Soldiers, Priests and the Nation: 
From Wars of Religion to Wars of National 
Independence in Spain and New Spain 

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The Capuchin friar Diego José de Cádiz penned an influential treatise in 1793 during the War Against the Convention (1793-1795) titled The Catholic Soldier, in a War of Religion.¹ It was reprinted and circulated widely during the War of Independence in Spain (1808-1814), and, according to an early twentieth-century friar, it had a profound effect on that “heroic generation” of soldiers who fought against the French.² The 1815 edition featured images of four saints on the inside cover, with the martyred St. George and St. Maurice on equal footing with Iberian icons St. James and St. Sebastian. Six additional portraits appeared in the index, and the crusading French King Louis IX was placed next to St. Ferdinand of Castile. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Raimundo de Fitero, who fought the Moors during the Reconquista, were included as well as St. John Gualbert and St. Camillus de Lellis, who had risen to prominence in Florence and Venice, respectively. Clearly, each was not a figure of local importance across the Spanish Monarchy. Yet all were situated within a pantheon alongside saints like Santiago, the patron and protector of Spain, and Ferdinand III, the thirteenth-century king of Castile. Diego de Cádiz espoused a universalist religious ideal, premised upon Catholic orthodoxy, military virtues and a hierarchical social order, that transcended state borders. He agonized over the fact that all of the pillars of traditional society were under attack and proclaimed that no one could possibly misunderstand the true importance of the struggle: “God, his Church, his Faith, his Religion, his laws, his Ministers, his Temples, and the most sacred rights…are unjustly violated.”

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The church invested heavily in the campaign, donating millions of reales, and Diego de Cádiz concomitantly emphasized the obligations of the faithful: “All good sons of the Holy Church should take up arms in its defense against their enemies.”3 There were no exceptions to the rule.

Written at the height of the radical phase of the French Revolution, the text foregrounded the conflict against France as a war of “religion and justice.” Diego de Cádiz, decrying the nationalist convictions of liberals who justified their struggle against the Old Regime by appealing to the doctrine of popular sovereignty, insisted that the campaign be directed expressly against the French National Assembly, a monstrous association of “seditious” and “perverted” men who threatened the stability and prosperity of all of Christendom.4 Across the Atlantic in the early 1790s, novohispano clerics likewise celebrated their Catholic lineage, captured in phrases like the “Christian People.” According to a Creole prebendary preaching in Mexico City, the “People of God,” from the Duke of Alba to the Velascos, sixteenth-century viceroys of New Spain, had sacrificed their lives “in defense of the Patria, the King and Religion.”5 On the annual day of Guadalupe’s commemoration in 1793, a peninsular cleric in San Luis Potosí also extolled New Spain’s transatlantic kinship: “we have been born from the Spanish tree that extends its roots from there to here.” The spirit of religion had allowed their relationship to grow and to flourish, and the cult of Guadalupe functioned in a like manner to those of Pilar in Aragón, Santiago in Galicia, and San Ignacio de Loyola in Vizcaya.6

Within two decades, both Spaniards and Spanish Americans were engaged in political revolutions that in many ways mirrored the French Revolution and the promulgation of the Constitution of 1791. In the midst of a War of “Independence” against French occupation, Spaniards called for a congress to be held, the first in which deputies were elected and participated from almost all of the territories of Spanish America and peninsular Spain.7 Representatives, gathered in the southern city of Cádiz, circumscribed the role of the king and created the foundation of a modern nation-state that incorporated all men of Spanish origin, including the indigenous of the New World. Simultaneously, although the Cortes of Cádiz sought to reform the church and considered reorganizing the regular clergy and beginning partial disentailment, they maintained the primacy and exclusivity of Catholicism as a defining principle of national citizenship.8 Images of saints, especially that of Guadalupe, have become indelibly associated with the warfare that broke out in 1810 in Spanish America, and religion certainly played a role on the battlefields of the peninsula. In an age of secularization and nationalization, in which the architects of new states built upon Enlightenment tenets of science and rationality, why did revolutionaries on both sides of the
Hispanic Atlantic retain religious elements within a burgeoning patriotic script? In terms of nationalist development, was the Spanish Monarchy truly different?

During a crucial period of identification formation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Hispanic nationalists did in fact instrumentally draw upon a religious leitmotif in order to legitimate a new form of politics, although it had deviated from the ideology of Diego de Cádiz. Liberal nationalism became a popular idiom expressed in a multiplicity of forms throughout the long nineteenth century, from sermons to plays, poetry, novels and song. A vibrant public sphere allowed for the transmission and circulation of these new ideas within a culture that advocated freedom of expression and debate. This essay will examine the convergence between Catholic iconography and liberal discourse and the ways in which religious imagery was deployed from pulpits and by priests at the fronts. A pantheon of nationalist heroes emerged from the epic stories of these battles, and myths and narratives first used to mobilize troops contributed to the formation of new identities. As historians have insisted upon “bringing the state back in” in order to assess institutions as well as identities, this essay will focus upon a factor too often overlooked in studies of nationalism: religion. Religious and political loyalties were intertwined as liberals attempted to break with the Old Regime and establish a radical new basis of political legitimacy across the Hispanic Atlantic world. At the same time, the archetype of a Catholic soldier fighting in wars of religion quickly transmogrified into a constitutional soldier upholding an individual’s sacred rights as well as the Catholic faith.

Until recently, the study of national identity formation neglected the issue of religion, relegating spirituality to Old Regime norms and antiquated discourses premised upon ingrained social hierarchies. While Linda Colley certainly pays attention to matters of faith vis-à-vis British national identity, a number of scholars that have published since the late 1990s, including Adrian Hastings, Michael Burleigh and Anthony Marx, explore religion as a central element of nationalist cohesion across Europe and the world. All of these historians, however, perpetuate the idea of the Spanish Monarchy as a peculiarly anti-modern state that retained a reactionary Catholicism as a central element of political loyalty, an exceptional case in an age of reform. Hastings clearly situates Spain in terms of backwardness and resistance to the larger project of European Enlightenment. Early-nineteenth-century Spain, according to Charles Esdaile, constituted a state in “which the impact of enlightened absolutism and the processes analysed by [Linda] Colley had alike been minimal.” Using pointed examples from the War of Independence, Burleigh also plays upon the idea of Spaniards as particularly prone to reaction. He equates anti-French sentiment to purges of Muslims and the eventual expulsion of the Moors in the early seventeenth century. Marx discusses the religious origins of nationalism in western Europe by drawing
lessons from the experiences of Ferdinand and Isabel in 1492. The question of religious fanaticism—and the archetype of the brutal, cruel Spanish conquistador—has been the subject of great debate since the nineteenth century, and the idea of the Black Legend in some ways endures today. Marx tacitly states that Spain established a template of modern conflictive nationalism, which emerged in large part “on the back of fanatical religious passion and conflict.” As Spaniards persecuted and drove out non-Catholics, from Jews to the Moors, they were left without an internal enemy to battle. Marx concludes that Spanish Catholicism “was not effectively engaged as a basis for secular nationalism.”

While many fought to preserve the Old Regime state between 1808 and 1821, a liberal Catholicism, with roots in Jansenist ideology, profoundly influenced political developments and identities in Spain and New Spain by the early nineteenth century. Understandings of pueblo and nación shifted from associations with the popular classes to becoming synonymous with the “people.” Language began to reflect the diminished importance attached to heredity and hierarchy in an age of revolution in the Atlantic world. The construction of modern linguistic conceptions of the nation did in fact “flower” in the Spanish Monarchy, in spite of the claims of Hastings and others to the contrary. This produced a variant of modern nationalism which differed significantly from a secular basis of identification. Partha Chatterjee, among others from the Subaltern Studies project, establishes a dichotomy between identities produced in bourgeois, secular Europe and those which emerged in colonial domains. He postulates that anticolonial nationalisms incorporated and maintained spiritual dimensions within a sense of collective belonging, while states in Europe moved away from such an accommodation. Treating “metropole and colony in a single analytic field” challenges the logic that processes of modernization diverged along colonial lines, and that Europeans necessarily divorced religious aspects from national identities. The examples of Spain and New Spain demonstrate that religiously-informed identities were not the exclusive patrimony of colonial states or of “backward” polities.

Although ethnic and class divides represented cleavages within complex social formations, nationalists across the Hispanic Atlantic appropriated Catholicism as well as liberal ideology within largely inclusive identities and saw no inherent contradictions between the two systems of thought. A moderate brand of liberalism shaped the polities of the age and served as a unifying rhetoric of Spanish nationalism. Furthermore, the trope of the “Catholic soldier” morphed into a powerful and enduring symbol of liberalism during wars of independence, as nationalists utilized religious imagery as well as the discourse of popular sovereignty in order to appeal across classes and ethnicities. Between 1808 and 1821, many subaltern soldiers came to embrace the inclusive ideals of Hispanic
constitutionalism, values which in many ways reinforced a sense of Catholic identity.

The War of Independence in Peninsular Spain

In peninsular Spain during the War of Independence, soldiers accompanying the allied forces often commented upon the profound religiosity of Spanish troops and civilians. Political pamphlets and broadsides were published with titles such as “Catholic Proclamation to the Spanish Nation,” and cries of “Long live the Spanish lion” were issued beside calls of “Long live Religion.” The British General Blayney recounted episodes in which Spaniards would refuse to fight on Sunday and showed palpable discontent when there was not a priest to say mass. Soldiers also wore relics of the saints as well as caps embroidered with patriotic slogans and images of saints and of the Virgin. One priest from León spoke of giving masses and sermons in his own home as conscripts from the Basque provinces passed through town. In his Memorias, he recalled that officers and soldiers alike had attended and listened attentively as he upbraided their crude customs and discouraged looting and theft as corollaries of the violence of war. The British chaplain James Wilmot Ormsby, who served in Spain during the war, attended a mass in Ciudad Rodrigo in 1808 on the subject of “the duty and necessity of invoking and relying on the protection of the Virgin Mary; to her was all the past prosperity of Spain attributed, and all the future prospects were referred.” Just as Guadalupe had become a rallying cry in New Spain, a variety of incarnations of the Virgin Mary served a similar purpose across the peninsula. August Ludolf Friedrich Schaumann, a soldier from Hanover attached to the British army, stated: “In our general orders we are commanded to respect and not to scoff at the religious and other peculiarities of the Spaniards. All of us have also had to stick the Spanish national cockade in our hats. It is scarlet, and the words ‘Viva Fernando settimo’ are stamped in gold upon it.” He further asserted that the Spanish people, especially the peasants in small towns, saw him in exclusively religious terms, writing: “The Spaniards simply look upon us as heretics.” Other non-Spanish soldiers echoed this sentiment. Ormsby spoke of the ambivalence exhibited by local residents as they interacted with Protestants fighting in support of what many Spaniards viewed as a Catholic cause. He bluntly insisted that “So inveterate are their religious prejudices, that, in the event of our co-operating with their armies, much inconvenience must arise. It is not the opinion of partial bigotry, but the universal conviction, that the English are not Christians.” On the other hand, he found that the Irish soldiers were treated with warmth and embraced as co-religionists.
Ormsby emphasized that “the most striking circumstance here is certainly the number and variety of monks and friars.” This did not lead him to conclude that the Spanish had risen in support of absolutism, however. He even praised the modern sensibilities of churchmen in writing that “Some of them have… evinced a patriotic disposition.” Right from the start of the conflict in May, 1808, clerics helped to recruit troops and channeled political ideals for a public that valued religiosity and the role of the priest. They preached to a diverse audience of parishioners and served as mediators between the sacred and the profane. For example, Salvador Ximénez y Padilla, who served as a chaplain in the Spanish army, bragged of having enlisted over five hundred soldiers in one day—men who later distinguished themselves on the fields of Bailén. Ximénez painted a traditional portrait of the Old Regime in his sermons, although he drew on nationalist sentiments in referring to his patria chica as Málaga, reserving the term nación for Spain. The clergy advanced a range of political ideologies in the wake of the French invasion, yet they often couched their rhetoric in the language of liberal nationalism. Even the most reactionary churchmen called upon good Spaniards to rise up and resist Napoleon in the name of el pueblo español, a term that resonated with the radical idea of popular sovereignty. Other pamphlets described the “saintly patriotic furo” of Spaniards as they drove French forces back with the force of arms and a riposte that they, too, enjoyed liberty and freedom under their own national government. Conversely, many foreigners who fought in Spain denigrated the lackluster war effort and the shortcomings of their allies. Ormsby defended the Spanish by suggesting that “the motives of this inertness have not been considered, and conclusions have been drawn from it, unjust to the Spanish character, and unfavourable to the Spanish cause.” He argued that Spain had faced serious setbacks without an effective central government and had been wracked by internal strife and military defeats at the hands of an invading army. He rhetorically asked: “do [these critics] honestly think that an army of thirty thousand Spaniards would be better received in England than [the French] were in Spain? I doubt it much.” After describing the inertia he understood as characteristic of Old Regime Spain, he opined: “How much will it redound to the honour of the modern Spaniards, if the spirit of patriotism and the love of liberty shall dispel those mists…and enable them to break those fetters, which were forged by superstition.” Entering La Coruña in early 1809, Ormsby optimistically related: “Nothing can exceed the animation and patriotism of the inhabitants; all ranks and ages are equally ardent. They have formed themselves into corps, and are constantly employed on some military duty… In short, the enthusiasm and zeal, which we had hitherto known but by description, we here see realised to the most full extent; and from the energy they inspire, it is unavoidable to infer how much may be accomplished
by a people determined to be free.” Preaching in the north of Spain in 1809, one Spanish cleric similarly described the unanimity of “the voice of twelve million men, and all clamor Liberty, Patria, and Religion.” According to the Archbishop of Valencia Joaquin Company, “The voice of one is the voice of all: long live Religion, long live Ferdinand VII, long live the patria, this is the general feeling of everyone.” Company found the origin of such sentiment in “the Religion of our Fathers, honor, [and] the Spanish character that inspires love toward our Sovereigns.” This “voice of patriotism,” exemplified by cries of “long live Spain” on the battlefield of Bailén, had emboldened the Spaniards in their apocalyptic struggle against the tyrant Napoleon.

An important aspect of Hispanic identity revolved around oppositional sentiment. George L’Estrange, an Irishman who fought with British regiments in Spain, highlighted the “national antipathy” between the French and the Spanish. He wrote: “The Spaniards were excusable in their hate, as the French were invaders, but why the French hated the Spaniards so violently I never knew; but probably the guerilla fighting in the earlier part of the war.” The French, denigrated as godless heretics, served as a convenient foil in both peninsular and American rhetoric. The Málagaño Ximénez recognized the need to print sermons “to propagate more and more the saintly hatred that all sensible hearts should have toward such a cruel enemy.” He admonished France as “fanatical” and denounced as irreligious the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, Robespierre, and the very idea of temples of reason. Finally, he maintained that if “we destroy the sin within ourselves, our enemies will be vanquished.”

The French served as the primary targets of religious ire. Clerics unleashed a barrage of anti-French sentiment, imploring Spaniards to defend the nation against the bearers of atheism and revolution. Conservative clerics argued that the French symbolized all of the evils then poisoning European societies. In the aptly titled Preservativo contra irreligión, Rafael de Vélez inveighed against the French: “In all of Europe they are known by the names of the enlightened, materialists, atheists, unbelievers, libertines, masons, the impious. Their doctrines against kings, authorities and religion merit these titles: and their works expose them at least as fanatics, misanthropic enemies of all society.” He rallied the faithful to the national cause with cries of “long live the Virgin Mary: long live Jesus Christ: long live their faith, their religion: long live Ferdinand VII: death to the French.” Vélez boasted that “all Spaniards heard nothing but cries of long live Spain, religion will triumph, death to France.” Just as insurgents called for
“death to the gachupines” in New Spain—some demanded that all Europeans be killed—peninsular Spaniards attacked the French in nationalistic terms that had not been used in the previous war of 1793-1795.\(^{52}\) The entire French nation had become the enemy of Spain rather than a select few impious individuals representing seditious causes.

**Religion and Civil War in New Spain**

Although neither Marx nor Hastings analyzes nationalism in the Americas, nationalist discourses emerged throughout the various realms of the Spanish Monarchy within entangled political and cultural traditions, grounded in Catholic language and imagery. Nationalist traditions borne out of colonial Spanish America, with supposed roots in pre-Columbian dynastic states, have laid claims to a singular and unique past that justified separation and political sovereignty.\(^{53}\) Neo-Azteccism infused the rhetoric of early imperial Mexico in the 1820s. “Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe” and “death to the gachupines” are slogans that have in large part defined the legacy of the War of Independence in Mexico, for example.\(^{54}\) In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, however, the political boundaries of colonial viceregalies had yet to be demarcated into national borders—no nations existed in Spanish America. The priest Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla rebelled against peninsular rule in the name of King Ferdinand VII and under the banner of the Catholic Church, loyalties which did not seem contradictory to his followers at the time. With chants of “long live America” and “death to bad government,” insurgents successfully mobilized a militant base around class grievances rather than national allegiance in 1810.\(^{55}\) They played upon issues of oppression and injustice that mixed historic claims to provincial rights with New World signifiers, including prominent saints. Simón Bolívar celebrated the instrumental use of religious iconography in his 1815 *Jamaica Letter*:

> Happily, the leaders of the Mexican independence movement have made use of this fanaticism to excellent purpose by proclaiming the famous Virgin of Guadalupe the Queen of Patriots, invoking her name in all difficult situations and placing her image on their banners. As a result, political enthusiasms have been commingled with religion, thus producing an intense devotion to the sacred cause of liberty. The veneration of this image in Mexico is greater than the exaltation that the most sagacious prophet could inspire.\(^{56}\)
Bolívar espoused the consolidation of pan-American states that did not always correspond to historic viceregal or to audiencia territories. He pondered whether or not Mexico might be suited to exert a paternalistic authority over the independent republics which he predicted would be established in America. Yet the glue of religion remained an important bond which Bolívar did not ignore. Historians have not thoroughly examined the conjunctures between American patriotic discourses and peninsular thought that came to delineate the parameters of national identification in the Hispanic world. Recent political histories have challenged the conventional narrative of a Creole-led insurgency struggling against the remnants of a weakened Spanish Empire to achieve independence. Research has shown that American autonomists attempted to shape a polity which retained administrative and symbolic ties to the Spanish Monarchy in the wake of the French invasion of Spain and Napoleon’s installation of his brother Joseph on the throne. The Constitution of 1812 realigned the basis of sovereignty and defined a new nation, including españoles americanos and indios, on the premise of equality as Spanish Catholic citizens. One novohispano bishop maintained that “now there is no difference between a man of American origin and he who was born in Europe; now there is no Atlantic, now there are not two continents, the Constitution unites them.” Accordingly, there were not two separate poles of the Spanish Monarchy but one unified Hispanic Atlantic World under the banner of liberal, Catholic constitutionalism. The origins of nationalism cannot be ascribed solely to New World elites chafing within the confines of Bourbon ministerial reforms or to the ideologies of European philosophes, but can be found in the interstices between colony and metropole, and in relationships between subjects and sovereign, citizen and government. Thus the public, political and religious discourses delivered across the Spanish Monarchy shed light on links between Spanish and Spanish American nationalisms.

According to the Dominican friar Servando Teresa de Mier, the “revolution” in New Spain began in response to the turmoil caused by the French invasion and because of the peninsular putsch which ousted the Viceroy Iturrigaray in 1808. In his history of the period, he excoriated the ecclesiastical response to the uprising, led by Hidalgo, and the abuses of the power of excommunication. Specifically targeting the higher clergy of New Spain, he pointed to the hypocrisy of their missives, deprecating the revolt on one hand while imploring priests to animate the troops and even take up arms in defense of the monarchy on the other. He could not believe that Inquisitors in New Spain condemned Hidalgo and the doctrine of popular sovereignty just as peninsular Spaniards justified their resistance to French occupation using the same language. Above all, however, Mier emphasized the role of religious symbolism and the pronounced attachment of a “Catholic people” to their faith as defining aspects of the war in
New Spain. He highlighted the religiosity of an army that flew banners with inscriptions and images of Guadalupe, while many soldiers wore similar regalia around their necks. In 1817, despite being under investigation by the Inquisition, Mier gave masses to troops “in accordance with the Dominican rite” in addition to granting “a plenary indulgence for those on the point of death.” Religion infused the everyday activities of soldiers during the wars of independence and cannot be separated categorically from the cosmovision they shared. Other participants, such as the insurgent cleric José María Mercado, described the daily prayers and masses requesting help from the Lord and invoking the name of “God of the Armies.” According to one eyewitness to the unfolding events in Dolores in September of 1810, Hidalgo gave a daily mass and dedicated a significant amount of time to contemplation and reading. Prior to an engagement, Hidalgo ordered church services to be held, followed by reciting a Te Deum. Furthermore, Hidalgo did not don a military uniform but wore his traditional dark blue clerical garb with a medallion of the Virgin of Guadalupe around his neck. Eric Van Young, analyzing data on over seven hundred churchmen from areas of high insurgent activity in central New Spain, finds that “the ambiguous character of political loyalty” cut across social classes, although he asserts “the prevalence of religious imagery and religious forms of political legitimation… among most insurgent groups, especially those of a notably popular stamp.”

The immediate goals of the conspirators, including Hidalgo and Ignacio Allende, were not unlike those of liberal agitators in peninsular Spain: seize their enemies and form a representative Junta in the name of Ferdinand VII. Hidalgo framed a discourse of national identity, what Lynch referred to as “incipient nationalism,” in terms strikingly similar to those articulated by royalist clerics and by the clergy in Spain. A lingua franca of Spanish nationalism, littered with religious metaphors and references, imbued sermons and calls to arms across the Spanish Monarchy. Formal armies as well as guerrilla bands offered their services to the patria in the name of religion. The trinity of God, King and Country, with God often listed first among the three, provided ideological ammunition for those fighting the French in Spain as well as for insurgents battling the Spanish forces in New Spain. For example, Hidalgo insisted that “the object of our constant vigilance is to maintain our Religion, the King, the Country, and the purity of our customs.” Hidalgo had amassed five to eight hundred men in Dolores, and marched toward San Miguel el Grande and Guanajuato, convening tens of thousands of troops within the first month of the initial military campaigns. The dramatic withdrawal of insurgent forces from the hills outside Mexico City on November 3 was only the beginning of a prolonged ideological as well as military campaign.
Opponents of the uprising led by Hidalgo and Morelos condemned the bloody civil war that had broken out as sacrilege, and Hidalgo was excommunicated prior to his trial and execution. Yet they too justified their stance in the language of Catholic piety, upholding the pillars of church and state. The Bishop of Michoacán, remaining loyal to the crown, exhorted his parishioners to “understand the obligations that one has, as a true Christian, to God, King, and to the Country, and to each one of your fellow citizens. All of you can understand your true interests, and embrace the sure ways of achieving them.” Preaching against Hidalgo in Guanajuato in 1810, the site of some of the first battles of the war, the friar Diego Miguel Bringas impugned the “traitors to America, to Spain, and to the Church,” because they “declare war against their fathers, their sons, their brothers, their monarch, their country and against their sacred religion.” In Querétaro, clerics were marshaled to “avoid the contagion and defend the city” against the rebellion. José Mariano Beristáin de Sousa beseeched the ecclesiastics of his congregation to censure all manifestations of the “diabolical” insurgency “in the confessional and in the pulpit, in public and private conversations.” Each side accused the other of crimes against religion, claiming exclusive rights of speaking in the name of the universal Catholic faith. Hidalgo railed against his enemies, the men that “are Catholic only to benefit themselves: their God is money.” He concluded that “under the veil of Religion and of friendship they want to make you victims of their insatiable greed.”

In order to demonize those who fought against the uprising in New Spain, insurgents accused royalists of secretly conspiring with the French. As in Spain, anti-French epithets became synonymous with atheism and hostility toward the Catholic church. In December, 1810, the insurgent periodical El Despertador Americano claimed the bonds of the Hispanic family had frayed, as “Mother Spain…will remain reduced—oh painful humiliation—to the precarious state of a mere Colony of France.” Other editorials compared the convening of the Cortes of Cádiz to the afrancesado assembly brought together in Bayonne, France in 1808. The Creole Bringas likewise portrayed Hidalgo and his followers as counterparts to Napoleon and the French, “penetrated by the spirit of the failed politics of the impious Napoleon Bonaparte,” corrupting the Americas with rapacious French ideas of liberty and equality. Conflating the enemy with the French proved to be a powerful ideological weapon, which in turn established the idea that Spaniards in general were tied to the illegitimate regime of Bonaparte that had to be defeated.

Despite fundamental differences, religious referents often bridged the gap between oppositional political factions. El Despertador Americano, edited by the insurgent priest Francisco Severo Maldonado, definitively stated that the rebels acted according to the will of God: “Americans. Heaven has declared for
you, the will of God manifests itself each day with unequivocal indications of the most decided and celebrated approval of our Cause.”83 One week later, in January of 1811, Maldonado implored his compatriots to join the cause: “Why do you fight on the side of the Europeans? Are you perhaps moved to the defense of Religion, the defense of our Sacrosanct Faith? But this is exactly our cause, on this matter our feeling is the same as theirs.”84 In an invective leveled against the rebellion led by Hidalgo, the royalist priest Miguel Santos Villa exclaimed: “your God and Lord is inside of you, and you will fight with your gifts to liberate yourselves from the danger of the rebellion.”85 Santos Villa portrayed God as a central figure within an individualized struggle, invoking the image of a soldier fighting in the name of religion. Significantly, both factions fought in the name of the Catholic faith and ardently believed God was on their side.

Even the most liberal periodicals such as Semanario Patriótico often fell back on religious paradigms in characterizing the War of Independence in peninsular Spain. In an editorial devoted to the subject of patriotism, Manuel Quintana identified countries privileged by God as the most patriotic: “Only in those countries favored by heaven can one find the passion that we know by the name of Patriotism.” In the same issue, he noted that divine retribution would befall the enemies of Spain, contrasting “the horrible calamity of an avenging God going to inspire terror in our enemies, and pursuing them in their flight” with “the love of the country, and recent Spanish triumphs, with jubilation and happiness overflowing in all Spaniards.”86 Quintana ultimately maintained that religion had been a prominent factor animating the defense of the nation: “the war we have endured is against a foreign aggressor, against an outside tyrant that has neither the right nor any reason to rule over the Spaniards, and whose domination and government we resist for justice, religion, honor, vengeance and for all types of obligations and political and moral incitements.”87 Along similar lines, in an article on the rights of societies, El Robespierre Español asked: “What are the privileges of a nation, or the social rights that must be respected?” The response listed: “Their religion, their constitution, their laws, their government, their institutions, their habits and customs, and the integrity of their territory.”88 Notably, religion appeared first, followed by devotion to constitutionalism and observation of the law. Even for a radical publication, religion was not the object of denigration. While religion did not suffuse the editorials of these periodicals, Hispanic liberals did not disparage Catholicism or espouse a purely materialist agenda.

Other letrados, such as Bartolomé Gallardo, although ridiculing friars and monastic life, manifested a continued attachment to Catholic spirituality.89 Unlike revolutionaries involved in the de-Christianization campaigns undertaken during the French Revolution, notable Hispanic radicals decried the extravagance and
hypocrisy of ecclesiastics while adhering to the precepts of the Catholic faith. Gallardo introduced his satire of conservative views in Spain with a disclaimer: “my aim has never been (nor would God permit it!) to upbraid the ecclesiastical estate in general, nor in the least the individuals that through virtue and exemplary doctrine are the edification of strong souls, the alimentation of the weak, and the support of just liberty. I only take aim against the dissolute members of the various hierarchies of the Church.” Gallardo separated his anticlerical position, condemning specific representatives of the church, from an overarching attack on religion itself.

Conclusion

Antonio Alcalá Galiano, an acute observer who wrote memoirs covering the War of Independence and the advent of constitutional government in Spain, argued that the Spanish revolution was not peculiar at all. He suggested that Spaniards had resisted French occupation for a variety of reasons, including religious passions, patriotism “a la Romana,” or even because they held a contradictory mix of beliefs. Although he distanced himself from “the confusion of ideas” put forward by some contemporary writers, his republican stance, hearkening back to ancient Rome, and his attraction to Deism, inspired by reading Montesquieu, Rousseau and Voltaire, did not necessarily conflict with a defense of God, King and Country. The Constitution of 1812 reflected this political and ideological hybridization, moderating individual rights such as free speech with a religious requirement for citizenship. Article 12 pointedly indicated that the Spanish nation was, and “always will be Apostolic Roman Catholic.” During this revolutionary age, Hispanic liberals attempted to reconcile their values with religion. Even popular liberal periodicals of the early 1820s, such as Madrid’s La Colmena, extolled Article 12 of the Constitution in addition to approving of the abolition of the Inquisition. Many religious partisans defended the Constitution as consistent with the doctrinaire principles of the church, while liberals felt vindicated by the end of feudal obligations as well as the end of arbitrary rule by ministers and hereditary monarchs.

In independent Mexico, the Plan de Iguala, proclaimed by Agustín Iturbide and Vicente Guerrero, accorded legal primacy to the Constitution of 1812 and legitimacy to the monarch Fernando VII, to whom Iturbide swore allegiance, and emphasized the common Spanish lineage of all Americans. Ironically, as Americans embraced pre-Conquest indigenous roots, they did not shirk a Hispanic heritage. The Plan de Iguala outlined the establishment of an independent state, declared religious uniformity and called for the convocation of a Cortes. While
nationalists pilloried peninsular Spaniards and the legacy of three centuries of colonialism, the political architecture of the Mexican nation relied heavily on the Hispanic precedent of the Constitution of 1812.\textsuperscript{94}

Unlike Diego de Cádiz upholding the “Catholic soldier” as the icon of religious war, liberal culture enshrined the “constitutional soldier” as the quintessential hero who fought for the honor of the nation. José Bravo, an outspoken Spanish priest, composed a popular anthem of national resistance that paid tribute to Spanish valor in the face of tyranny. He dedicated his song to the “patriotic company...of military officials of Sevilla, brought together under the constitutional system.” While his clarion call to arms, published in Sevilla in 1821, may have been written originally during the War of Independence and revived during the Trienio liberal of 1820-1823, the battle hymn nonetheless recalled the Valencian guerrilla leader Ascencio Nebot’s call to arms: “long live Spain: long live the Constitution.” Bravo poignantly announced: “With union, strength and constancy/ What tyrant will be able to defeat us?/ The heavens part and you will see how he fights/ The constitutional soldier.”\textsuperscript{95} The Catholic soldier engaged in the last of the wars of religion had been superseded by the figure of a constitutional warrior, fighting for national independence and to bring law and order to the darkest corners of continents still mired in absolutism. Soldiers pitted against Spanish authorities in the New World and those engaged with French troops in the peninsula struggled in protracted conflicts for independence and sovereignty. Although the Holy Alliance would put an end to this first phase of Spanish liberalism, and the Americas definitively broke away from the metropole by the early 1820s, a shared political culture survived intact on both sides of the Hispanic Atlantic throughout the course of the nineteenth century, a testament to the strength of Hispanic constitutionalism.

NOTES


3 William J. Callahan, *Church, Politics, and Society in Spain, 1750-1874* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), 77; Diego José de Cádiz, *El Soldado-Católico*, 6-8. This was not a new phenomenon, as priests, such as the Bishop of Salamanca, implored men to take up arms during the War of the Spanish Succession. The Bishop argued that a war of religion had erupted as Calvinists and Lutherans, enemies of the true faith, were waging a heretical campaign to profane the sacred spaces of Catholic Spain. See David González Cruz, *Propaganda e información en tiempos de guerra España y América* (1700-1714) (Madrid, 2009), 49.


5 Juan de Sarria y Alderete, *Oración fúnebre que en las solemnes honras que se celebran todos los años en la santa Iglesia metropolitana de México a la gloriosa memoria de los difuntos militares que han seguido las triunfantes banderas españolas* (1791), in C.D.F., vol. 604, sig. 2193, 2-7.


8 Callahan, *Church, Politics, and Society in Spain, 1750-1874*, 100-102.


13 Hastings argues that vernacular language and Biblical translation played a special role within the process of nationalization, contrasting developments in eighteenth-century England with those in Spain. Echoing claims made by Gellner on Spain’s supposedly retrograde process of identity formation, he asserts that the English language is “a good place to start” an investigation into national identity. As evidence, he cites ‘Johnson’s Dictionary of 1755 which defines ‘nation’ as ‘A people distinguished from another peo-
14 Esdaile, Fighting Napoleon, 77.
18 Ibid., 26.
20 See, for example, Antonio de Capmany’s 1778 and 1808 definitions of pueblo, cited in Françoise Etienvre, Centinela contra franceses: Edición, con introducción, notas y apéndices documentales por Françoise Etienvre (London, 1988), 45, 133. On French linguistic changes, see Greenfeld, Nationalism, 160-162.
23 Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, “Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda,” in Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, eds., Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World (Berkeley, 1997), 4.
25 Manuel Moreno Alonso, Los españoles durante la ocupación napoleónica: la vida cotidiana en la vorágine (Málaga, 1997), 195.
27 Juan Antonio Posse, in Richard Herr, ed., Memorias del cura liberal don Juan Antonio Posse con su Discurso sobre la Constitución de 1812 (Madrid, 1984), 115.
28 James Wilmot Ormsby, An Account of the Operations of the British Army, and of the State and Sentiments of the People of Portugal and Spain, during the Campaigns of the Years 1808 & 1809, Vol. II (London, 1809), 3.


Ibid., 70-71.

Ibid., 159-160.


Rafael de Vélez, *Preservativo contra la irreligión, o los planes de la Filosofía contra la Religión y el Estado, realizados por la Francia para subyugar la Europa, seguidos por Napoleón en la conquista de España, y dados a luz por algunos de nuestros sabios en perjuicio de nuestra patria* (1813), in C.D.F., vol. 172, sig. 701, 2.

Ibid., 116.

Ibid., 122.


Adelman argues that Americans in both the Spanish and Portuguese monarchies did not necessarily resent their metropolitan regimes. See Jeremy Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic* (Princeton, 2006). Pedro García’s memoir *Con el cura Hidalgo en la guerra de independencia* exemplifies the nationalist teleology of reading Hidalgo’s uprising as the moment of “emancipation” and “the hour of our liberty.” See Pedro García, *Con el cura Hidalgo en la guerra de independencia* (Mexico, 1967), 51.

On the army and events of 1808-1810, see Chrston I. Archer, *The Army in Bourbon Mexico, 1760-1810*, 278-301.


Simón Bolívar, *Reply of a South American to a Gentleman of this Island* (emphasis mine), in Harold A. Bierck, Jr., ed., *Selected Writings of Bolivar* (New York, 1951), 121.


Mier Noriega y Guerra, *Historia de la revolución de Nueva España*, 313.

Ibid., 315-316.

Ibid., 318.

66 Paul Vanderwood has argued that “common people may well have measured the transition (away from Spanish authority) in religiously founded moral terms because religiosity, including degrees of millenarian thought, permeated their cosmos.” See Paul J. Vanderwood, “The Millenium and Mexican Independence: Some Interpretations,” in Christon I. Archer, ed., The Birth of Modern Mexico, 1780-1824 (Wilmington, Del., 2003), 178.


68 Pedro José Sotelo, cited in García, Con el cura Hidalgo en la guerra de independencia, 23.

69 García, Con el cura Hidalgo en la guerra de independencia, 92-93.


71 Hamill, The Hidalgo Revolt, 120.


74 Manuel Abad Queipo, Edicto instructivo que el Ilustrísimo Señor Don Manuel Abad Queypo (México, 1810), in Colección Lafragua (C.L.), Biblioteca Nacional, México, vol. 995, 23.


80 El Despertador Americano no. 2 (December 27, 1810).

81 Semanario Patriótico Americano no.10 (Sept. 20, 1812).

82 Bringas, Sermón que en la Reconquista de Guanaxuato, 4.

83 El Despertador Americano no. 2 (December 27, 1810).

84 El Despertador Americano no. 4 (January 3, 1811).

85 Miguel Santos Villa, Sermón que en los solemnes cultos que se tributaron a San Francisco Xavier por haberse libertado esta ciudad de Valladolid de los estragos con que la amenazaban los insurgentes (México, 1811), in C.L., vol. 1280, 25.

86 Semanario Patriótico no. 3 (September 15, 1808).
87 Semanario Patriótico no. 74 (September 5, 1811).
88 El Robespierre Español no. 13 (Cádiz, 1811).
89 Gallardo defined friars as “a species of vile and contemptible animals that live a life of leisure.” See Bartolomé Gallardo, Diccionario crítico-burlesco: Diccionario razonado manual para inteligencia de ciertos escritores que por equivocación han nacido en España (Madrid, 1820), 54.
90 Ibid., xxi.
91 Alcalá Galiano, Memorias de D. Antonio Alcalá Galiano, 277, 349-352.
93 La Colmena no. 1 (March 17, 1820).
95 José Bravo, A la compañía patriótica, justa y benéfica de oficiales militares de Sevilla, reunidos por el sistema constitucional (Sevilla, 1821), in C.D.F., vol. 977, sig. 3456; Gazeta del Reyno de Valencia no. 36 (May 8, 1813).