter sent to the pope which contained a lucid analysis of the state of the Catholic Church in the region and proposing, as a solution, the gathering of a council. Casanova suggested the idea of a council as a means whereby the Latin American episcopate might unite in the face of its common enemies: regalism; Protestantism; Freemasonry; liberalism.<sup>58</sup>

religión de progreso y esencialmente civilizadora con base moral de perpetua regeneración, y no pasará quizás una centuria sin que se vea América adorada por el mundo entero’: *ibid.* 334.

<sup>56</sup> ‘Sabes por qué tengo sumo placer de visitar Caldea. Porque según opinión muy autorizada entre los americanistas la civilización primitiva de América proviene de estas regiones, de los antiguos Accades y Sumitas de la Baja Caldea’: Archivo de la Curia de Montevideo, Vicaría General, carpeta 7, correspondencia Soler-Luquese, 1888, 1893–4.

<sup>57</sup> A. Pazos and D. Piccardo, *El Concilio Plenario de América Latina. Roma 1899*, Madrid–Frankfurt 2002, 12.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* 54–64.

As a symbol of Latin American episcopal unity the council also indicates the limits of Latin American identity. While the council was being organised two elements turned out to be particularly controversial: its geographical reach and its location. The first question revolved around what was understood by 'Latin America' – if this meant 'South America', with Mexico excluded, or whether it meant Spanish-speaking territories to the exclusion of Portuguese Brazil. The choice of location would bring into the open tensions between Latin American countries, especially between Chile and Peru.

Latin America was thought of by the Vatican as a more or less homogeneous bloc and both diplomatic and political representation was carried out on this basis.<sup>59</sup> Pope Leo XIII, writing to Cardinal Rampolla, recently appointed Secretary of State, suggested that he should not distinguish between Spain and (Latin) America on account of their 'close relations in origin, language and religion'.<sup>60</sup> Leo referred to Latin America in a range of pontifical documents such as the encyclical *Quarto abeunte saeculo* (1892) commemorating the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America, or the apostolic letter *Trans oceanum* (1897) in which is underlined the importance that popes had given to the Christianisation of the continent. Leo noted that the region, 'because of the religion that it inherited from its new inhabitants and the origin of its language, is known by the name of Latin America'.<sup>61</sup>

Nevertheless, there were different versions of what was considered 'Latin America'. If Mariano Casanova's initial plans encompassed both South America and Mexico that was not clear either in previous episcopal consultations nor within the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs. In its responses to the Vatican the opposition of the Haitian episcopate stands out, highlighting its differences in origin, language and tradition. Brazil claimed differences between nations and a lack of means while, finally, Mexico argued that, politically, the time for a council was not right.<sup>62</sup>

Nor was there unanimity within the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs where resistance from Brazil, Haiti and Mexico to

<sup>59</sup> E. Cárdenas Ayala, 'La construcción de un orden laico en América Hispánica: ensayo de interpretación sobre el siglo XIX', in Roberto J. Blancarte (ed.), *Los retos de la laicidad y la secularización en el mundo contemporáneo*, Mexico 2008, 92; Ayala Mora, 'El origen del nombre', 213–41.

<sup>60</sup> 'Las estrechas relaciones de origen, lengua y religión', *Acta Sanctae Sedis* xx (1887), 8.

<sup>61</sup> 'En relación a la religión heredada de los nuevos habitantes y al origen de su lengua, es conocida con el nombre de América latina': 'Lettera apostolica in forma brevis *Trans oceanum*, su alcuni privilegi all'America Latina', <[https://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/it/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_apl\\_18970418\\_trans-oceanum.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/it/apost_letters/documents/hf_l-xiii_apl_18970418_trans-oceanum.html)>.

<sup>62</sup> Pazos and Piccardo, *El Concilio Plenario*, 52.

inclusion in the council was dealt with and where diverse solutions were proposed – from regional councils to a plenary council in which those countries would not be represented. In the end Cardinal Rampolla's criteria were adopted: recognising the common origin of the republics and putting forward, as a principle objective, the establishment of a common discipline for all.<sup>63</sup> The final call to the conference was aimed at 'the bishops of the Republics of Latin America', excluding both the French and English colonies and Cuba and Puerto Rico which, after the war of 1898, were under the control of the United States.<sup>64</sup>

The choice of location created problems from the outset. Casanova proposed to Cardinal Rampolla that the council should have a Latin American base. If indeed that idea had been favoured, there would have been problems. In their responses to Rampolla's circular of 1889 prelates were largely inclined towards Santiago de Chile, Lima and Bogotá, although both Caracas and Panamá were in contention.<sup>65</sup> In December 1894 it emerged unofficially that the chosen site was to be Santiago de Chile. This generated no slight tensions. On the Peruvian side there were still a number of open wounds due to its defeat in the Pacific War. Moreover, both the archbishop of Lima and the apostolic delegate of Peru defended the historical primacy of Lima. Faced with the possibility that otherwise the council would meet at Santiago, the Peruvians finally accepted Rome.<sup>66</sup> In spite of attempts by Mariano Casanova, on December 1898 it was resolved that the Latin American College in Rome would host the council.

Nevertheless, such problems should not obscure the fact that the council did consolidate links between Latin American bishops and secured a Latin American Catholic identity. Beyond the resolutions themselves, the experience of the council served to create still closer bonds amongst the episcopate. Throughout its duration they shared routines, meals, down-times and more solemn moments, all of which might well have contributed to the awakening of a feeling of collegiality amongst the prelates.

Little is known about the proceedings of the congress as its sessions were held behind closed doors and treated as secret. Little, with the exception of the public sessions, was reported in the media. On 29 May 1899, when the council was inaugurated, a letter from its attendees was sent to the Vatican, to which Leo XIII responded eulogising their efforts given that 'although from such disparate regions, each one of you came to Rome out of joy: and we have admired your collective concordance; leaving aside the

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 70–5.

<sup>65</sup> Gaudio, 'Mons. Mariano Soler', 287–92.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid; M. Camus Ibacache, 'La Préparation et convocation du concile plénier de l'Amérique latine célébré à Rome en 1899', *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* xciii (1998), 66–82.

<sup>64</sup> Cited *ibid.* 91.

diversity of nations you unanimously dedicate your complete solicitude and eagerness to the greater wisdom of the deliberations of the council'.<sup>67</sup>

When the council ended, the prelates were received back into their dioceses with manifestations of joy. In the festivities organised in Santiago de Chile for the return of Mariano Casanova, Canon Rafael Prado gave a speech in which he eulogised the council and the beneficial effects that he expected for the entire continent, amongst which were the tightening of bonds between members of the Latin American episcopate:

There is yet another factor which completes the importance of this work. You have strengthened relations with your brothers within the episcopate from the different republics and, as expert generals, strategically placed along the line, you will not only know how to conserve the precious unity of the faith which aggrandises nations, but also that Latin America will comprise one soul, one heart, one arm capable of countering the ambitious plans of the powerful who, at their worst, would attempt to wrest from them their political autonomy.<sup>68</sup>

Throughout the twentieth century the initiative to establish a Latin American Catholic Church strengthened its institutions and contributed to generating a group identity as Latin American Catholics. Despite their differences Latin American ecclesiastics managed to create a permanent framework for dialogue and action. The creation of CELAM in 1955, like the Pontifical Commission for Latin America in 1958, would confirm the health of the initiative, and the support that it enjoyed both from the Vatican and in America. At the same time both bodies would substantiate the thesis argued here: that the movement for a Latin American Catholic Church was the result of interaction between Latin American Catholics themselves and the Vatican.

In its origin this initiative ran in parallel with other projects concerned with political union amongst Latin American republics. However, it worked on two levels: between Latin Americans themselves, and between

<sup>67</sup> 'Aunque de regiones tan apartadas, cada uno de vosotros vino a Roma gustoso; y hemos admirado vuestra suma concordia, mediante la cual, dejadas a un lado la diversidad de naciones dedicáis unánimes toda vuestra solicitud y afán al mayor acierto en las deliberaciones del Concilio': *La Voz de la Iglesia*, 4 Aug. 1899.

<sup>68</sup> 'Hay todavía otro factor que viene a completar la importancia de esta obra. Habéis estrechado relaciones con vuestros hermanos en el episcopado de las diferentes Repúblicas, y, cuál expertos generales, colocados estratégicamente en toda la extensión de la línea, no sólo sabréis conservar la preciosa unidad de la fe, que engrandece a las naciones, sino que también la América Latina será una sola alma, un solo corazón y un solo brazo capaz de burlar los ambiciosos planes de los poderosos que en mala hora pretendieran arrebatarles su autonomía política': *Manifestaciones de bienvenida al Ilmo. y Rmo. Sr. Dr. Don Mariano Casanova, arzobispo de Santiago de Chile a su vuelta del Concilio Plenario Latinoamericano, celebrado en el presente año, Santiago de Chile 1899*, 37.

Latin Americans and Rome. The aim of such a union was liberation from republican control over matters ecclesiastical and joint responses to the challenges of secularisation, Freemasonry and Protestantism. In addition to its reactive character, the ecclesiastical alliance contributed to the configuration and strengthening of the 'imagined community' of Latin America by confirming the cultural and historical traits upon which it was founded.<sup>69</sup>

However, the union was not without tensions and there were communities which did not feel themselves completely integrated, or did not participate so actively in its development although they never abandoned it completely. For example, although Brazil and Mexico play an active part in CELAM's Latin American conferences they found it necessary to create their own educational institutions in Rome alongside the Pontifical Latin American College: the Brazilian College (1934) and the Mexican College (1967).

Similarly, there were countries such as Chile, Argentina and Uruguay which were more committed than others. This may have been because the colonial ecclesial structures of these regions were somewhat weaker and had fewer traditions and practices; this may have facilitated the reception of ultramontane initiatives and its internationalisation. At the same time, their structural weakness and lesser economic power when compared with the wealthier Churches of Peru, Colombia and Mexico meant that they were less attractive to liberal authorities in need of resources for the construction of the new republics and therefore the processes of secularisation there were less aggressive and traumatic than elsewhere.<sup>70</sup>

Finally, plans for a Latin American Catholic Church brought with them a re-statement of the dynamics between the centre and the periphery within global Catholicism. After having achieved political independence, the diverse Latin American Churches reintegrated themselves into the global Catholic Church by means of this approach to, and union with, Rome. At the same time a Romanised Latin American Church would bring with it a re-evaluation of the Latin American contribution to the centre of Catholicism. As such, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries not only did Vatican interest in Latin America increase, but so did Latin American representation within the global structures of Catholicism; a presence which would be confirmed with the election of Pope Francis in 2013, the first American pope in history.

<sup>69</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, London 2006.

<sup>70</sup> Roberto Di Stefano, 'Vino viejo en odres nuevos: las vías de la secularización en la Argentina decimonónica', in Pedro Rújula and Javier Ramón Solans (eds), *El desafío de la Revolución*, Granada 2017, 319–34.