

The Politics of Recognition in US-Philippine-Vatican Relations, 1898–1899

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In a draft of a homily written sometime in October or November 1898, the Filipino nationalist Padre Mariano Sevilla lauded his compatriots, declaring “that you are being regarded with the utmost amazement by the entirety of Europe, Asia, and America, not only because of your gallantry in war, but also because of your honorable conduct towards the vanquished Spaniard.” The “vanquished Spaniard” (*nagaping castilá*) to which he referred were the Aguinaldo government’s Spanish prisoners of war that comprised not only Spanish combatants but also friars. At the time of writing, the Malolos Congress was debating the separation of church and state; American forces had seized Manila, keeping Filipino troops out; and, on the other side of the world in Paris, negotiations for the treaty of peace between Spain and the United States were underway. Sevilla’s praise of Filipino virtue, therefore, was clouded by political worries. Conscious of a world observing, he counselled that “true unity is necessary so that when other nations see this unity, they would come to respect us and would not dare to toy with us.” He argued prophetically that “if the Americans were to see us being rent asunder...they will take advantage of such situation and conquer us.”¹

Padre Sevilla’s joys and anxieties were rooted in what is termed in this article as the “politics of recognition.” The nascent Philippine Republic felt that it needed to prove itself worthy of diplomatic recognition by showing that it treated its Spanish enemies in a civilized way. But the presence of Spanish friars in the Philippine state’s politics of recognition, not to

¹ “Mga kapatid cong cristiano...,” ca. 1898, Selected Documents Folder [hereafter SD] 619.9, Philippine Insurgent Records, National Library of the Philippines [hereafter PIR]. For the activities of Sevilla, see John N. Schumacher S.J., *Revolutionary Clergy: The Filipino Clergy and the Nationalist Movement, 1850–1903* (Ateneo de Manila University Press 1981); “Las Bodas de Oro del R. P. Dr. Mariano Sevilla, 1863–1913,” *Cultura Social* (1913): 120–122.

mention Sevilla's profession as a Catholic priest, embroiled *La República Filipina* not only with Spain and the US but also the Holy See. A Doctor of Sacred Theology, he was the recognized leader of the Filipino clergy and an esteemed counsellor of Filipino nationalists and revolutionists. His homily, therefore, was nothing short of foreign policy advice. However, unbeknownst to Padre Sevilla, as the next sections of this article will parse, his superiors in Rome were aware of the situation in the Philippines and desired to quell what they perceived as a double rebellion against Spain and the Catholic Church. To forward its goals, the Holy See ironically found an unlikely ally in the Protestant United States, then about to annex the Philippines.

This article traces the vagaries of the politics of recognition that triangulated three sovereign powers—the Philippines, the United States, and the Holy See—arguing that the Holy See's refusal to grant political recognition of the First Philippine Republic facilitated the US conquest of the Philippines. The Aguinaldo government retained the Spanish friars as prisoners of war to obtain from the Holy See the Filipinization of the Catholic Church and the political recognition of the Philippine Republic through formal, diplomatic means. In this quest for recognition, the Republic's level of political and religious civilization was scrutinized and judged by outside observers. The Holy See, considering the imminent triumph of the United States, withheld recognition of Aguinaldo and his government, an act that advanced the rise of US overseas empire.

Paul Kramer describes this dynamic tension of competing sovereignties as the “politics of recognition.” He avers that such politics was based on civilizational and racial thinking either to assert or to deny political independence and sovereignty. It was, as he argues, the very basis of the prosecution of the Philippine Revolution (1898) and the Philippine-American War (1899–1902). Through competitive state-building and propaganda, Filipinos asserted the political and juridical existence of the Republic, while Americans

downplayed the Revolution as an “insurrection” and Filipino claims to sovereignty as inchoate.² Nevertheless, even without using Kramer’s term, Philippinists have long noted the Aguinaldo government’s cosmetic preoccupation with national respectability at the expense of practical matters such as military preparedness.³

What has been oddly missing in the literature is the prominent and central role of the Roman Catholic Church in this politics of recognition. As this article reveals, the Holy See engaged in such politics by repeatedly describing the Philippine Republic as illegitimate, at the same time gesturing towards the US as an ally despite it being non-Catholic. When Spain fell in 1898, the Catholic Church in the remaining Spanish territories (Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines) was thrown into a state of volatility. Under the system of church-state union called the *Patronato Real* (Royal Patronage), the Spanish monarch provided temporal support to the church in exchange for the power to present nominees for ecclesiastical positions, to license the establishment of pious institutions, and to oversee the execution of Papal Bulls (*exequatur*) and other communications with the Holy See.⁴ The diplomacy of the Holy See at

² Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (University of North Carolina Press 2006), 19–20, 87–158. Kramer developed this idea from Uday Singh Mehta, “Liberal Strategies of Exclusion,” *Politics and Society* 18, no. 4 (1990): 452–552.

³ Nicole CuUnjieng Aboitiz, *Asian Place, Filipino Nation: A Global Intellectual History of the Philippine Revolution, 1887–1912* (Columbia University Press 2020), 80–86, 106–110; Milagros C. Guerrero, *Luzon at War: Contradictions in Philippine Society, 1898–1902* (Anvil Publishing 2016); Tisa Wenger, *Religious Freedom: The Contested History of an American Ideal* (University of North Carolina Press 2017), 56–65; María Dolores Elizalde, “Observing the Imperial Transition: British Naval Reports on the Philippines, 1898–1901,” *Diplomatic History* 40, no. 2 (2016): 219–243. For traditional texts on the Philippine Revolution, see Teodoro Agoncillo, *Malolos: The Crisis of the Republic*, new ed. (University of the Philippines Press 1997); Onofre D. Corpuz, *Saga and Triumph: The Filipino Revolution against Spain* (University of the Philippines Press 2002).

⁴ For a recent treatment of the Patronato, see Benedetta Albani and Giovanni Pizzorusso, “Problematizando el Patronato Regio: Nuevas Acercamientos al Gobierno de la Iglesia Ibero-Americana desde la Perspectiva de la Santa Sede,” in *Actas del XIX Congreso del Instituto Internacional de Historia del Derecho Indiano*, vol. 1 (Instituto Internacional de Historia del Derecho Indiano 2017), 519–544. For the Philippine context of the Patronato, see Domingo Abella, “Episcopal Succession in the Philippines,” *Philippine Studies* 7, no. 4 (1959): 435–447; Pablo Fernández O.P., *History of the Church in the Philippines, 1521–1898* (National Book Store 1979), 33–34; Antolin Uy

this conjuncture, therefore, revolved around securing the institution after the abrupt disappearance of its patron. The Holy See also attempted, whenever possible, to assert its political sovereignty that it lost after the dissolution of the Papal States (the so-called *Questione Romana*). This was an agenda that undergirded its negotiations with the United States during the Taft Mission to the Vatican in 1902.⁵

The Holy See and the Philippine Republic framed their relations with the United States in formal, diplomatic terms. Of course, the legitimacy of one was contested by the other, but we take these three sovereigns as equals to surface more clearly the nuances of their interactions. Unlike Protestant churches, or any other religion for that matter, the Roman Catholic Church formally interacted (and continues to interact) with other nation-states, such as the United States, through its diplomatic corps.⁶ From its foundation in 1814 until its abrogation in 1989, the Sacred Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs (*Sacra Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari*) was responsible for the foreign policy of the Holy See. Leadership of this congregation (or department) was at times assumed by the Secretary of State to His Holiness, who in the pontificate of Leo XIII (1878–1903) was the nobleman Cardinal Mariano Rampolla del Tindaro, who served in that position from 1887 to

S.V.D., *The State of the Church in the Philippines: The Correspondence Between the Bishops in the Philippines and the Nuncio in Madrid, 1850–1875* (Divine Word Seminary 1984).

⁵ David J. Álvarez, “Purely a Business Matter: The Taft Mission to the Vatican,” *Diplomatic History* 16, no. 3 (1992): 357–369; Anna Su, *Exporting Freedom: Religious Liberty and American Power* (Harvard University Press 2016), 11–35.

⁶ Robert Araujo S.J., “The Holy See as International Person and Sovereign and Participant in International Law,” in *From Just War to Modern Peace Ethics*, ed., Heinz-Gerhard Justenhoven and William A. Barbieri, Jr., 249–273 (De Gruyter 2012); Mariano Barbato, “A State, a Diplomat, and a Transnational Church: The Multi-layered Actorness of the Holy See,” *Perspectives* 21, no 2 (2013): 27–48; Robert A. Graham S.J., *Vatican Diplomacy: A Study of Church and State on the International Plane* (Princeton University Press 1959). For a systematic critique, see John R. Morss, “The International Legal Status of the Vatican/Holy See Complex,” *The European Journal of International Law* 26, no. 4 (2016): 927–946.

1903.⁷ Like the Vatican, the Philippine Republic attempted to establish diplomatic relations with other sovereign states to advance its own political agenda. Its imprisonment of Spanish friars as leverage, then, could only be understood as a diplomatic strategy. Consequently, instead of considering it as a local phenomenon, as previous authors have averred, the imprisonment of Spanish friars is foregrounded in this article as central to the diplomacy of three sovereign states.⁸

Strands of historiography that have not been put into sustained and productive conversation are juxtaposed here. By drawing attention to the diplomacy of the Roman Catholic Church, this article pushes back against, but also enriches, the “religious turn” in American foreign relations history that has often been the domain of Protestant divines and missionaries participating informally in American diplomacy.⁹ Recently, Emily Conroy-Krutz

⁷ Lajos Pásztor, “La Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari tra il 1814 e il 1850,” *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 6 (1968): 191–318; Diego Pinna, *Il Gran Consiglio della Chiesa: Leone XIII e la Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, 1878–1887* (Edizioni Studium 2021); Nicholas J. Doublet, “Church-State Relationship: The Congregation of Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs and the Politics of Concordats during the Pontificates of Pius X and Benedict XV, 1903-1922,” *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 54 (2020): 189–208; Roberto Regoli, “Il ruolo della Sacra Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari durante il Pontificato di Pio XI,” in *La Sollecitudine Ecclesiale di Pio XI alla luce delle Nuove Fonti Archivistiche*, ed. Cosimo Semeraro, 183–229 (Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2010).

⁸ e.g., William M. Abbott S.J., “Friar Prisoners under the Malolos Government,” in *Unknown Aspects of the Philippine Revolution*, ed., José S. Arcilla S.J., 127–144 (St. Paul’s 2006); Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 112–123; Giulio Cargnello, *La Diplomazia della Santa Sede e i Governi nelle Filippine e a Guam: Dalla Crisi dell’Impero Spagnolo alla Nascita della Superpotenza Statunitense nel Pacifico dopo la Guerra Ispano-Americana del 1898* (Aracne Editrice 2021), 358–363; Luigi Bruti Liberati, *La Santa Sede e le Origini dell’Impero Americano: La Guerra del 1898* (UNICOPLI 1984), 65–71.

⁹ See e.g., Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (Alfred A. Knopf 2012); Tisa Wenger and Sylvester Johnson, eds., *Religion and US Empire: Critical New Histories* (New York University Press 2022); David A. Hollinger, *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America* (Princeton University Press 2017); Matthew McCullough, *The Cross of War: Christian Nationalism and US Expansion in the Spanish-American War* (University of Wisconsin Press 2014); Melba Padilla Maggay, *A Clash of Cultures: Early American Protestant Missions and Filipino Religious Consciousness* (Anvil Publishing 2011); Susan K. Harris, *God’s Arbiters: Americans and the Philippines, 1898–1902* (Oxford University Press 2011); Kenton J. Clymer, *Protestant Missionaries in the Philippines, 1898–1916: An Inquiry into the American Colonial Mentality* (University of Illinois Press 1986).

has argued that American Christian missionaries were diplomatic agents of an expanding United States.¹⁰ But while adhering to her central claim, this article differs greatly in demonstrating that Catholic ecclesiastical diplomats did not simply imagine their “religious” work as a tool for American or Filipino “political” diplomacy, but that the Roman Catholic Church, unlike Protestant churches, behaved like a state with all the trappings of diplomatic representation. As will be shown below, the Catholic Church played a much bigger, central role in American overseas expansion than had earlier been assumed.¹¹

Meanwhile, the persistence of the “Americanization” paradigm in the historiography of US empire has occluded certain aspects of imperialism. By the Americanization paradigm we mean the historiographical bias that implicitly considers the United States and its culture, religion, ideology, and so on, as the heuristic bases to understand its expansion overseas.¹² Ensclosed within this paradigm, recent works on Catholicism and US empire, although laudable and interesting, have favored culture and ideas at the expense of other aspects such as politics, economics, and yes, formal diplomacy, all of which were crucial to the Church in the period in question.¹³ Despite the overwhelming evidence, older American Catholic historiography takes at face value the expansion and imposition of US power in 1898,

¹⁰ Emily Conroy-Krutz, *Missionary Diplomacy: Religion and Nineteenth-Century American Foreign Relations* (Cornell University Press 2024), 183–205.

¹¹ For similar cases, see Susan Pendersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford University Press 2017); Kevin Grant, *A Civilised Savagery: Great Britain and the New Slavery in Africa, 1884–1926* (Routledge 2005), 135–166.

¹² cf. Alfred McCoy, *Policing America’s Empire: The United States, the Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State* (University of Wisconsin Press 2009), 15–56; Paul Kramer, “How Not to Write the History of U.S. Empire,” *Diplomatic History* 42, no. 5 (2018): 911–931, at 921–924.

¹³ Katherine Moran, *The Imperial Church: Catholic Founding Fathers and United States Empire* (Cornell University Press 2020), 139–201; Wenger, *Religious Freedom*, 34–46; Anne M. Martínez, *Catholic Borderlands: Mapping Catholicism onto American Empire, 1905–1935* (University of Nebraska Press 2014), 71–98; John McGreevy, *American Jesuits and the World: How an Embattled Religious Order Made Modern Catholicism Global* (Princeton University Press 2016), 179–209; Tom Smith, *Word across the Water: American Protestant Missionaries, Pacific Worlds, and the Making of Imperial Histories* (Cornell University Press 2024), 168–203.

oblivious as these were to the workings of Papal diplomacy.¹⁴ Some have even adopted a tepid, if not dismissive view of this conjuncture as temporary and ad hoc.¹⁵ This article's focus on US-Philippine-Vatican diplomacy is an argument that the politics of recognition in the US empire was not only exercised on the plane of ideas or culture but on the actual practice of foreign relations.¹⁶ It likewise asserts that 1898 was the world historical moment that witnessed the unlikely rapprochement between the Vatican and the United States. Given the intense anti-Catholicism in the US mainland, it was unthinkable for the US to interact with the Holy See, let alone engage it in diplomatic affairs. But it nevertheless served the needs of empire.

The longstanding, uncritical view in Philippine Church historiography that the Holy See was an unproblematic, neutral, and even passive actor is disputed by this article. Almost sounding like apologists, Philippine (Catholic) Church historians are mostly unwilling, if not

¹⁴ Frank T. Reuter, *Catholic Influence on American Colonial Policies, 1898–1904* (University of Texas Press 1967); John T. Farrell, “Background of the Taft Mission to Rome I,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 36, no. 1 (1950): 1–32; Farrell, “Background of the Taft Mission to Rome II,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 37, no. 1 (1951): 1–22; Farrell, “Archbishop Ireland and Manifest Destiny,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 33, no. 3 (1947): 269–301; John L. Offner, “Washington Mission: Archbishop Ireland on the Eve of the Spanish-American War,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 73, no. 4 (1987): 562–575.

¹⁵ Wilson D. Miscamble, “Catholics and American Foreign Policy from McKinley to McCarthy: A Historiographical Survey,” *Diplomatic History* 4, no. 3 (1980): 223–240, at 225–227; Roy P. Domenico, “An Embassy to a Golf Course?: Conundrums on the Road to the United States’ Diplomatic Representation to the Holy See, 1784–1984,” in *Roman Catholicism in the United States: A Thematic History*, eds., Margaret McGuinness and James T. Fisher, 108–129 (Fordham University Press, 2019); Daniele Fiorentino, “A Peculiar Relationship: The U.S. and the Vatican, 1893–1919,” in *Holy See’s Archives as Sources for American History*, eds., Kathleen Sprows Cummings and Matteo Sanfilippo, 191–214 (Edizioni Sette Città 2016); John F. Pollard, “Leo XIII and the United States of America, 1898–1903,” in *The Papacy and the New World Order*, 465–477; Graham, *Vatican Diplomacy*, 341–342; Álvarez, “Purely a Business Matter.”

¹⁶ Roberto Regoli, “La Diplomazia Papale: Un Percorso Storiografico,” in *La Santa Sede, gli Stati Uniti e le Relazioni Internazionali durante il Pontificato di Pio XII*, eds., Roberto Regoli and Matteo Sanfilippo, 17–64 (Edizioni Studium 2022); Peter C. Kent and John F. Pollard, eds., *Papal Diplomacy in the Modern Age* (Prager 1994); Vincent Viaene, ed., *The Papacy and the New World Order: Vatican Diplomacy, Catholic Opinion and International Politics at the Time of Leo XIII, 1878–1893* (Leuven University Press 2005); Roland Minnerath, *L’Église Catholique face aux États : Deux Siècles de Pratique Concordataire 1801–2010* (Les Éditions du Cerf 2012).

timid, to plainly surface the deep-seated complicity of the institutional church in US imperialism, with their interpretation inescapably influenced by Catholic orthodoxy.¹⁷ This article rejects this view by showing that the diplomatic strategy of the Holy See that denied the Philippine Republic official recognition inversely accorded the United States acknowledgement as a legitimate and sovereign power in Spain's former colony. In turn, American officials recognized the vital importance and utility of the Vatican in its imperial ventures. This latter view has been forwarded within Philippine historiography in a handful of works, but these have rather been incomplete, conjectural, and based on insufficient evidence.¹⁸ The case of Aguinaldo's Spanish friar prisoners in the Philippine Republic's politics of recognition is a prism that nuances our view of US-Vatican relations confronting a nascent Filipino nation asserting independence.

¹⁷ See, especially, Antonio Francisco B. de Castro S.J., "Between Madrid and Rome: The Philippine Church in Transition, 1898–1902," in *Quae Mari Sinico and Beyond: Philippine Local Churches after the Spanish Regime*, eds. Daniel Franklin Pilario C.M. and Gerardo Vibar C.M., 17–88 (St. Vincent School of Theology 2015); Pedro S. de Achútegui S.J. and Miguel Bernád S.J., *Religious Revolution in the Philippines* (Ateneo de Manila 1960–1972), 4 volumes [hereafter RRP]; Ángel Martínez Cuesta O.A.R., "De la Tradición Hispánica al Modelo Norteamericano: La Iglesia Filipina entre Dos Imperios, 1898–1906," *Archivo Agustiniiano* 95 (2011): 133–177; Antolin Uy S.V.D., "The New Dioceses and the Bishops until 1910," in *Quae Mari Sinico and Beyond*, 89–110; Uy, "The First Three Apostolic Delegates to the Philippines," in *Chapters in Philippine Church History*, ed. Anne C. Kwantes, 160–181 (OMF Literature 2001); Uy, "The Friar Lands and the Vatican Involvement," *Diwa: Studies in Philosophy and Theology* 16 (1991): 56–69; Schumacher, *Readings in Philippine Church History*, 2nd ed. (Loyola School of Theology 1987), 292–384; Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*; Fernández, *History of the Church in the Philippines*, 314–355.

¹⁸ Dennis Shoemith, "The Dichotomous Legacy of the Catholic Church's Opposition to the Philippine Revolution of 1896," *The European Legacy* 25, no. 5 (2020): 502–518; Coeli M. Barry, "Polyglot Catholicism: Genealogies and Reinterpretations of the Philippine Catholic Church," *Pilipinas* 32 (1999): 59–81; Eva Lotta-Hedman, *In the Name of Civil Society: From Free Election Movements to People Power in the Philippines* (University of Hawai'i Press 2005), 20–21, 25–41; Josep M. Delgado, "'In God We Trust': La Administración Colonial Americana y el Conflicto Religioso en Filipinas," in *Filipinas: Un País entre Dos Imperios*, eds. María Dolores Elizalde and Josep M. Delgado, 145–163 (Ediciones Bellaterra 2011); Oscar L. Evangelista, "Religious Problems in the Philippines and the American Catholic Church, 1898–1907," *Asian Studies: Journal of Critical Perspectives on Asia* 6, no. 3 (1968): 248–262; Mario Bolasco, "The American Expansion and Christianity in Asia," in *Points of Departure: Essays on Christianity, Power, and Social Change*, ed. Edicio de la Torre, 46–60 (St. Scholastica's College 1994).

The Spanish Friars and the Philippine Revolution

The Philippine Revolution was partly driven by anti-friar sentiments, a reaction to the Spanish colonial state's deployment of Spanish friar parish priests as agents of colonial control. This policy was in place until the end of Spanish rule in 1898.¹⁹ The main friar orders were the Dominicans, Augustinians, Augustinian Recollects, and the Franciscans; no natives were admitted to these orders. Although there was a considerable number of native secular (diocesan) priests, they were relegated as mere coadjutors (assistants) to the friars who enjoyed the full privileges of being curates in many lucrative and significant parishes. It was a racist policy that pitted native clerics against Spanish friars, spurring the nationalist movement in the latter half of the nineteenth century.²⁰ The friars were also resented for their political control, for they inspected schools, oversaw tax collection, enforced press censorship, initiated public works, and especially towards the end of the nineteenth century, exerted arbitrary police power on the natives.²¹ Their ownership of vast tracts of agricultural

¹⁹ Fernando Primo de Rivera to Segismundo Moret, 21 June 1897, doc. 15, exp. 9, leg. 5361, *Ministerio de Ultramar*, Archivo Histórico Nacional [hereafter AHN], Madrid; Giuseppe Francica Nava di Bontifè to Mariano Rampolla, 19 February 1898, Archivio Storico della Segreteria di Stato—Sezione per i Rapporti con gli Stati e le Organizzazioni Internazionali [hereafter ASRS], *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 874, fasc. 301, 46^f–49^f; “Progetto di Riforma degli Ordini Religiosi nelle Isole Filippine,” Archivio Apostolico Vaticano [hereafter AAV], Arch. Nunz. Madrid, Titolo X, rubr. II, sez. 1, n° 2; “Situación de las Islas Filipinas,” AAV, Arch. Nunz. Madrid, Titolo X, rubr. II, sez. 1, n° 14, 465^f–466^v.

²⁰ John D. Blanco, *Frontier Constitutions: Christianity and Colonial Empire in the Nineteenth-Century Philippines* (University of California Press 2009), 64–94; Roberto Blanco Andrés, *Entre Frailes y Clérigos: Las Claves de la Cuestión Clerical en Filipinas, 1776–1872* (CSIC 2012); Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*; Schumacher, “The Cavite Mutiny: Toward a Definitive History,” *Philippine Studies* 59, no. 1 (2011): 55–81; Jethro Calacday, “Bishop Francisco Gaínza and the Creation of the Native Clergy in the Philippines, 1863–1879,” *Saysay: The Journal of Bikol History* 1, no. 1 (2021): 38–80.

²¹ For friars and public works, see Martínez Cuesta, *History of Negros*, trans., Alfonso Félix Jr. and Caritas Sevilla (Historical Conservation Society 1980); Rex Andrew C. Alarcon, “Bishop Francisco Gaínza OP: Obispo de Nueva Caceres (1862–1879),” *Philippiniana Sacra* 40, no. 120 (2005): 611–633. See also María Dolores Elizalde, “Gobierno Colonial y Órdenes Religiosas en Filipinas en las Últimas Décadas del Siglo XIX ‘Cuando la religión se convierte en un instrumento político,’” in *Gobernar Colonias, Administrar Almas: Poder Colonial y Órdenes Religiosas en los Imperios Ibéricos, 1808–1930*, eds., Xavier Huetz de Lemps et al., 115–148 (La Casa de Velázquez

land caused much irritation among the native and mestizo middleclass tenants who accused them of usurping these lands and exacting exorbitant rents.²² Allegations of sexual abuse and concubinage compounded native antipathy.²³ Lay Filipino intellectuals (*ilustrados*), revolutionists, and members of the nationalist movement therefore demanded the expulsion of the Spanish friars and the confiscation of their properties.²⁴ Filipino nationalist clergy like Padre Mariano Sevilla, meanwhile, insisted that Filipino clerics be accorded the rights and privileges as parish priests and bishops that were being monopolized by Spanish ecclesiastics.

As the symbol of Spanish colonialism, the Spanish friars became the object and focus of Filipino revolutionary violence. At the onset of the first phase of the Revolution in 1896, the friars were immediately pursued and captured by members of the *Katipunan*, the secret society turned revolutionary movement founded by Andrés Bonifacio. In fact, some of the friars were brutally murdered by Filipino combatants in the pandemonium that ensued.²⁵

After a temporary armistice in 1897, the Revolution was revived by General Emilio Aguinaldo in 1898. Together with Spanish combatants and officials, the friars who did not escape during the first wave of the Revolution were captured by Filipino soldiers as prisoners

2018); *Report of the Philippine Commission to the President*, vol. 2 (Government Printing Office 1900), 22, 25–26, 42–43, 93–100, 132, 143–144, 363, 370–371, 395–399, 402–413; *Reports of the Taft Philippine Commission* (Government Printing Office 1901), 15–16, 23–28.

²² Dennis M. Roth, *The Friar Estates of the Philippines* (University of New Mexico Press 1977); Nicholas Cushner, *Landed Estates in the Philippines* (Yale University SEAS 1976); Rene R. Escalante, *The American Friar Lands Policy: Its Framers, Contexts, and Beneficiaries, 1898-1916* (De la Salle University Press 2002); Fernando Palanco, “The Tagalog Revolts of 1745 according to Spanish primary sources,” *Philippine Studies* 58, nos. 1–2 (2010): 45–77.

²³ *Lands Held for Ecclesiastical or Religious Uses in the Philippine Islands* (Government Printing Office 1901), 133–140; Felipe Calderón, “Account of the Illegitimate Wives, Children, and Descendants of Friars,” ca. 1901, Reel 34, William Howard Taft Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁴ Schumacher, *The Propaganda Movement: The Creation of a Filipino Consciousness, The Making of a Nation*, rev. ed. (Ateneo de Manila University Press 1997), 83–104; 125–127; 301–306.

²⁵ José R Hernández O.P., ed. and trans., *Kasaysayan ng Paghihimagsik sa Cavite ni Don Telesforo Canseco, 1897* (Philippine Dominican Center of Institutional Studies 1999), 196, 198, 200; Lucio Gutiérrez O.P., *Historia de la Iglesia en Filipinas* (Editorial MAPFRE 1992), 283–5; Martínez Cuesta, “La Iglesia y la Revolución Filipina de 1898,” *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia* 7 (1998): 147–153.

of war. In addition to the obvious political reason, revolutionists imprisoned the friars to seize their properties and funds.²⁶ In 1898 there were 123 friar captives in Northern Luzon, mostly Dominicans, that included the bishop of Nueva Segovia, José Hevia Campomanes. Captured in Aparri, Cagayan towards the end of July 1898 as they were escaping to Hong Kong, they were the subjects of the Vatican's negotiations with the United States and the Philippine Republic. There were also friar prisoners in other provinces: Augustinians in Bulacan, Franciscans in the Bicol Provinces, Augustinian Recollects in Bacolod, and a handful of Jesuit and Benedictine missionaries in Mindanao, totaling 420 prisoners.²⁷

Brutalities were committed by Aguinaldo's forces as they adopted a "policy of severity" towards their Spanish captives.²⁸ A Dominican nun in Northern Luzon reported that Filipino soldiers tortured, severely struck, flogged, and publicly humiliated their friar captives, including those who were already old.²⁹ In an interview with the Taft Commission in 1900, Bishop Hevia testified that, after refusing to ordain unprepared native seminarians endorsed by the military governor of Isabela, said official "kicked me, and broke a cane over my left arm, kept that for three hours [sic]." On another occasion he was kicked several times in the stomach, leaving an injury that took two months to heal.³⁰

Nevertheless, the degree and intensity of anti-friar sentiment varied in every province just as there were variances in the way the Revolution was prosecuted in other parts of the

²⁶ William H. Reaney to Cándido García Valles, 20 July 1898, in Fidel Villarroel O.P., *The Dominicans and the Philippine Revolution, 1896–1903* (University of Santo Tomás Press 1999) [hereafter DPR], 253–4.

²⁷ Abbot, "Friar Prisoners Under the Malolos Government," 135; DPR 338–343; Peter Schreurs MSC, *Angry Days in Mindanao* (University of San Carlos Publications 1987); Martínez Cuesta, *History of Negros*, 438–463.

²⁸ Abbott, "Friar Prisoners under the Malolos Government."

²⁹ Mercedes de la Ascensión, *Relación de todo lo ocurrido...hasta nuestra vuelta á Manila* (Imprenta del Colegio de Santo Tomás 1900), 21–24.

³⁰ *Lands Held for Ecclesiastical or Religious Uses*, 126.

country. Aguinaldo, for instance, was angered by the murder of the friars in Cavite in 1897.³¹ Meanwhile in Cebú and the Bicol provinces, the Revolution was not motivated by anti-friar hatred: the friars in these places were either allowed to escape or were treated under better conditions by local officials.³² Although the friars were imprisoned by Filipino revolutionaries in the island of Negros, good rapport between them was fostered that there was little to no brutality committed upon the Spanish curates there.³³ In some cases where the friars were imprisoned or maltreated by Filipino military men, ordinary citizens lost no time to protest.³⁴ In fact, despite his experience, Hevia himself emphasized in a letter to Pope Leo XIII that the Filipino faithful continued to show the Spanish clergy respect and piety, that during their incarceration the natives provided them with food and clothing. When Filipino soldiers dared to inflict harm upon the Spanish padres, the people, according to Hevia, “manifested their displeasure towards those who tormented us.”³⁵

Given these considerations, it is insufficient to argue that the Philippine Revolution was totally anti-Catholic. Similar to its predecessors in Latin America, the Philippine Revolution desired less the obliteration of the Church than having complete control over it.³⁶

³¹ Schumacher, “Religious Character of the Revolution in Cavite, 1896–1897,” *Philippine Studies* 24, no. 4 (1976): 399–416.

³² Schumacher, “Religious Aspects of the Revolution in Bicol,” *Philippine Studies* 39, no. 2 (1991): 235; Resil Mojares, *The War Against the Americans: Resistance and Collaboration in Cebu, 1898–1906* (Ateneo de Manila University Press 1999), 13–25; Engracio Peña to Commanding Officer, 3 and 4 January 1900, RRP III: 72–75.

³³ Martínez Cuesta, *History of Negros*, 447–457.

³⁴ Ulpiano Herrero Sampedro O.P., *Nuestra Prisión en Poder de los Revolucionarios Filipinos* (Imprenta del Colegio de Sto. Tomás 1900), e.g., 247–248, 314, 324–325, 330–331, 339–340, 496, 692; Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 103–104 n. 56; Apolinar Pastrana Riol O.F.M., ed., *A Friar's Account of the Philippine Revolution: An Unpublished Manuscript of Fr. Marcos Gómez, O.F.M., about the Philippine Revolution of 1898 in Ambos Camarines* (Franciscan Friary of St. Gregory the Great 1980); Cayetano Sánchez Fuertes O.F.M., “The Franciscans and the Philippine Revolution in Central Luzon,” in *The Philippine Revolution of 1896: Ordinary Lives in Extraordinary Times*, eds., Florentino Rodao and Felice Noelle Rodríguez, 179–216 (Ateneo de Manila University Press 2001).

³⁵ Hevia to Leo XIII, 15 March 1900, RRP III: 11–16.

³⁶ See, e.g., José David Cortés Guerrero, “En pos del patronato republicano: la primera gran tensión en las relaciones Estado-Iglesia en la naciente república de Colombia,” *Lusitania Sacra* 43

Revolutionary (and later Republican) leaders intended to rectify the political and religious problems they inherited from Spain within the same model of church-state relations: ecclesiastical patronage (*patronato eclesiástico*).³⁷ Given the inescapable tug of the secularization thesis in Philippine historiography, most scholars have either hesitated to forward or totally ignored this phenomenon, some even misapprehending the religious policies of the Revolution as attempts to establish a “national church.”³⁸ However, the evidence strongly suggests that the Aguinaldo government actively exercised authority over ecclesiastical appointments to favor Filipino clerics, regulated the exaction of sacramental fees and, controlled church properties within the system of patronage. For this purpose, the “Bureau of Worship” (*Dirección de Cultos*) was established within the Justice department of the government of 1898 led by Padre Manuel E. Roxas, a Filipino priest and canonist. When the Philippine Republic was inaugurated in 1899, oversight of ecclesiastical matters was transferred to the Interior department.³⁹ Exercising control over the Church, Aguinaldo appointed Padre Gregorio Aglipay as military vicar general in October 1898. Encouraging his

(2021): 53–75; Carlos Salinas Aranedá, “The Efforts to Sign a Concordat between Chile and the Holy See in 1928,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 101, no. 1 (2015): 100–121; Lucrecia Raquel Enríquez, “El patronato de la monarquía católica a la república católica chilena, (1810–1833),” in *Normatividades e instituciones eclesiásticas en el virreinato del Perú, siglos XVI–XIX*, eds., Otto Danwerth et al., 223–243 (Max Planck Institute for European Legal History 2019); Lucrecia Raquel Enríquez, “¿Reserva pontificia o atributo soberano? La concepción del patronato en disputa: Chile y la Santa Sede (1810–1841),” *História Crítica* 52 (2014): 21–45.

³⁷ See the use of the term in PIR SD 167.1. See also Schumacher *Revolutionary Clergy*, 73–86; Schumacher, “Church and State in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” in *Church and State, The Philippine Experience*, Loyola Papers no. 3 (Loyola Papers Board of Editors 1978), 25–34.

³⁸ Cesar Adib Majul, *The Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Philippine Revolution* (University of the Philippines Press 1966); 157–9; Majul, “Anticlericalism during the Reform Movement and the Philippine Revolution,” in *Studies in Philippine Church History*, ed. Gerald H Anderson, 152–171 (Cornell University Press 1969); Majul, *Mabini and the Philippine Revolution*, rev. ed. (University of the Philippines Press 1996), 314–322, 343–361; Peter Ben-Smit, *Old Catholic and Philippine Independent Ecclesiologies: The Catholic Church in Every Place* (Brill 2011), 108–110, 119–142; Filomeno V. Aguilar, Jr., “Church-State Relations in the 1899 Malolos Constitution: Filipinization and Visions of National Community,” *Southeast Asian Studies* 4, no. 2 (2015): 279–311; Agoncillo, *Malolos*, 241–251.

³⁹ See the documents in PIR SD 167 and PIR I-26 and I-27.

fellow clerics to renounce their obedience to the Spanish bishops, Aglipay made ecclesiastical appointments in his capacity as a government appointed vicar, an act for which he incurred excommunication.⁴⁰ The religious policy of the staunch anticlerical Prime Minister Apolinario Mabini (who also was Foreign Minister) was likewise geared towards state control of the church.⁴¹ As a matter of political expediency, Mabini opposed the separation of church and state when the Malolos Constitution demanded so, influencing Aguinaldo to suspend the article declaring the Philippine state secular, and enjoining local municipal officials to continue paying the salaries of the parish priests.⁴² Perceptively, even in their bitter complaints, the Spanish friars described the threats of expulsion and expropriation as testaments to the Filipinos' attempted takeover of the Church.⁴³

The envisioned Filipino control of the Church was such that it was sanctioned by Rome. Felipe Calderón, the lawyer who drafted the Malolos Constitution, explained that his adoption of church-state union was meant to prepare the government for the signing of a Concordat between the Republic and the Holy See. Such agreement would stipulate the appointment of Filipino bishops and the confiscation of the friar haciendas.⁴⁴ Mabini, who was Calderón's political enemy, likewise anticipated a Concordat when he encouraged the clergy to draft a provisional constitution for the Philippine Catholic Church in 1899 which assured that the selection of bishops would be done with the coordination between the

⁴⁰ For the full narrative, see RRP I; Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 87–123; William Henry Scott, *Aglipay before Aglipayanism* (Aglipayan Resource Center 1987).

⁴¹ Apolinario Mabini, *Panukala sa Pagkakana nang Repùblika nang Pilipinas* (Limbagan sa kapamahalaan ni M. Z. Fajardo 1898), 10, 13, 20–22.

⁴² Majul, *Mabini and the Philippine Revolution*, 314–322.

⁴³ *Exposición de los superiores de las corporaciones religiosas...en Filipinas, 21 de Abril de 1898* (Imprenta de la Vda. de M. Minuesa de los Ríos 1898), 20–21. See also “Miseranda conditio...,” 21 April 1898, AAV, Arch. Nunz. Madrid, Titulo X, num. 638, rubr. II, no. 12, 449^r–452^r.

⁴⁴ Felipe Calderón, *Mis Memorias sobre la Revolución Filipina: Segunda Etapa, 1898 á 1901* (Imp. de ‘El Renacimiento’ 1907), 243.

Vatican and the Republic.⁴⁵ Concordats between the Latin American republics and the Holy See in the nineteenth century generally involved the concession of the Pope, as a special privilege to the president of each republic, the prerogative to present candidates for bishoprics and parishes. In return, the same republics were to enshrine the protection and official recognition of the Roman Catholic Church as the religion of the state.⁴⁶ The same was true for the Philippines at the turn of the century.

The Aguinaldo Government had compelling reasons behind its actions towards the Spanish friars and towards the Church. The main animating force of the Revolution's stance towards the Church, as exemplified by their policy towards the Spanish friars, was the desire to have control over it. Their foreign policy towards the Vatican and the United States, as the following discussions will show, reflected this tendency.

The Matter and Form of Diplomacy

The Aguinaldo government regarded the Holy See as an important and impartial personality in international affairs, and so it sought all means necessary to establish official relations with it to advance Filipino self-determination. According to Aguinaldo, the Vatican was being deceived by the Spanish friars into believing “the many evils that they allege against our country.” He praised the efforts of Congress “in appointing a Commission going to Rome, so that everything that is truly happening to our Holy Religion here could be exposed there.” He likewise desired to reveal to “the Supreme Pontiff, Leader of the religion that we all respect” how the Spanish friars were “mocking” (*ini-inis*) the “learned” Filipino clergy whom he

⁴⁵ “The Constitution of Paniqui,” 23 October 1899, RRP III: 113–117; “Organización del clero filipino,” October 1899 in Mabini, *La Revolución Filipina, con otros documentos de la época* (Bureau of Printing 1931), 2 volumes [hereafter RF], II: 114–118.

⁴⁶ Minnerath, *L'Église Catholique face aux États*, 417–436; Paolo Valvo, “Santa Sede e America Latina all'inizio del Novecento: Problemi Politici e Sfide Pastoralì,” in Roberto Regoli and Paolo Valvo, *Tra Pio X e Benedetto XV: La Diplomazia Pontificia in Europa e America Latina nel 1914* (Edizioni Studium 2018), 41–68.

wanted to assist in “oversee[ing] our Holy Religion and fulfil[ing] the commands of the Supreme Pontiff.”⁴⁷ A draft of a formal letter to Pope Leo XIII, which internal evidence suggests having been written on 23 January 1899 at the inauguration of the Philippine Republic, indicates that Aguinaldo was planning to notify the Holy See of the political existence of his government “in the form which diplomacy provides in similar cases.” “Most Holy Father,” he wrote, “with the aid of God and the efforts of the people I have come to give independence to a large part of our territory and soon the Philippine Archipelago will be under its own government of which today I am the President.” Aguinaldo emphatically indicated that the allegations of brutality and barbarity towards Spanish captives were false. Trusting in the “justice and high wisdom” of the Pope that “receive the respect and homage of the whole world,” he reiterated that despite their abuses, the friars were not exterminated, a testament that Filipinos, “at all times slandered, are convinced of the justice of their cause and has not at any time wanted to forget sentiments of humanity.”⁴⁸

“Demonstrating its firm will of to live and to die under the wing of the Roman Church,” the Aguinaldo government desired the establishment of formal relations with the Pope with two goals in mind: “the recognition and the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Filipino clergy, and to obtain the support of such an influential international personality for our political cause.”⁴⁹ In addition to opening an embassy to the Vatican, such relations were to be formalized in a Concordat to ensure that, aside from the parish priests, “the bishops who shall be appointed must be sons of Filipinas and members of its secular clergy, as is known in other countries.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ “Mga guino at kababayan...,” Emilio Aguinaldo, ca. 1899 [undated], “Aguinaldo Writings,” Philippine Insurrection Collection (MMC2195), 1898–1899, Library of Congress Manuscript Division [hereafter PIC].

⁴⁸ Emilio Aguinaldo to Pope Leo XIII [draft], undated, RRP III: 67–8/DPR 380–381.

⁴⁹ “Honorable Señor...,” undated, PIR SD 208.7.

⁵⁰ “Cuestion de prisioneros,” undated, “Correspondences Undated,” PIC.

There is no indication that the planned commission made it to Rome or that Aguinaldo's letter was ever sent, but the Republic persisted in its efforts at formal relations with the Vatican. Using the pen name *El Creyente* (The Believer), Padre Manuel Roxas, the Director of Worship, presented two cases: if the Philippine government were to maintain religious unity and declare itself a Catholic state, then official diplomatic representations should be made to the Holy See at the instance of such government. However, if the Philippine government were to be declared secular, then all ecclesiastical matters should be taken up with the Vatican at the instance of the Filipino clergy under the leadership of the Spanish archbishop.⁵¹ Assuming that the government was Catholic, Padre Mariano Sevilla advised Aguinaldo to urge the Roman Curia to appoint Filipino coadjutor bishops with the right of succession to the Spanish bishops. Sevilla drafted a letter to be sent to the Pope, leaving three blanks for the candidates that the government will be presenting to the Holy See, mimicking the procedure of the Spanish patronato.⁵² In June 1899, Felipe Buencamino, who replaced Mabini as Foreign Minister, proposed the appointment of Padre Gregorio Aglipay as the Republic's ambassador to the Holy See. An annual remission of \$100,000 pesos for the next twenty-five years would serve as the pledge of the Republic's adhesion to the See of Rome. This amount was to be taken from profits generated in the proposed sale of confiscated friar estates, part of which was to be used for the repair of churches ravaged during the Revolution. The rest of the fund would then be appropriated for the maintenance of the Catholic Church in the Philippines—under the supreme authority of the Roman Pontiff but staffed by Filipino clergymen.⁵³

⁵¹ "Los asuntos eclesiásticos," *La República Filipina*, 12 November 1898.

⁵² This letter in Sevilla's captured papers (PIR SD 619) is now lost, although it was described and cited, although not specified, by Schumacher in *Revolutionary Clergy*, 91 n. 9.

⁵³ John R. M. Taylor, *The Philippine Insurrection against the United States: A Compilation of Documents with Notes and Introduction* (Eugenio López Foundation 1971), 5 volumes [hereafter Taylor] II: 117. The actual document was not cited by Taylor.

The diplomacy of the Aguinaldo government, however, was doomed to fail as soon as the deliberations for the Treaty of Paris had begun in August 1898. To further its claims over the Philippine Islands, the United States repeatedly denied the legitimacy of the Philippine Republic. From Manila on 13 October 1898, Admiral George Dewey sent an ominous prodding to the American peace commissioners in Paris: it must decide on the Philippines quickly to establish “strong government,” for there was “anarchy” at the fall of Spanish authority. He alerted them to the “distressing reports...of inhuman cruelty practiced on religious and civil authorities,” proving that “the natives appear unable to govern.”⁵⁴

The Republic, just as it attempted to make contacts with the Holy See, likewise approached the United States formally. Its representatives, however, were denied legitimacy at the very moment of their appearance in Washington. Felipe Agoncillo, the Filipino lawyer and Minister Plenipotentiary appointed by Aguinaldo, met with McKinley but was refused to be received as a representative of the Aguinaldo government.⁵⁵ Agoncillo had with him a memorandum arguing for the political existence of the Philippine state, demanding that the United States recognize this.⁵⁶ It was denied. Failing to obtain recognition in Washington, he went to Paris where he was also ignored by the American and Spanish peace commissioners. A certain F. Madrigal, leader of the Filipino community in London, wrote to the American commission in Paris to assert the existence of the Philippine Republic. Engaged in the politics of recognition, Madrigal disputed the “falsehoods invented by the friars” who claimed that Aguinaldo’s troops maltreated their Spanish prisoners of war.⁵⁷ Madrigal emphasized the

⁵⁴ Dewey to Naval Secretary, 13 October 1898, Box 1, A1 799, RG 43, US National Archives II, College Park, MD [hereafter USNA].

⁵⁵ Memorandum of the Meeting between Felipe Agoncillo and William McKinley, 1 October 1898, A1 797, RG 43, USNA.

⁵⁶ “Memorandum de Felipe Agoncillo, de Manila, en las Islas Filipinas, sobre la situación y aspiraciones del pueblo filipino,” 4 October 1898, A1 797, RG 43, USNA.

⁵⁷ F. Madrigal to William Day, 27 October 1898, “Miscellaneous Letters,” Box 1, A1 800, RG 43, USNA.

“unimpeachable” conduct of the war on the Filipino side, which he said deserved the “consideration of the United States of America and the whole of the civilized world.”⁵⁸ Frustrated in his efforts, an infirmed Agoncillo in April 1899 lamented the “brazenness” (*kaualanghia-an*) of McKinley in demanding the annexation of the Philippines. He reported to Aguinaldo that he frantically protested (*karaka-rakang nag-protesta*) before the American and European press to defend Philippine independence, but most importantly he attempted to seek the intervention of Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore, de facto primate of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. As expected, Gibbons gave him a cold response (*malusay na kasagutan*).⁵⁹

For its part, the Holy See was making its way steadily through the high echelons of American power. Informed by reports from the friars, Cardinal Mariano Rampolla, the Vatican Secretary of State, was convinced that the Aguinaldo government was hostile to Catholic interests and that the only way to safeguard the church was to cooperate with the United States.⁶⁰ When the Vatican learned that the deliberations for the Treaty of Paris were commencing, Rampolla made plans to influence the outcome of the negotiations. He commanded the Papal representatives in Washington and Madrid to convince the relevant officials to protect church property and personnel.⁶¹ To Archbishop Sebastiano Martinelli, the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, Rampolla specified that he was to posit a “saving influence” (*salutare influenza*) upon the President, persuading him that to secure Catholic interests was “the good of civil society” (*il bene della società civile*).⁶² The Vatican was in

⁵⁸ Madrigal to Day, 2 November 1898, “Miscellaneous Letters,” Box 1, A1 800, RG 43, USNA.

⁵⁹ Agoncillo to Aguinaldo, 6 April 1899, “Correspondences 1899,” PIC.

⁶⁰ Sessione 827, 21 July 1898, ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 874, fasc. 302, 77^r–80^v.

⁶¹ Rampolla to Francica, 2 August 1898, 2 August 1898, ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 874, fasc. 303, 8^r–9^v; Rampolla to Martinelli, 2 August 1898, ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 874, fasc. 303, 6^r–7^v.

⁶² Rampolla to Martinelli, 10 September 1898, ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 883, fasc. 307, 18^r–19^v.

Paris, too. The Archbishop of New Orleans, Placide Louis Chapelle, received his appointment from Rampolla as Apostolic Delegate to Puerto Rico and Cuba.⁶³ Taking advantage of his presence in France, Chapelle actively lobbied for Catholic interests in the treaty negotiations.⁶⁴ Afterwards in mid-1899, McKinley confidentially requested the Vatican to appoint Chapelle as the first Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines.⁶⁵

In effect, there was a three-way conversation taking place between the United States, the Philippine Republic, and the Holy See, a conversation that, as the next section will show, focused on the attempts to liberate the Spanish friars. The Holy See and the United States were able to find common ground in their refusal to grant any recognition to the Philippine Republic. On the part of the United States, this refusal was expedient to secure its claim to sovereignty in the Philippines. For the Holy See, the refusal was propitious in securing the Church's interests against a supposedly anti-clerical, insurgent government. For the Philippine Republic, the defense of its political existence and religious policies was crucial.

Between Diplomacy and Empire

Civilizational language suffused the interaction between Manila, Rome, Washington, and Madrid over the release of the Spanish friars, thereby making empire and diplomacy uncannily interchangeable. The Aguinaldo government leveraged its retention of the Spanish

⁶³ "Istruzioni per Monsignor Placido Ludovico Chapelle, Arcivescovo della Nuova Orleans, Delegato Apostolico Straordinario in Cuba e Puerto Rico, 19 Settembre 1898," ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 883, fasc. 307, 41^r–44^r.

⁶⁴ Chapelle to US Peace Commissioners, 24 October 1898, "Miscellaneous Letters," Box 1, A1 800, RG 43, USNA/French version in ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 883, fasc. 308, 56^r–58^v.

⁶⁵ Chapelle to Rampolla, 25 July 1899, in *Sacra Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinarii, Isole Filippine: Proposta di Delegazione Straordinaria, Agosto 1899*, pp. 4–11 [AAV, Arch. Nunz. Filippine, Titolo XXIII, b. 33, fasc. 264]/ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 905, fasc. 316, 53^v–57^r; Sessione 859, 24 August 1899, Isole Filippine, ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Rapporti delle Sessioni.

friars to coerce the Holy See to open formal communications and relations with the Republic, forcing it to appoint Filipino bishops.⁶⁶ Spain, the United States, and the Holy See, however, rejected the proposition, averring that international law did not provide for the imprisonment of non-combatants, above all, ecclesiastics.⁶⁷

Just like the United States, the Holy See perceived Filipinos their Republic as belonging to a lower level of both religious and political maturity. Such opinion, shaped by Spanish colonial ideology, conveniently aligned with US arguments that Filipinos were incapable of self-rule.⁶⁸ The Papal Nuncio in Madrid, Archbishop Giuseppe Francica Nava di Bontifè, reported to Rampolla that there were “grave defects” in the native Filipino character, chief among them was “impressionability.” He argued that “because of this lack of tendency towards intellectual culture it was not possible that this people, who can nevertheless be said to be infantile, could govern themselves with their own and independent government, unless under the protection of an established power.”⁶⁹ For the Spanish Augustinian Bishop Arsenio Campo of Nueva Cáceres, the annexation of the Catholic Philippines by the Protestant United States “would be fatal and poisonous for the Christian customs and superficial faith of the native.”⁷⁰ Dominican professor Evaristo Fernández Arias of the Universidad de Santo Tomás, in his protest to Aguinaldo, passionately declared that the natives “did not have a fatherland

⁶⁶ “Cuestion de prisioneros,” “Correspondences Undated,” PIC.

⁶⁷ cf. David Álvarez, “The Holy See and the First Hague Conference (1899),” *Archivium Historiae Pontificiae* 26 (1988): 431–438.

⁶⁸ See, for example, José Arcilla S.J., trans., “Acts of the Conference of the Bishops of the Philippines held in Manila under the Presidency of the Most Reverend Apostolic Delegate, Monsignor Placide de la Chapelle–1900,” *Philippiniana Sacra* 9, no. 26 (1974): 308–351.

⁶⁹ Giuseppe Francica-Nava di Bontifè to Mariano Rampolla, 25 September 1898, ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 883, fasc. 307, 50^r–53^v.

⁷⁰ Arsenio Campo Monasterio O.S.A. to Mariano Rampolla, 26 September 1898, ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 883, fasc. 307, 68^r–71^r.

in the true, social, legal sense of the word until the sons of Castille gave you your own which, since then, has been the Filipinos' fatherland."⁷¹

The epistolary interaction between Father William H. Reaney, the Catholic chaplain of Dewey's *Olympia*, and the Spanish Dominican superior in Manila, fray Cándido García Valles in July 1898 attests to the widespread idea of Filipino incapacity in politics and religion, uttered at the interface of two empires. Fray García "feared" the "insolent Indians" but admired the Americans who were a "polished people" and were disposed to "respect lives, property, religion, and public order."⁷² Thus, even with the war still raging, García put his hope and trust in the US to assist him in liberating his confreres from Aguinaldo and his troops, whom he considered as no more than a "rable [sic] of the insurgents."⁷³ With the permission of Dewey, Reaney pleaded with Aguinaldo on behalf of García to release the friars, who appeared to have been unmolested by the troops, but he failed.⁷⁴

The Vatican likewise trusted the United States, approaching it to liberate the friars through the mediation of Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore and Archbishop Martinelli.⁷⁵ Martinelli sought the assistance of the French ambassador in Washington to reach the President.⁷⁶ Gibbons, meanwhile, had direct access to McKinley.⁷⁷ McKinley perceived the request as reinforcing his claim that Aguinaldo's government was barbaric. Martinelli

⁷¹ Evaristo Fernández Arias O.P. to Aguinaldo, 7 July 1898, DPR 225–236.

⁷² García to Reaney, 21 July 1898, DPR 255–6; García to Reaney, 2 August 1898, DPR 258–9.

⁷³ García to Reaney, 21 July 1898, DPR 255–6.

⁷⁴ Reaney to García, undated, DPR 253–4; Reaney to García, 21 July 1898, DPR 257; Reaney to García, 20 July 1898, DPR 253–4.

⁷⁵ Rampolla to Martinelli, 2 August 1898, ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 874, fasc. 303, 6^r–7^v/96M1 Gibbons Papers, Archdiocesan Archive of Baltimore [hereafter AAB]; Cargnello, *La Diplomazia della Santa Sede*, 246.

⁷⁶ Martinelli to Rampolla, 5 August 1898, ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 874, fasc. 303, 15^r; Jules Cambon to Martinelli, 8 August 1898, ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 874, fasc. 303, 18^r.

⁷⁷ John Tracy Ellis, *Life of James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, 1834–1921*, vol. 2 (The Bruce Publishing Company 1952), 93–94.

reported the President “does not in any way recognize Aguinaldo and his followers” (*non riconosce in modo alcuno Aguinaldo ed i suoi seguaci*). Speaking as if he already had authority over it, McKinley assured Martinelli and Gibbons that church property and personnel in the Philippines would be protected. Arguing that the Spanish clergy was “the more secure and effective means to maintain order” in the new territory, McKinley ordered Admiral Dewey in Manila to secure the proper treatment, and if possible, the liberation of these prisoners.⁷⁸ A further request from Rampolla to the US government on 13 September 1898, however, indicates that McKinley’s initial orders were not able to effectuate the result intended.⁷⁹

Although nothing came out of this initial exchange between Rome and Washington, it was clear to the two powers that the issue at hand was both diplomatic and civilizational. After receiving another report on 15 October 1898 regarding the inhumane treatment of friar prisoners, Rampolla commanded Chapelle in Paris to bring the matter to the attention of the commissioners, and Martinelli in Washington to obtain Gibbons’s intercession, yet again, with McKinley.⁸⁰ Complying with Rampolla’s command, Gibbons wrote to US Secretary of War Russell Alger a letter couched in civilizational rhetoric: “I need not remark,” wrote the cardinal, “that to a civilized, and especially to an American mind the capturing and torturing of non-combatants is utterly repulsive and disgusting.” Gibbons urged Alger to “exert the

⁷⁸ Martinelli to Rampolla, 23 August 1898, ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 883, fasc. 307, 3^r–4^r/96M4, Gibbons Papers, AAB.

⁷⁹ William Day to Russel Alger, 16 Sept 1898, in *Correspondence relating to the War with Spain including the Insurrection in the Philippine Islands and the China Relief Expedition* (Center of Military History, U.S. Army 1993), 2 volumes [hereafter CWS], II: 790–791; H.C. Corbin to Elwell Otis, 20 September 1898, CWS II: 793.

⁸⁰ Francica to Rampolla, 15 October 1898, ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 883, fasc. 308, 21^r–22^v; Rampolla to Chapelle, 21 October 1898, 30^r–31^v; Chapelle to Rampolla, 25 October 1898, ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 883, fasc. 307, 52^{r-v}; Rampolla to Martinelli, 19 October 1898, 96Q4, Gibbons Papers, AAB. See also Ellis, *Life of Cardinal Gibbons*, 94.

fulness of the influence” which American forces had over Filipinos so that “they might compel the Insurgents to act with greater consideration toward these poor captives, and to refrain from every species of barbarity.”⁸¹

It is in this context of US-Vatican relations that the exchange of letters for the release of the friar prisoners between Aguinaldo and General Elwell Otis in Manila in November 1898 must be understood. The impetus came from Rampolla, mediated by Martinelli, passed on to Gibbons, relayed to the US government, and negotiated in Manila. There were two phases in the attempts at the liberation of the Spanish friars: in November 1898 with the exchange between Elwell Otis and Emilio Aguinaldo at the instance of the War department in Washington; and throughout 1899 when the Vatican, upon realizing the difficulty of obtaining the release, engaged in indirect communications with the leaders of the Philippine Republic. Once the negotiations were brought across the Pacific, the politics of recognition became much more pronounced.

Otis, who by then was the military governor in Manila, ostensibly played the politics of recognition to negotiate the release of the friars. In his 2 November 1898 letter to Aguinaldo which was fortified by arguments from international law and “civilized warfare,” Otis harped upon the perception of the “civilized world” observing the actions of the Filipinos. The civilized world, he said, had read about the Spanish friars’ “privations and hardships” to which are joined “charges of the most cruel and inhuman treatment, resulting in loss of life.” These charges, he continued, “will continue to be spread abroad to the great detriment of the interests and welfare of the Philippino [sic] people.” He warned Aguinaldo

⁸¹ Gibbons to Alger, 24 October 1898, 96R1, Gibbons Papers, AAB/Italian copy in ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 883, fasc. 309, 57^r–58^r.

that to keep friars and nuns as prisoners was “invariably looked upon with marked disfavor by all nations claiming to practice civilized warfare.”⁸²

Aguinaldo’s 3 November 1898 reply was similarly framed by the politics of recognition, even as it emphasized political expediency over the civilizational angle set up by Otis. All of Aguinaldo’s responses were drafted by his Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Señor Apolinario Mabini. Mabini’s emphasis of state reasons was an affront to Otis’s implications that the imprisonment of the Spanish friars, as a measure adopted by the Philippine state, was illogical and barbaric. Mabini argued that the friars were imprisoned to “obtain from the Vatican the recognition of the rights of the Filipino secular clergy.” The condition for their release was if “the Filipino priests, unjustly rejected by the Vatican, have obtained the nomination for the office of bishops and parish priests in their country.” He claimed that the Spanish friars had “deceived the Vatican and international public opinion, depicting [our] towns as savage settlements in need of the constant attention of the Spanish religious missionaries, so that the natives do not return to their old idolatries.” He added that if the Spanish friars, wielding so much political and economic power were set free, “they could incite a counter-revolution aided by their gold.”⁸³

Padre Roxas was delighted by this reply which for him signaled to the rest of the world that the Catholic Church in the Philippines, under Filipino leadership, had already come of age. He wrote to Aguinaldo that the Filipino clergy, who “desired to be numbered with dignity amongst the clergy of other countries,” have been for so long treated as mere “servants of the friars” (*criados del fraile*) “incapable of leading any parish unless guided by a Spanish priest, and thus from them it was impossible that any Dean, Bishop, or Archbishop

⁸² Elwell Otis to Aguinaldo, 2 November 1898, “Correspondences 1898,” PIC. These exchanges were also published in *Report of Major General E.S. Otis, U.S. Volunteers on Military Operations and Civil Affairs in the Philippine Islands* (Government Printing Office 1899), 22–29.

⁸³ Emilio Aguinaldo [Apolinario Mabini] to Otis, 3 November 1898, “Correspondences 1898,” PIC/RF I, 222–225.

could arise; they are only useful as coadjutors.” He challenged the missionary portrayal of Filipinos as “a people of infidels and savages comparable to the inhabitants of the center of Africa or the forests of America, and it was for this reason that the good Spanish missionaries have come, conquering these ignorant peoples for the Faith.”⁸⁴

Otis rejected the premise against his initial letter by reiterating the civilizational over the political argument posited by Mabini. According to Otis, the imprisonment of clergymen, as a state measure, was not “founded in law, custom or precedent” and did not think that “the views you advance would receive favorable general acceptance.” He warned Aguinaldo that “the good name, reputation and welfare of that people would be greatly enhanced by relieving those men from the captivity which they have so long endured.”⁸⁵

Mabini did not concede his position and insisted vigorously on his argument centering on reasons of state, his central claim being that the imprisonment of the friars was not mindless retaliation but sound, pragmatic policy. Because the friars were political agents of Spain, and because the nature of their incarceration was “political” and not “religious,” the Philippine government was justified in meting out such measure without violating international law. Writing for Aguinaldo yet again, Mabini averred that “in many instances, the principles of international law, generally observed by cultured nations, have to give way to circumstances in the interests of a people that claims the violation of such laws.” He emphasized that what the Republic aspired to was “the opportune moment...when it is possible to free these prisoners without inciting the displeasure of the people.”⁸⁶ These were “conditions” and not “demands”; reasonable strategy and not senseless vengeance. An earlier draft of this letter tactically rethought the imprisonment of the Spanish friars not as a

⁸⁴ Roxas to Aguinaldo, 15 November 1898, PIR SD 208.8/Isacio Rodríguez O.S.A., *Gregorio Aglipay y los Orígenes de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente 1898–1917*, vol. 2, (Madrid: CSIC, 1960), 219–221. A garbled English version is in Taylor III: 404–406.

⁸⁵ Otis to Aguinaldo, 2 November 1898, “Correspondences 1898,” PIC.

⁸⁶ Aguinaldo [Mabini] to Otis, 18 November 1898, RF I: 225–230.

religious concern but as a political one. “I only wanted to say” Mabini wrote, “that when the Filipino priests have obtained from their Head the Vatican the recognition of their rights, then have the political reasons which have guided my retention of them ceased.”⁸⁷

The Otis-Aguinaldo [Mabini] exchange of November 1898 did not yield any definite gain for the United States, the Vatican, or the Philippine Republic. As a concrete demonstration of the politics of recognition, this first attempt to release the friars drew the lines of alliances: the Philippine Republic on one side, the Vatican and the US on the other. On 10 December 1898, the Treaty of Paris was signed, and the Philippines was finally annexed by the US. On 23 January 1899 Aguinaldo issued a presidential decree freeing all Spanish prisoners who belonged to the army. The Spanish friars, including the bishops, were ordered expelled from Philippine territory.⁸⁸ This decree, however, was suspended immediately when the Philippine-American War erupted on 4 February 1899.

By January 1899, the strategy of the Vatican had changed: failing to obtain the release of the prisoners through the direct influence of Washington, the Vatican deliberated carefully how best to approach Aguinaldo without, in any way, bestowing upon him official recognition. Doing so would compromise Rome’s standing with Washington which it had obtained through careful and critical engagement. Archbishop Francica in Madrid was so disgusted by the prospect of direct interaction between the Holy See and the Philippine Republic, remarking that Aguinaldo made the “ridiculous claim that the head of the Church negotiates directly with him, as the President of the new Philippine Republic.”⁸⁹ The “leaders of the self-styled Philippine Republic” (*capi della sedicente Republica Filipina*), said Francica, “will persist in its intention of negotiating the release of the religious with the Head

⁸⁷ Aguinaldo [Mabini] to Otis, 13 November 1898, “Correspondences 1898,” PIC.

⁸⁸ Decreto Presidencial, 23 January 1899, RF I: 255–256.

⁸⁹ Francica to Rampolla, 17 January 1899, ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 903, fasc. 316, 5^r–6^r/RRP III: 46–47.

of the Church, with the ill intention of attaining a certain moral prestige and to forcibly fulfil the promise of providing the native clergy not only exclusive benefits as parish priests, but also of episcopal sees.”⁹⁰

Representing Aguinaldo, Filipinos in Europe called upon officials of the Holy See to campaign for the recognition of the Philippine Republic, but they were outrightly rejected, ignored, or rebuked as barbaric. F. Madrigal, for example, sent the Pope a memorial on the religious conditions in the Philippines that argued for the expulsion of the friars—this was expectedly ignored by the Vatican.⁹¹ From Madrid, Francica reported that Isabelo de los Reyes, member of the Filipino community in that city and in 1902 the founder of the schismatic *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, had called on him to lobby for the interests of the Republic and the Filipino clergy.⁹² Reyes, “with an air of apparent geniality,” told the Nuncio that “his esteemed President Aguinaldo” was hoping that the Pope would bestow upon the Filipino clergy the benefits of becoming bishops and parish priests, because these have “unjustly been represented as either ignorant or incapable of sustaining the care of souls by themselves.” On behalf of “his Republican Government,” he further requested that the Holy Father send an Apostolic Delegate to be acquainted with the true facts in the Philippines. Reyes ended his spiel with the declaration that Aguinaldo was firm in retaining the friars until such time that the Pope would have instituted the demanded religious reforms. Shocked at the demands presented to him, Francica rebuked Reyes, saying that “such a condition imposed upon the most respected Authority on earth, aside from being unworthy of a people who pride

⁹⁰ ⁹⁰ Francica to Rampolla, 22 January 1899, ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 903, fasc. 316, 9^r–10^v/RRP III: 49–51.

⁹¹ F. Madrigal to Leo XIII, 21 August 1898, ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 874, fasc. 303, 35^r–37^v.

⁹² For an excellent biography of Reyes, see Resil Mojares, *Brains of the Nation: Pedro Paterno, T. H. Pardo de Tavera, Isabelo de los Reyes, and the Production of Modern Knowledge* (Ateneo de Manila University Press 2006).

themselves of being Catholic, would only prove them to be, to their detriment and dishonor, a people anything but civilized and capable of exercising any political authority.”⁹³

Convinced that it was risky to give in to Filipino demands, Francica advised Rampolla that communication with Aguinaldo must be done only by indirect means (*mezzi indiretti*). He presented four options: the Holy See could send an Apostolic Delegate to investigate the situation; it could offer money in exchange for the release of the friars; it could accost the consuls of France, Germany, or Belgium stationed in Manila to intervene on behalf of the Holy See. Lastly, the Holy See could accost the Archbishop Nozaleda of Manila to “exhort the native clergy if possible, in the name of the Supreme Pontiff” to plead for the friars’ release. Nozaleda should be instructed to highlight the “painful impression” and “scandal” which the indifference of the Filipino clergy would cause among the faithful in the entire world. This last option was more elaborate yet the most removed from the Holy See, as it involved different levels of mediation: from the Holy See to Nozaleda, Nozaleda to the native clergy, and finally the native clergy to Aguinaldo. Francica indicated that should this option be chosen, the letter that Rampolla would write must be made public to call the attention of the entire “civilized” world.⁹⁴

Rampolla took this last option, penning a carefully worded letter to Nozaleda that, like Otis, played upon the politics of recognition.⁹⁵ He commanded Nozaleda to “take advantage of the valuable help that you can obtain from the native clergy, who, having an easier access to the leaders of the Philippine forces, can try to inspire in all its members a magnanimous and humanitarian feeling.” Rampolla added that “the native priests who will

⁹³ Francica to Rampolla, 22 January 1899, ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 903, fasc. 316, 9^r–10^v/RRP III: 49–51.

⁹⁴ Francica to Rampolla, 8 February 1899, AAV, Arch. Nunz. Madrid, Titolo X, num. 638, rubr. II, no. 5, 411^r–414^r/ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 903, fasc. 316, 13^r–16^r/RRP III: 56–59.

⁹⁵ Rampolla to Francica, 20 March 1899, AAV, Arch. Nunz. Madrid, Titolo X, num. 638, rubr. II, no. 5, 409^r–410^r/ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 903, fasc. 316, 18^{r-v}.

help you in such a noble and merciful undertaking should be convinced that they shall be worthy of the civilized world as of their sacred and evangelical ministration.” Indirectly addressing the Revolutionary leaders, the cardinal wrote that releasing the friar prisoners would “give prestige to the Filipinos in the eyes of the civilized world and, just because of this fact, they will find in the latter a strong support for the cause that they are fighting for.” To persist in keeping the friars hostage would earn for the Filipinos the “indignation of cultured peoples,” inciting “bad impressions” among other nations. He ended his letter with the offer of sending an Apostolic Delegate, on the condition that the friars were released.⁹⁶

Before the letter arrived in Manila, Nozaleda, himself a Dominican friar, had already made attempts to liberate his confreres from the hands of Filipino revolutionaries. Using the respectful *usted*, Nozaleda “appealed to the conscience” and to the “humanitarian sentiments” of Mabini to consider the sufferings endured by the friars who were not simply incarcerated but also enduring abandonment by their compatriots in what was becoming to them “foreign territory.”⁹⁷ Mabini, consistent with his previous argument, tersely responded that the imprisonment of Spanish functionaries did “not obey any sentiment of hatred” against past faults but resulted from the unwillingness of the Spanish government to negotiate directly with Revolutionary leaders. On the Spanish friars, Mabini said that their situation was the effect of their conduct: “They were keen on shaping the policies of Filipinos,” he argued, “and it is just that they become involved in the upheavals of such policy.” Mabini curtly ended the letter: “I shall not entertain anyone who will change the course of things.”⁹⁸

When Nozaleda received Rampolla’s letter in Manila sometime in August 1899, he deviated from the cardinal’s instructions and inadvertently put the Holy See and the

⁹⁶ Rampolla to Nozaleda, 13 March 1899, in Mabini, *The Letters of Apolinario Mabini*, 2nd ed. (National Heroes Commission 1999), 311–12/Italian in ASRS, *AA.EE.SS.*, Leone XIII, Periodo II, *Spagna*, pos. 903, fasc. 316, 17^{r-v}/Spanish in RF I: 275–276.

⁹⁷ Nozaleda to Mabini, 19 March 1899, “Correspondences 1899,” PIC.

⁹⁸ Mabini to Nozaleda, 22 March 1899, “Correspondences 1899,” PIC.

Philippine Republic in direct communication. Instead of writing to the Filipino clergy, he wrote to Aguinaldo transmitting Rampolla's letter. Engaging the politics of recognition and seemingly echoing Mabini's response, Nozaleda told Aguinaldo that his retention of the friars was not borne out of commercialism or vengeance, but that there was a political motivation behind it. He reiterated what the Pope (not Rampolla) had said to him: "the means to inspire sympathy in the outside world and the only way, even, to the attainment of their aspirations demand that the conduct followed up to now with the prisoners be rectified." He ended by telling Aguinaldo that "the cause of the Filipino people, far from suffering a setback before the eyes of the peoples of the world, shall gain universal sympathy and add to its favor a powerful moral support."⁹⁹

In the opinion of Padre Sevilla, Rampolla's letter implied that the Vatican was finally paying attention to and recognizing the Filipino clergy. It was, in other words, a moment of vindication. Out of sincere piety to the Supreme Pontiff, Sevilla magnified Rampolla's communication as an "official" letter to the Filipino clergy that relayed the sentiments and wishes of the Pope, despite it not being the case. Nevertheless, repenting of the injuries inflicted upon the Spanish religious, Sevilla averred that the Philippine government should consider the Pope's supplication, that complying with such request was advantageous "to the ideals that we pursue." He therefore asked the President of Congress to endorse to the members of the Aguinaldo cabinet a petition signed by Filipino priests asking for the release of the Spanish friars.¹⁰⁰ As if confirming his 1898 homily, the petition argued that intransigence would damage the country's reputation: the Philippines will become "the object of contempt on the part of civilized Nations." "To voluntarily and swiftly set [the friars] free

⁹⁹ Nozaleda to Aguinaldo, 21 August 1899, in Mabini, *Letters*, 313–4/Spanish in RF I: 277–278.

¹⁰⁰ Mariano Sevilla to Ambrosio Rianzares Bautista, 14 September 1899, PIR SD 619.26; "Al Señor Presidente del Congreso Filipino," August 1899, PIR SD 467.13/RRP III: 69–71.

will be a cause so much more powerful for civilized nations to favor, protect, and aid this our country in her political aspirations; for the contrary, to keep them longer, will produce a more bitter affliction.” Citing the “official letter from the Vatican...which is in our possession,” the clergy implored Aguinaldo to relent. The Filipino priests, however, did not exonerate their Spanish confreres, for their liberation was to be conceded only by the momentary forgetting of “the wrongs they have done to us.”¹⁰¹

But Mabini was unmoved. By the middle of 1899, as the Republic was fleeing farther North to escape the advancing American troops, his foreign policy had become more intransigent and critical of international politics, perceptively divining the alliance between Rome and Washington against them. In an undated draft responding to Nozaleda, Mabini, again writing for Aguinaldo, launched a full-scale critique of the Holy See. Citing the Treaty of Paris, Mabini acerbically criticized the Vatican for not raising “its authoritative voice against [such an] inveterate custom, which is so opposed to Christian morals but regarded as lawful in the positive international law,” supposedly because the Vatican did not “find [it] convenient to be in open controversy with the interests of many world powers.” Attacking the politics of recognition, the anti-clerical Mabini called the United States a “pagan nation” because it did not profess Catholicism as its state religion, unlike the Philippines, a claim which was of course untrue. Comparing the Treaty to the slave trade, he argued that Filipinos, who professed Catholicism, could not be “sold like merchandise to pagan nations.” Therefore, why was the Pope not transacting with the Republic? To the sending of an Apostolic Delegate, he counselled Nozaleda that the Filipinos would receive the Delegate with respect but added that, for political reasons, no foreign bishop would be accepted to lead

¹⁰¹ “Exposición que los Señores clérigos de Manila...pidiendo la libertad de los prisioneros españoles, especialmente de los Religiosos,” September 1899, PIR SD 619.25.

Philippine dioceses since it was “a dangerous measure for the peace and order and the very interests of the Catholic Church.”¹⁰²

As the Philippine-American War progressed, so did the intransigence of the Republic in retaining the Spanish friars, which clearly turned out to be a failed policy. At the advance of American troops, the friars were released from Filipino revolutionaries.¹⁰³ Negotiations from 26 June to 1 July 1899 between General Diego de los Ríos of the Spanish army and representatives of Aguinaldo’s forces for the release of the Spanish prisoners, both clergy and lay functionaries, had failed. In the meeting of 25 June 1899, for example, the Filipino commissioners immediately conceded the release of Spanish prisoners except the friars.¹⁰⁴ In the final months of 1899, Felipe Agoncillo was in Paris and there he called upon the Apostolic Nuncio to propose direct negotiations with the Holy See for the release of the Spanish friars, indicating that he was willing and ready to meet Rampolla. The Nuncio in Paris reported this but received a brief answer from Rampolla that such negotiations were no longer necessary since the friars had already been released at the encroachment of American troops.¹⁰⁵

Just how effective was the Holy See’s recognition of the Treaty of Paris and simultaneous non-recognition of Aguinaldo could be gleaned from the statements of the

¹⁰² Aguinaldo [Mabini] to Nozaleda [draft], undated, in Mabini, 215–216; Spanish version in RF I: 278–280.

¹⁰³ Herrero, *Nuestra Prisión*, 849–867; Pastrana, *A Friar’s Account*, 253–257; Schreurs, *Angry Days in Mindanao*, 114–137; Otis to Corbin, 13 December 1899, CWS II: 1120–1121; Otis to Corbin, 23 December 1899, CWS II: 1124–1125. The Augustinian Recollects were liberated earlier, see Martínez Cuesta, *History of Negros*, 456–7; Ferrero to Pérez, 4 March 1899; Ferrero to Pérez, 22 September 1899, leg. 10, caja 60 A, Archivio Generale dell’Ordine degli Agostiniani Recolletti, Roma.

¹⁰⁴ “Condiciones propuestas por el Excmo. Sr. Dⁿ. Diego de los Ríos para la soltura de todos los prisioneros españoles retenidos por los filipinos,” 24 February 1899; “Acta No. 1,” 25 June 1899; “Acta No. 2,” 25 June 1899, “Correspondences 1899,” PIC. The copies of the Spanish commissioners are in leg. H2423, *Ministerio de Estado*, AHN. See also Cargnello, *La Diplomazia della Santa Sede*, 361–362.

¹⁰⁵ Cargnello, *La Diplomazia della Santa Sede*, 362–363.

staunch GOP partisan Archbishop John Ireland, the face of Americanism and chief consultant of McKinley and Roosevelt on Catholic interests.¹⁰⁶ In one interview Ireland told the press that Cardinal Rampolla had revealed to him that “on no less than three different occasions petitions had been sent to the Vatican in the name of the Filipino leaders asking that direct official relations be opened between them and the Vatican, but the Vatican had always refused to listen to such petitions out of consideration for the American government.”¹⁰⁷ Although not having any decisive role in obtaining the release of the Spanish friars, Ireland gloried in public attention by brandishing the Vatican’s non-recognition of the Philippine Republic as an achievement of him and McKinley. In his endorsement of the McKinley-Roosevelt ticket in 1900, he indicated: “Our Flag Protects All Faiths–In the Philippines and Cuba is a Warrant of Justice–The Vatican Refused to Open Official Relations with the Filipino Leaders.”¹⁰⁸

What this article has drawn attention to is the centrality of the Roman Catholic Church in the expansion of US empire in 1898. The case of the Spanish friars in the Philippines reveals the nexus of power that inevitably connected two unlikely allies: Washington and Rome.

Aguinaldo and his government, emerging from a Hispanic political tradition that enclosed the church within the state, recognized immediately that to gain the recognition of the Pope advanced both their religious and political aspirations as a fledgling nation. Diplomatic recognition of the Philippine Republic by the Vatican, had it been granted in 1898–1899, would have meant the recognition of the political struggle against Spain and an admission that the Spanish friars were really at fault. Whether such an act would have bolstered the

¹⁰⁶ Marvin R O’Connell, *John Ireland and the American Catholic Church* (Minnesota Historical Society Press 1988); Farrell, “Archbishop Ireland and Manifest Destiny”; Offner, “Washington Mission.”

¹⁰⁷ Farrell, “Background Taft Mission I,” 19–20.

¹⁰⁸ “Archbishop Ireland supports McKinley and Roosevelt,” 20 October 1900, Reel 7, John Ireland Papers, Minnesota Historical Society.

Philippine agenda is hard to tell, but it would have certainly put the Holy See at an awkward position vis-à-vis the emerging US empire. Nevertheless, at a time when it was simply unthinkable given the anti-Catholicism in the mainland United States, an initial rapprochement was reached by the Roman Pontiff and the American President, united as they were in denying the legitimacy and political existence of the First Philippine Republic. Such rapprochement would later become more direct in the Taft Mission to the Vatican in 1902.