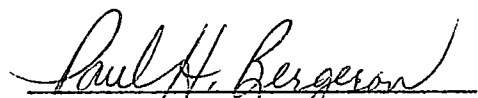


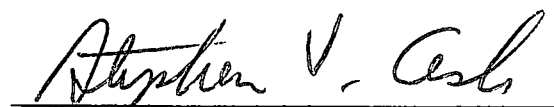
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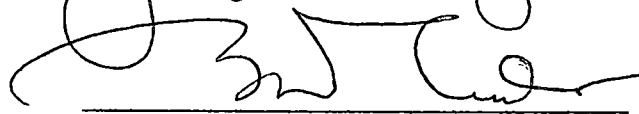

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**CRUSADE AND CONQUEST:
ANTI-CATHOLICISM, MANIFEST DESTINY,
AND THE U.S.-MEXICAN WAR OF 1846-1848**

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
University of Tennessee

John Christopher Pinheiro
December 2001

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how anti-Catholic sentiment affected Americans' conduct in, and opinions of, the U.S.-Mexican War of 1846-1848.

Chapter One explores how increased immigration and republican ideology allowed anti-Catholicism and nativism to fuse in the late 1830s and early 1840s. Nativists and many evangelical Protestants claimed that the Pope conspired to undermine American liberty by establishing a Catholic stronghold in the West with the help of a Jesuit-led army of Catholic immigrants. Moreover, many Americans argued that Roman Catholicism was incompatible with civil and religious liberty, the two hallmark freedoms of republicanism. They pointed to Mexico's political troubles as an example of this incompatibility in action, and pre-war portrayals of Mexico and Catholicism helped to establish a preconception of Mexicans as a congenitally inferior, superstitious, and lazy race. Chapter Two analyzes how nativist politicians used incidents relating to the war, such as the appointment of Catholic chaplains to the U.S. army, to support further their argument that Catholics were subverting the American republic. Contrary to their usual anti-immigrant rhetoric, nativists also supported the annexation of Mexico in its entirety in the name of Manifest Destiny, and for racist and anti-Catholic reasons. Chapter Three, through an examination of sermons, inter-denominational voluntary societies, and newspapers, investigates the interplay between anti-Catholic, evangelical Protestants and the war. Voicing their opinions in republican language, many evangelicals saw the war as a Providential opportunity to evangelize Catholic Mexico with a "pure" gospel. To them, the Manifest Destiny of the United States included the spread of Protestantism as

the necessary foundation of republican government. Chapter Four looks at the experience of the American invasion force in Mexico. American soldiers, in their observations of Mexican culture, mixed racism and religious bigotry with Anglo-Saxonist, republican rhetoric. This denigration fostered a mindset among some that enabled them to commit atrocities, accost priests, and rob and vandalize churches. Using the interpretive framework of anti-Catholicism, Chapter Five examines the All Mexico debate, treaty deliberations in the U.S. Senate, and the effect of the war's end on nativists and evangelicals. When the war ended, Protestant missionaries streamed into the Mexican cession in an attempt to convert Catholics, Indians, and newly-arrived settlers.

Certain tenets of American republicanism were brought into play when the overwhelmingly Protestant United States waged war on Catholic Mexico. Located at the middle point in the growth of the antebellum anti-Catholic movement, the U.S.-Mexican War helped to hone the concept of American republicanism as an ideology that included Anglo-Saxonism and anti-Catholicism under the greater umbrella of Manifest Destiny.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
1. Making a "Plea for the West": The Rise and Influence of Anti-Catholicism, 1834 – 1846	12
2. "On Their Knees to Jesuits": Nativism and the Politics of War	52
3. Errand into a New Wilderness: Protestant Evangelicals and the Advantages of War	92
4. "This Barbarous Catholic Country": The American Soldier's Encounter with Roman Catholicism in Mexico	130
5. 1848 and the Opportunities of Peace	217
Epilogue	259
Bibliography	264
Vita	306

INTRODUCTION

On May 23, 1847, over 5,000 people gathered in the Kensington district of Philadelphia to lay the cornerstone for the new St. Augustine Church. The new building sat atop the ashy remains of the old one that a nativist mob, incited by leaders of the Native American Party and some local evangelical Protestant clergymen, had burned three years earlier. Bishop Peter Richard Kenrick, accompanied by a large number of Catholic priests, presided over the celebration. In the middle of a keynote speech aimed mostly at what the new church would be like and what it would offer to its parishioners, the Rev. Dr. James Ryder of Holy Cross College took a moment to address the nativist accusation "that no Catholic would bear arms against a Catholic nation" or support a war against a Catholic country. "The contrary," proclaimed Ryder, "was now fully established." He pointed to the many faithful Catholic soldiers "in the field of operations." What Ryder did not know was that, in a few short months, an entire battalion of mostly American Catholic deserters would be captured near Mexico City. The reaction to the capture of these men, known as the San Patricios, would demonstrate that the issue of Catholic loyalty during the U.S.-Mexican War had not died out by the middle of 1847. Indeed, the same anti-Catholic sentiment that had led to the 1844 attack on St. Augustine Church and the questioning of Catholic loyalty persisted throughout the war, beginning as early as the congressional declaration of war in May 1846.¹

The story of the San Patricios has been treated extensively by historians, but it was not the only flashpoint between Catholics and their detractors during the U.S.-

¹ *Washington Daily Union*, 5 June 1847.

Mexican War.² The fact was not lost on nativists and anti-Catholic groups that the war might fatally weaken the Roman Catholic Church in North America, an institution which they viewed as despotic. Since the middle 1830s, the central argument of anti-Catholic leaders like Lyman Beecher and Samuel F. B. Morse had been that the Pope plotted to subvert the American republic through the use of an army of Jesuit-led immigrants. Indeed, in dealing with the pressures of a more diverse America, anti-Catholicism and nativism had begun to combine in the 1830s into one coherent anti-Catholic movement. This virulent combination of the two transcended the usual Protestant disputes with Catholic theology or nativist attempts to strengthen naturalization laws. It led to mob violence against Catholics and church burnings. It also lay behind the oft-stated accusation that Roman Catholics could never be faithful citizens of the United States, because their allegiance to the Pope prevented them from fully supporting the existence of civil and religious liberty. Roman Catholicism, by its very nature, was unrepugnant and despotic. Therefore, to the nativists Catholic immigrants were a dangerous mass of men and women easily controlled by their priests. The fact that most Irish and German Catholics supported the Democratic Party did little to endear them to the Whig and Native American parties.

Anti-Catholicism, however, was intertwined with the U.S.-Mexican War in a far deeper manner than that suggested by the mere questioning of American Catholic loyalty, for it formed part of the popular cultural/religious/political drive in the 1840s for

² Robert Ryal Miller, *Shamrock and Sword: The Saint Patrick Battalion in the U.S.-Mexican War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989); Peter F. Stevens, *The Rogue's March: John Riley and the St. Patrick's Battalion* (Washington: Brassey's Press, 1998); Dennis Joseph Wynn, "The San Patricios and the United States-Mexican War of 1846-48" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Loyola University, 1982).

territorial aggrandizement known as "Manifest Destiny." This belief, a major driving force behind the war, held that American Anglo-Saxons, by reason of their cultural and racial superiority, were destined to extend themselves, and/or their republican institutions of civil and religious liberty, throughout the western hemisphere, if not the world. Americans would accomplish this feat preferably through example, but by conquest if necessary.

Racially and religiously different from the largely Protestant United States, Mexico served as the most obvious target of this sentiment, especially after the Texas Revolution and the later debate in 1844 and 1845 over the annexation of Texas by the United States. Americans easily blamed what they perceived as a weak race and its decrepit, idolatrous religion for their southern neighbor's social and political problems. Indeed, to these American observers, taking civil and religious liberty to a country like Mexico virtually assured the advent of superior religious ideals, the invariable consequence of which would be the weakening, if not destruction, of the Catholic Church there. Most Americans agreed with the anti-Catholic argument that Protestantism lent itself toward liberty much more than did Catholicism. Americans well understood that when the advocates of Manifest Destiny called for republican expansion and the birth of civil and religious liberty in Mexico, these two things implied not only the extension of republican institutions, but also Protestantism and the superior Anglo-Saxons who had the capability to sustain it.

The most illustrative example of the anti-Catholic aspects of Manifest Destiny, as Americans understood that doctrine in the 1840s, was the U.S.-Mexican War. During the war, many American soldiers, while in Mexico, experienced Catholicism for the first

time. In doing so, they tested preconceptions that had been shaped by popular books on Mexico and years of anti-Catholic literature, sermons, and rhetoric. These opinions held that the Roman Catholic Church, which stunted the economic and social evolution of every country it dominated, depended solely on power, intrigue, and ignorance to flourish. Thus, soldiers blamed Mexico's political and social troubles on a mix of racial and religious inferiority. In some instances, anti-Catholic sentiment among soldiers led them to abuse clerics, as well as to vandalize and loot churches. Soldiers' depictions of Mexico during and shortly after the war reinforced and influenced the anti-Catholic fears of those back home in the United States.

The dominant and most influential group within the anti-Catholic movement in 1840s America were evangelical Protestants.³ Early in that decade, a number of voluntary societies focused upon converting Catholics as a means of preventing the papal takeover predicted by Beecher and Morse. Moreover, anti-Catholicism was also a

³ The terms "anti-Catholic" and "evangelical Protestant" deserve some attention. The designation "anti-Catholic" refers not to persons who disagreed doctrinally with Roman Catholic theology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. Rather, in the context of the 1830s and 1840s this label applies to those who maintained that Catholics were not Christians, identified the Pope with the "anti-Christ" of the Book of Revelation, willfully propagated false and hateful stories about Catholics, and claimed that Jesuits were leading an immigrant Catholic army as part of a papal-orchestrated takeover of the United States. The vast majority of vehement anti-Catholics were "evangelical Protestants." Richard J. Carwardine calls evangelical Protestantism "the principal subculture in antebellum America." He argues, and rightly so, that "there was no single evangelical community, but a series of overlapping circles . . . of believers which did not conform in any straightforward way to denominational labels." However, evangelicals held in common certain "universal elements." Like other Protestants, they believed in the Trinity, emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit in personal regeneration, and stressed the total salvific role of Jesus. But they added to these beliefs a focus on revivalism and demanded more than a mere intellectual assent to these particular doctrines. Evangelicalism stressed the personal conversion experience and the importance of leading an upright life as part of the individual's ability to perfect himself or herself (and society as well) in light of the imminent second coming of Jesus Christ. Because of their confidence that the Millennium was near, evangelicals "enjoined active . . . effort for the spread of the Gospel in preference to unproductive speculation about the date of Christ's return." This proselytism included attempts at converting not only Catholics and non-Christians, but also other Protestants who had not been "born again." The majority of Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists, and New School Presbyterians ascribed to evangelicalism, although individual evangelicals belonged to a wide range of Protestant churches. Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven: Yale University Press), xiv-5.

prominent theme in the religious press, as well as one that was preached from Sunday pulpits. Some preachers argued that the unjustness of the war did not predetermine that all of the war's consequences necessarily had to be evil. Wrapping their opinions in republican language, these men viewed the war as an opportunity to improve and convert Catholic Mexico. Yet even those who protested the war's legitimacy, such as many northeasterners and abolitionists, reluctantly agreed by 1848 that one good in the otherwise evil war was the likelihood of missionary work among Catholics who lived on lands which the United States might annex. Most evangelicals took a moderate stance between ardently pro-war and anti-war views. This position allowed them to approve of the results of the war for anti-Catholic purposes, while at the same time condemning the conflict. Some Protestants beginning in 1847 used the war to enhance their standard anti-Catholic arguments. By the time of the peace treaty in February 1848, the subject of the war had become part of the literature of the anti-Catholic movement, as writers mined the conflict for examples that demonstrated the threat and errors of Roman Catholicism.

The political side of the anti-Catholic movement during the 1840s was taken up by the Native American Party.⁴ Native Americans, although Protestant, were allegedly concerned only with the political effects of Catholic immigration and not religion. Yet they, too, exploited the war as a malleable issue to advance a wide variety of objectives. These aims included attacks upon James K. Polk, whom they labeled as too pro-Catholic and criticized for starting the war in the first place. Nevertheless, nativists supported the

⁴ Throughout this dissertation, the labels "native American" and "Native American" refer exclusively to American citizens born in the United States and to the members of the antebellum political party by that name, respectively.

annexation of the entirety of Mexico in the name of Anglo-Saxonism and Manifest Destiny. This ran counter to the usual nativist fear that Catholic immigrants were pawns of the Democratic Party and dangerous to American institutions. Indeed, Native Americans advocated the incorporation into the United States of millions of Catholic Mexicans! The party explained this disconnect with appeals to patriotism, anti-Catholicism, and evangelization. It claimed that it defended total conquest, because unlike Whigs, who by and large opposed the war, Native Americans strongly loved their country. But most importantly, nativists exulted in the harm done to Catholic power in North America and looked forward to the ascendancy of Protestantism in Mexico. If nothing else, nativists' activity during the war clearly demonstrated that their movement was strongly grounded in a religious outlook that had little to do with political issues.

The official end of the U.S.-Mexican War in early 1848 proved momentous for the American political system. During the treaty debates in Congress senators spent a good deal of time deleting all mention of Catholicism from the text of the original treaty. Later that year, the new Free Soil Party drew members from both of the major parties, although not in equal numbers. Led by former-Democrat Martin Van Buren, the Free Soil insurgency temporarily fragmented the Democracy, even as Native Americans threw their support behind Whig presidential candidate Zachary Taylor. These political conditions resulted in the election of the war hero.

The year 1848 also proved fertile ground for those looking for examples of Anglo-Saxon, Protestant superiority and Mexican, Catholic inferiority. Anti-Catholicism became a theme in many of the histories, novels, and other literature written about the conflict during the immediate post-war years. Moreover, with liberal revolutions

breaking out across Europe and the very papacy itself threatened, some Protestants saw the defeat of Mexico within the context of worldwide republican and religious advancement. Blessed with an enlarged West, evangelicals, anti-Catholic and moderate alike, turned to that same region that had held such a prominent place in their minds since the 1830s. Hoping some day to reach Asia and the Pacific islands through California's ports, with great zeal they entered the Mexican Cession to convert Catholics, Mexicans, Indians, and un-churched American settlers.

Historians have investigated the relationship between anti-Catholicism and the war; but have done so only in fractional ways. Ray Allen Billington, for instance, claims that the war held obvious religious connotations, but spends little time exploring them. Clayton Sumner Ellsworth, in a 1940 essay, surveys the attitudes of American churches and denominations toward the U.S.-Mexican War. He makes only passing mention of anti-Catholicism, however, identifying it as a much weaker motive behind evangelical Protestant support for the war than geographical proximity to Mexico and denominations' traditional views on war. The brevity of Ellsworth's study allows only for a look at various denominations' overall views on the war's good or evil qualities. This therefore falls far short of the necessary depth of research required to gauge truly the Protestant response to the war, such as an analysis of trans-denominational voluntary societies, individual preachers, army chaplains, the range of attitudes among abolitionists, and the reaction of Protestant newspaper editors to particular events, such as the army's use of Jesuit chaplains.⁵

⁵ Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study in the Origins of American Nativism* (New York: Macmillan, 1938; reprint, New York: Quadrangle Books, 1964), 238-39; Clayton Sumner

Other historians, such as Ted C. Hinckley, John R. Bodo, Richard J. Carwardine, Mark Y. Hanley, and Donald K. Gorrell, base their conclusions regarding the U.S.-Mexican War and anti-Catholicism largely upon the findings of Ellsworth and Billington.⁶ In recent years, though, a few scholars have reexamined the relationship between anti-Catholicism and the war, but only within the limited context of American soldiers' attitudes toward Mexicans and their religious practices. For example, Robert W. Johannsen finds a clear connection between nativism in the United States and soldiers' negative opinions of Mexican Catholicism, whereas Richard Bruce Winders argues that one cannot discern "if these observers were truly outraged by the church as they saw it or if they were merely expressing the anti-Catholic sentiment that already existed in the United States during the 1840s." Unfortunately, much like Billington, neither historian explores the relationship to any great degree.⁷

The only book-length treatment of the relationship between anti-Catholicism and the U.S.-Mexican War is the dissertation by Isaac McDaniel. His main concern is whether or not the war increased or decreased anti-Catholicism in the United States. Thus, McDaniel does not sufficiently explore the ways in which anti-Catholics and

Ellsworth, "The American Churches and the Mexican War," *American Historical Review* 45 (1940): 301-27.

⁶ Ted C. Hinckley, "American Anti-Catholicism during the Mexican War," *Pacific Historical Review* 31 (1962), 121-37; John R. Bodo, *The Protestant Clergy and Public Issues* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 221-23; Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics*, 142-52; Mark W. Hanley, *Beyond a Christian Commonwealth: The Protestant Quarrel with the American Republic, 1830-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 66-67; Donald K. Gorrell, "American Churches and American Territorial Expansion, 1830-1850" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Western Reserve University, 1960), 93-102, 125-26.

⁷ Richard Bruce Winders, *Mr. Polk's Army: The American Military Experience during the Mexican War* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 183; Robert W. Johannsen, *To the Halls of the*

nativists interpreted the war or the ways in which their opinions affected the conduct of the war. McDaniel views nativism as primarily an ethnic, and not religious, phenomenon, and argues that bigotry lessened, once Protestant soldiers fought alongside valiant Irish and German Catholics. These soldiers returned home less anti-Catholic than they had been before the war, and their attitudes affected popular opinion well into the 1850s. This conclusion is much the same as that of John Tracy Ellis. But McDaniel goes further than Ellis and supports his claims by interpreting the prominence of the slave issue between 1848 and 1850 as proof of a decline in nativist sentiment. This conclusion, however, ignores evidence such as the opinions and activities of evangelical Protestants and Native American Party members, not to mention the rise of even more virulent nativism in the 1850s.⁸

Historians have given much less treatment to the connection between anti-Catholicism and Manifest Destiny. Yet the U.S.-Mexican War was the central expansionist event of the nineteenth century. Therefore, a complete examination of anti-Catholicism as it relates to the war cannot be accomplished without an analysis of the

Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 167.

⁸ Isaac McDaniel, "The Impact of the Mexican War on Anti-Catholicism in the United States" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1991), 49, 62, 93-94; John Tracy Ellis, *American Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 68-69. See also Paul W. Foos, "Mexican Wars: Soldiers and Society in an Age of Expansion, 1835-1855" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1997), ii-39, 390-91, 399-400. Foos examines anti-Catholicism and anti-Irish sentiment in the U.S. army, but those two topics are not the primary subjects of his study. He claims that American soldiers criticized the Mexican church, because they "saw in Mexican institutions and society merely a corrupted reflection of themselves and their own institutions." Indeed, Foos portrays most clashes among American troops, and between Americans and Mexicans, as part of a larger class struggle between elite and lower classes. Therefore, within this Marxist paradigm American troops (whom Foos labels the "wage-earning guardians of the propertied classes") attacked Mexico's Catholic Church as an "accessible" symbol of "caste privilege." Foos does admit, however, that there was strong "anti-Catholic rhetoric embedded in manifest destiny," something which my own dissertation asserts and explores at length.

relationship between anti-Catholicism and America's belief in its providential destiny.

Most historians who have examined Manifest Destiny have done so within the context of racism. Reginald Horsman and Thomas R. Hietala both cite racism and ethnocentrism as integral elements of the American drive for additional territory. However, although they discuss Anglo-Saxonism (or, in the case of Horsman, emphasize it), neither connects Mexico's Roman Catholicism to the American denigration of Mexico. Yet most Anglo-Saxonist Americans considered the spread of Protestantism as inseparable from their own territorial growth.⁹

Frederick Merk and Albert K. Weinberg are two historians who do examine the religious aspects of Manifest Destiny. Merk identifies the concept of religious freedom as an important feature of that doctrine. However, in his discussion of the U.S.-Mexican War he does not explore the relationship between anti-Catholicism and this drive for religious liberty. Weinberg links American expansionism with "Calvinistic pride and equalitarianism." He argues that the mission of the United States was not necessarily to elevate Latin Americans, but rather to provide for the free development of Americans, who had been blessed by God with liberty.¹⁰

The anti-Catholicism seen in the U.S.-Mexican War was neither the culmination of nearly two decades of nativism nor the foundation upon which the Know Nothingism of the 1850s would be built. It was, however, a striking example of how the idea of

⁹ Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 1-2, 208-12; Thomas R. Hietala, *Manifest Design: Anxious Aggrandizement in Late Jacksonian America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 154-66.

¹⁰ Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), viii-ix, 29-30; Albert K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansion in American History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1935), 128-29.

American expansion had become intertwined with anti-Catholic sentiment. The war was Manifest Destiny in action and it opened up innumerable possibilities for anti-Catholic forces. Expansionist ambitions during the war with Mexico combined easily with American suspicions about the Catholic Church as a "Man of Sin" that, while it had already impeded Mexico's economic, social, political, and religious progress, aspired to do the same to the United States. An American victory might regenerate poor, hapless Mexico by firmly establishing the republican values of civil and religious liberty there. More importantly, a successful American campaign inevitably would lead to an increase in United States territory. Those new lands could then be settled by Anglo-Saxons, carrying with them republicanism, Protestantism, and the racially superior ability to make full use of both. Through an examination of the interplay between anti-Catholicism and the war, the American belief in Manifest Destiny appears as something much broader than a racial or politico-religious justification for territorial expansion. It emerges as an intricate web of complementary concepts and ideas, one of which was an anti-Catholic impulse that played a vital role in the American drive to overspread the continent.

CHAPTER ONE

Making a "Plea for the West": The Rise and Influence of Anti-Catholicism, 1834 - 1846

Thirty years after the ratification of the United States Constitution, a mysterious-looking group of women arrived in Boston, Massachusetts. Catholic nuns belonging to the Order of St. Ursula, they soon established a religious house and school on Mount Benedict in nearby Charlestown. The history of the region was not lost on the sisters as they began to live and work in close proximity to the birthplace of the American Revolution. Overlooking Charlestown, the convent, in the eyes of many Unitarians and Roman Catholics, stood as a monument to the religious freedom that had been guaranteed to Americans since the addition of the First Amendment to the Constitution in 1791. But to some residents of Boston and its environs, the convent was more of a gravestone than a monument. To them, the Ursuline house was not a celebratory model of America's civil and religious freedom in action, but an ominous portent that spelled the death of those liberties. It was an awakening symbol of an impending papal takeover of the American republic, led by shrewd Jesuits and wily nuns, such as those perched like waiting vultures atop Mount Benedict. But such conspiracy theories found few willing ears until the 1830s, when the growing number of immigrant Catholics in the northeast's major cities no longer could be denied.

The predominant American view of Roman Catholicism evolved significantly from the early 1830s to the middle 1840s. Anti-Catholicism had always existed in the English colonies and in the United States, but it had lain relatively dormant since the time

of the Revolution. However, in dealing with the pressures of a more diverse nation, Americans fused anti-Catholicism and nativism into one coherent anti-immigrant movement based chiefly upon religion and ethnicity. At the same time, the idea that the United States was providentially destined to occupy North America and spread republican government gained in popularity. Any such expansion outside of Oregon would be had at the expense of Catholic Mexico. Literature on Mexico and other Latin American countries largely shaped American views of their southern neighbor as a decrepit pseudo-republic hampered by despotism and superstition. All of these issues came to a head by 1844. Following years of heightened anti-Catholic rhetoric and activity, riots provoked by nativists exploded during the summer months in Philadelphia. The opinions expressed by congressmen, nativists, and anti-Catholics in the Texas debate combined race, religion, and expansionist sentiment and foreshadowed their later treatment of Mexico during the war that was to come in 1846. By late 1845, the complex sentiment and drive for American territorial aggrandizement had earned the popular name, "Manifest Destiny." Under the banner of this new phrase, Americans advocated the spread of American republicanism, Anglo-Saxons, and Protestantism throughout North America. Anti-Catholicism was implicit in this drive, in no small part because of years of anti-Catholic rhetoric, the events of the early 1840s, and derogatory descriptions of Mexico.

By the 1830s, Anti-Catholicism had grown from a fringe existence into a more widespread, influential movement. At the start of the decade, a small number of anti-Catholic newspapers struggled to survive in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and

Baltimore. Meanwhile, prominent evangelical Protestants, for example the Rev. W. C. Brownlee and the Rev. John Breckinridge, publicly debated leading Roman Catholic clergymen, like the Rev. John Hughes, soon to be the influential bishop of New York. Out of these debates and newspapers grew some of the first anti-Catholic voluntary societies in antebellum America, such as the New York Protestant Association. The purpose of this latter organization was to enlighten American minds to the insidious character of the Roman Catholic Church and its unholy drive to take over the United States through deceptively benevolent institutions, such as schools. Whereas previous to the 1830s anti-Catholic propaganda mostly took the form of religious polemics and apologetics, by the mid-1830s anti-Catholics found that defamatory accusations against Catholics, as well as sensational stories of conniving Jesuits, corrupt prelates, and sordid convents and monasteries, were much more effective than apologetics in shaping popular opinion of Roman Catholicism.¹

The first major act of violence that grew out of this newly invigorated anti-Catholic movement was the burning of the Ursuline convent and school in Charlestown. By 1830, the Catholic school had successfully attracted wealthy citizens from Boston and the surrounding areas. Boston minister Lyman Beecher warned Bostonians that the purpose of Roman Catholicism was to undermine republican government and true religion. Consequently, he urged parents not to support the school. Stirred up by Beecher's zealous sermons, Congregationalists founded a rival school in 1831. Yet many

¹ Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York: Macmillan, 1938; reprint, New York: Quadrangle Books, 1964), 53-68.

leading citizens and Unitarians from around Boston continued to send their children to the Ursuline school. Besides this seeming threat by a successful Catholic institution to the traditional religious and political structure of Massachusetts, a constant barrage of anti-Catholic propaganda about corrupt nunneries combined easily with suspicions among the lower classes of the Boston area that dangerous and violent acts were committed daily behind the convent walls. Thus, when a mentally deranged nun ran from the convent one night in 1834, the citizens of Charlestown and Boston were fully prepared to react with mob violence. The nun returned to the convent the next afternoon, but within a few days the account of her "escape" had been transformed into stories of vast dungeons and tremendous cruelties at the Ursuline convent. On the night of August 11 a mob attacked and burned the convent and school.²

In 1836, a similar story involving a convent of diabolical nuns appeared in the popular book, *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery at Montreal*. The reputed author, Maria Monk, claimed to have suffered terribly at the hands of priests and nuns before her escape from the convent. Critics, including her mother and impartial Protestant clergymen who visited the convent in question, attacked her claims as false. Debate over the veracity of *Awful Disclosures* continued throughout the late 1830s and the unquestioned belief in Maria Monk's tale became a sort of litmus test of whether or not one fully supported the anti-Catholic movement.³

² Ibid., 68-76. For a mostly political interpretation of this riot, see David Grimsted, *American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 8-9. The author gives passing mention to these events in Charlestown as an example of how Democrats sought to label certain riots as "Whig" violence.

³ Billington, *The Protestant Crusade*, 99-108.

The burning of the Charlestown convent demonstrated that anti-Catholicism in the United States had finally broken out of the narrow territory of theological debates and apologetics and had crossed over into a realm where conspiratorial propaganda could motivate Americans to commit acts of violence. On the night of the Charlestown riot, Lyman Beecher had preached a sermon in nearby Boston about the dangers posed to the United States, and especially the West, by the papacy and Roman Catholic immigrants. Later claiming that he had nothing to do with inciting the mob, Beecher condemned their violence.⁴

The year after the riot, Lyman Beecher published *A Plea for the West*, a book based upon the sermon he had delivered the night of the Charlestown violence. Together with similar warnings published by Samuel F. B. Morse, Beecher's book would influence Americans' opinion of immigration and Roman Catholicism for years to come. Beecher despised Catholicism as a barbaric, malignant religion rife with ignorance, stupidity, and animalism. In Beecher's opinion, the republican institutions of the United States were "not borrowed from Greece or Rome, but from the Bible." Calling the Bible "the anchor of republics," Beecher hoped that the United States could alter the religious darkness of "Pagan, Mahometan, and Papal lands," by "revolutions and convulsions" if necessary. These political and religious ideas went into *A Plea for the West*.⁵

In the book, Beecher warned Americans that their providential destiny to lead the world hinged on "the religious and political destiny" of the West. The main barrier in the

⁴ Ibid., 72-73.

⁵ Lyman Beecher, *Lectures on Political Atheism and Kindred Subjects* (Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1852), 136, 189-90, 320, 326, 331-34; Lyman Beecher, *The Works of the Rev. Lyman Beecher* (3 vols., Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1852-3), 2: 417-22.

way of this American mission was the horde of ignorant Roman Catholic immigrants coming to America who, guided by foreign priests, would soon "throw down our free institutions." To make matters worse, the immigrants were being educated alongside Protestant students in schools run by crafty Jesuits who had been trained in Europe to undermine the American republic through the indoctrination of the young. Catholic bishops and priests, who refused to assimilate even as they held complete sway over their flock, sought to establish Catholic schools and churches in the West. According to Beecher, all true republicans and Protestants were thus called to end their complacency and accomplish two goals: stop the influx of Catholic immigrants through legislation, and build and staff schools in the West to prevent "the predominant influence of the society of Jesuits." Beecher instructed Americans to view Roman Catholicism not just as a religious threat, but also as a danger to political liberty.⁶

Samuel F. B. Morse took Beecher's rhetoric a step further in *Foreign Conspiracy* and in *Imminent Dangers*, both published in 1835. These books came with glowing recommendations from a number of New York ministers, as well as nativist and anti-Catholic newspapers, like the *New York Journal of Commerce*, the *Christian Advocate*, and the *Boston Recorder*. Whereas Beecher seemingly accused only Jesuits, priests, and bishops of ill intent, Morse implicated all Catholics in a vast conspiracy to destroy civil and religious liberty. Although the Pope and Catholic princes of Europe could not send a real army to accomplish this feat, Rome and Austria sought to flood the United States

⁶ Lyman Beecher, *A Plea for the West* (Cincinnati: Truman and Smith, 1835; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1977), 11, 41, 50-59, 76-77, 105, 110, 116-19, 135-36, 145-50.

with "priest-ridden troops of the Holy Alliance, with their Jesuit officers well skilled in all the arts of darkness." Their purpose was to undermine Protestantism and republicanism in America, claimed Morse, and thereby harm the republican and Protestant cause everywhere: "Popery, while it is the natural antagonist of Protestantism, is opposed in its whole character to Republican liberty." As evidence for his theory, Morse pointed to the fact that most Catholics in the United States were foreigners. Thus, he declared, it was foolhardy and dangerous to continue to grant the foreign-born equal political rights with native-born Americans.⁷

The ideology of republicanism, as seen in the works of Morse and Beecher, allowed theological anti-Catholicism and political nativism to fuse together into one common front against the Roman Catholic Church and its adherents. The late 1830s and early 1840s experienced a surge in anti-Catholic literature and newspapers, spurred on by fights over the mandatory use of the King James Bible in New York City's public schools. The anti-Catholic movement gained increasing support as the 1840s progressed, thanks to the school issue and the tangible nature of an increasing number of Irish immigrants that seemed to confirm the fears of Morse and Beecher.

Nativists in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston formed strong political parties built upon the dread of a foreign, Catholic menace. The new partisans called themselves

⁷ Samuel F. B. Morse, *Foreign Conspiracy against the Liberties of the United States* (New York: Leavitt, Lord, and Co., 1835), 51, 53, 55, 104-05, 119; Samuel F. B. Morse, *Imminent Dangers to the Free Institutions of the United States through Foreign Immigration, and the Present State of the Naturalization Laws* (New York: E.B. Clayton, 1835; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), 8-20, 28. The editor of the anti-Catholic newspaper, *Downfall of Babylon*, Samuel B. Smith, elaborated greatly on Morse's conspiracy theory in his 1836 book, *The Flight of Popery from Rome to the West* (New York: n.p., 1836). Smith described in great detail how the Pope planned personally to settle in the West and lead an army of Catholic immigrants against the American republic. Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 128.

either Native Americans or American Republicans, but all agreed on a few core issues. They sought to increase greatly the length of time necessary for an immigrant to become naturalized and opposed the elevation of anyone who was foreign-born to office. The nativist political parties also took a stand against foreign intervention of any kind in American political and social affairs. The year of 1844 proved to be formative for the Native American Party, in part because of electoral successes but mainly due to a pair of widely condemned riots in Philadelphia that were clearly instigated by party leaders.

Ten years after the mob action in Charlestown, anti-Catholic sentiment and fear again led to violence. This time it also led to a number of deaths. Worried already about foreign and Catholic political influence, evangelical Protestant leaders formed the American Protestant Association in reaction to efforts by Bishop Francis Kenrick and local politicians to address the problems surrounding Bible reading in the public schools. Catholics were unhappy that only the Protestant King James Bible was available to students and sought either to excuse their children from Bible reading or to compel the use of an approved Catholic Bible. But the American Protestant Association and the Native American Party attacked their efforts as a conspiracy "to exclude the Bible from public schools."⁸

Native Americans held rallies throughout Philadelphia in early 1844. But on May 6, they decided to hold a mass meeting in a lot adjacent to a school in the Irish-Catholic neighborhood of Kensington. Approximately 3,000 spectators listened attentively to the

⁸ Michael Feldberg, *The Turbulent Era: Riot and Disorder in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 9-18; *New Englander*, 7 July 1844.

soon-to-be leading Native American Congressman, Lewis C. Levin. Hampered by rain, they moved the rally to a nearby market place where a small number of Kensington's Irish residents turned out to meet them. Fistfights ensued and someone fired a gun from within the melee. As the locals ran to their houses, some persons fired guns from the nearby Irish volunteer fire company building, killing one of the nativists. Nativists soon retaliated with gunfire of their own. After nightfall, a nativist mob marched to a Sisters of Charity seminary in order to burn it down, but found it guarded by an armed Irish mob that soon shot and killed another nativist.⁹

The next day, nativists held another rally, this time outside of Independence Hall. They hailed the nativist dead as martyrs and entreated the crowd of 3,000 to head immediately to Kensington. When the nativists arrived, most of the Irish locals had already fled except for a few gunmen. The nativists proceeded to burn houses in the neighborhood; they then broke into St. Michael's Church and set it ablaze. The next night, the nativist mob burned St. Augustine's Church in downtown Philadelphia, because local militia had finally locked them out of Kensington. With the onset of martial law, the riot ended after three days.¹⁰

⁹ Feldberg, *Turbulent Era*, 19-20.

¹⁰ Ibid., 21-23. David Grimsted stresses "the political origin" of this violence, although he argues also that this "large political riot" is "best discussed" in the larger context of "the nation's ethnic and religious travail." As partial evidence for this political interpretation, he cites "the shooting from an Irish firehouse into a Nativist Party rally." Yet, as I argue in Chapter Two of this dissertation, the religious connotations inherent in the rhetoric of the Native American Party made it much more than a mere political entity. Certainly the Native Americans had more on their minds than "protecting political rights in an ethnic district" when they began their rally in an Irish-Catholic neighborhood. The *Presbyterian* and *Christian Reflector* certainly interpreted the violence as an event grounded in the dangers of "Romanism." Grimsted, *American Mobbing*, 218-19; *Christian Reflector*, 23 May 1844; *Presbyterian*, 15 June 1844.

Many Catholics interpreted the riot as an act of religious hatred that had little to do with naturalization laws or politics. They argued that the Native Americans had goaded Irish Catholics into violence and traced the hatred and penchant for violence back to the Charlestown riot of 1834. Of Native American culpability and motivation, a Philadelphia nun wrote that the political party was "nothing but a party of Protestants leagued against the Catholics under the name of the Native Americans." Even though Levin and other Native American leaders were arrested for inciting the riot, nativists from Philadelphia and elsewhere argued that Roman Catholics had once again exhibited their unrepugnant, papist ways by attacking peaceable citizens exercising their right to public assembly. Nativists reported that "a popish priest was seen to leave the vicinity within an hour of the riot" and blamed the conflagration on "a vindictive, anti-republican spirit, manifested by a portion of the alien population of . . . Kensington." They issued a broadside claiming that the Irish Catholics had trampled upon the American flag during the riot. Claiming the "right to assemble," the broadside predicted future troubles, if foreigners continued their efforts to extinguish the constitutional rights of native-born Americans. As far away as Boston, nativists demanded: "Why should the Native American party avoid a district inhabited by Irishmen as if it was infected with the plague?" But others in the Boston area argued that mob violence was not "the true method of dealing with Roman Catholic Irishmen." They feared that nativist attacks would only make matters worse by pushing Catholic immigrants in need of protection into a Jesuit-dominated political party.¹¹

¹¹ *The Truth Unveiled; or, A Calm and Impartial Exposition of the Origin and Immediate Cause of the*

On July 4, Philadelphia's Native American Party tested its right to assembly once more when it rallied 5,000 marchers for a triumphal parade. They held aloft a banner "on which were represented figures of an open Bible and a dead serpent. The word was passed through the streets that this symbolized the power of the Roman Catholic Church, now utterly extinct."¹² Fearing more church burnings, Catholics guarded their churches with guns. The next day, the local militia tried to confiscate arms at St. Philip de Neri Church in Southwark, but the Irish refused out of fear that the authorities would offer as little help as they had at Kensington two months earlier. But on July 6, the militia and the armed Irish struck a deal: the militia would guard the church in order to relieve tensions. As the Irish departed, however, a mob surrounded them and beat an Irishman nearly to death. Meanwhile, Native American Party members had armed themselves and began guarding the church in an attempt to demonstrate that they were opposed to the use of violence in their cause. But when the militia asked them to leave, the Native Americans refused. Soon the militia forced the mob away from the church and removed the nativists. They eventually fired into the crowd, setting off a general riot replete with nativists using cannon, and leaving twelve dead and over forty wounded. Even though

Terrible Riots in Philadelphia (Philadelphia: M. Fithian, 1844), found in Raymond H. Schmandt, ed., "A Selection of Sources Dealing with the Nativist Riots of 1844," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 80 (1969): 152-55, 166-75; Sr. Mary Gonzaga to Mother Xavier, quoted in Schmandt, "A Selection of Sources," 109; Peter A. Browne, *Premonitory Letters, upon the Subject of Romanism and the Pope* (Philadelphia: Barrett and Jones, 1846), 8-9; *The Full Particulars of the Late Riots with a View of the Burning of the Catholic Churches* (Philadelphia: n.p., 1844), found in *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 80 (1969): 116; "Native Americans," broadside, found in *The Full Particulars*, 117-18; *New Englander*, 7 July 1844.

¹² Diary of Bishop Francis Patrick Kenrick, July 4, 1844, quoted in Schmandt, "A Selection of Sources," 104.

the church was not harmed, the Native Americans were again discredited for being at the center of a deadly riot.¹³

At their state convention in February 1845 at Harrisburg, the Pennsylvania Native Americans spent much of their time discussing the riots of the previous year and passing resolutions for the dissemination of Native American literature. Both Levin and prominent Philadelphian nativist Peter A. Browne continued to blame the incidents at Kensington and Southwark on “lawless aliens.” In his presidential address, Daniel Kendig proclaimed that the nativists wanted only a “purified ballot-box” and “the free use of the Bible.” But “the Pope of Rome” was working to expel the Bible from public schools. Like many evangelical Protestants, Kendig believed that republican institutions were rooted in the Bible and that this was the reason that Catholics were so opposed to the widespread use of scripture. All good republican Americans should support a “homogeneous” society based upon the Bible and republicanism; yet twice in Philadelphia “the Natives were met by *foreign aggression*.” At the national convention in July 1845 at Philadelphia, the Native Americans again emphasized the Philadelphia riots as a baptism in blood that had been the real birth of their party, because it had demonstrated the depravity of Catholics. Clearly, continual references made by nativists

¹³ Feldberg, *Turbulent Era*, 28-32. Despite these troubles, an alliance with the Whig Party allowed the Philadelphia Native Americans to win three out of four of the city’s congressional seats and most of its Pennsylvania Legislature seats. In return, the Whigs won the governorship, one congressional seat, and most local offices. Charles Sellers, *James K. Polk, Continentalist, 1843-1846* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 152-53.

to the Philadelphia riots demonstrated that these events had proven to be formative in the life of the Native American Party in the 1840s.¹⁴

Just prior to the elections of 1844, New York party leaders warned that the United States would end up like the nations of southern Europe, if it did not soon end its "intellectual and spiritual thralldom" to foreign influence. Labeling immigrants as demagogues who threatened their rights, the New York Native Americans implored voters to put aside their sympathy for the poor of Europe who hailed from "monarchistic and aristocratic governments" and instead to pay attention to their own interests. With no present political crisis in New York City akin to the 1840-42 melee between Bishop John Hughes and Protestant leaders over the use of the King James Bible in public schools, the Native Americans appealed instead to New Yorkers' love for their own city and the desire not to see it given over to Democrats who had sold themselves to the foreign vote. On this platform, the New York Native American Party won the mayoralty in 1844, along with a majority of the seats on the city council.¹⁵

The American Republican Party of Boston was much more openly anti-Catholic in its literature and rhetoric than its Native American brethren in New York City who had spoken in mostly ambiguous terms of foreign influence. In their statement to voters in 1844, Bostonian American Republicans roundly condemned the type of violence seen in

¹⁴ *Proceedings of the Native American State Convention, Held at Harrisburg, February 22, 1845* (Philadelphia: William F. Geddes, 1845), 6, 8-21; *The American: Necessity of American Organization* (Pittsburgh: A.A. Anderson, 1846), 2, 19-30.

¹⁵ J. T. Buckingham, *Golden Sentiments: Being an Address to the Native Americans of New York . . . Together with the Declaration of Sentiments of the Native Americans of Boston* (Boston: H.B. Skinner, 1844), 2-6; Ira M. Leonard, "New York City Politics, 1841-1844: Nativism and Reform" (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1965), iv-17. See also Billington, *The Protestant Crusade*, 142-58, for an excellent analysis of the Bible controversy in New York City.

elaborate and significant amid the Texas annexation debate and during the coming war with Mexico:

He has permitted in the neighboring States of Mexico and Equador, new constitutions to be formed, by which the Roman religion of the pope, is, by law, established, as the only religion, to the exclusion of all others, thus giving practical proof of the still unchangeable bigotry and intolerance of Popery.

As the closest Catholic nation to the United States, Mexico had finally entered into Native American rhetoric as corroborating evidence for claims about Roman Catholicism and its degrading, sinister effects upon a nation.¹⁷

Religious anti-Catholics already were making use of Mexican and South American examples by the time the nativist politicians began to do so. As early as the middle 1830s, Robert J. Breckinridge, the abolitionist and relative of the famed debater of the Rev. John Hughes, the Rev. John C. Breckinridge, accused Mexico of crushing the civil and religious liberties of the Texans as part of a wider nefarious plan. Breckinridge presented Mexico as a good example of what he called the unconscionable and medieval Romanist penchant for mixing politics and religion in order to empower the "Romish emissaries" who served the "mother of harlots." The Mexican Constitution's guarantee that the "Catholic Apostolic Roman Religion" would be the exclusive faith of Mexico was little more than a plot by Jesuits and the Pope to stop American emigration to the northern states of Mexico and Texas, according to Breckinridge. Eventually,

¹⁷ Ibid., 10.

Breckinridge warned, the Pope would extend his control over other Latin American republics, and possibly even the United States, if his power was not checked.¹⁸

In December 1840, pastor H.A. Boardman of the Walnut Street Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia explored the following question with his congregation: "Is there any ground to apprehend the extensive and dangerous prevalence of Romanism in the United States?" Answering affirmatively, he argued that Americans should not mistake Roman Catholicism for a mere religion, because it "is under the control of a foreign power." As an example of the dangers of ignorance and apathy, the pastor pointed to the Spanish Catholic legacy in the New World of "perpetual anarchy and depression," even while "opposition to Popery" had created "our free, happy, and prosperous Republic." In the end, Boardman claimed, the influx of Catholic immigrants would lead the United States down the same path toward anarchy. In a harbinger of things to come, he closed his sermon by questioning the loyalty of Catholic Americans, if a war were to arise "between the United States and a Catholic power."¹⁹

Other anti-Catholic writers and preachers drew comparisons between Catholic nations and the United States. John McLeod requested that his audience at a New York Protestant Reformation Society meeting in early 1843 compare Mexico to the United States. He proclaimed: "Civil and religious liberty are twin sisters, and Christianity is the mother of both. Protestantism has released them together from the chains of Rome."

¹⁸ Robert J. Breckinridge, "Romanism—Political and Religious," in *Papism in the United States in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: David Owen and Son, 1841), 19-21, 26-29.

¹⁹ H.A. Boardman, *A Lecture Delivered in the Walnut Street Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, on Sunday Evening, December 27th, 1840* (Philadelphia: Hooker and Agnew, 1841), 26-28, 31-32, 45, 61.

A direct correlation existed in countries between the degree of Protestantism, McLeod argued, and the extent of prosperity and freedom. He blamed all of Mexico's political and social problems on its lack of Protestantism and, in turn, complimented the Protestant denominations within the United States for bringing about American growth and material advancement. In this way, he tied the general, religious anti-Catholic cause to the nativist desire to stifle immigration and end the suffrage of the foreign-born.²⁰

The Rev. L. Giustiniani, another darling of the New York anti-Catholic movement, thanks to his alleged Italian Catholic past, echoed the sentiments of McLeod:

Look at the deplorable state of Mexico, enter into the examination of the state of Yucatan. . . . It is not yet three hundred years, that the Spaniards took possession of it, that they came under the iron rod of priestly government and papal influence. They are no more. Their palaces lie in ruins; arts and sciences are lost; the nation perished, and the wild ruins are living monuments of the melancholy effects of papal influence. Study the progressive spirit of the nineteenth century, and you will find in all the Protestant countries, commerce . . . and liberality. . . .

The Methodist clergyman insisted that the Pope and his Jesuits had no interest in insuring continued prosperity in the United States and would at the first opportunity overturn American republican institutions. America was a promised land of freedom, but that promise was now being threatened by European Catholic immigration. According to Giustiniani, without immediate political action, Jesuits would rule the United States as they had ruled Mexico.²¹

²⁰ John N. McLeod, *Protestantism: the Parent and Guardian of Civil and Religious Liberty. A Lecture, Delivered, March 26, 1843, under Appointment of the New York Protestant Reformation Society* (New York: Robert Carter, 1843), 16-21, 25-26, 30-33.

²¹ L. Giustiniani, *Papal Rome As It Is. By a Roman* (Baltimore: Publication Rooms, 1843; Philadelphia: James M. Campbell, 1845), 194, 215-23, 225-30, 243. Giustiniani's book came with a strong endorsement

One of the most popular anti-Catholic voluntary societies by the early 1840s was the American Protestant Society. In 1844 this organization sponsored a contest for the best essay written about the dangers posed to the United States by Roman Catholicism. Soon published as a book, the anonymously written essay, *Romanism Incompatible with Republican Institutions*, won the prize. The writer called Catholics "a Romish horde" of "pitiless and bloodthirsty" people determined to stamp out the success of the American founding fathers. The writer found in Romanism "not a feature . . . which has any sympathy with free institutions." Like McLeod and Giustiniani, this anonymous author entreated his readers to compare the original thirteen English colonies of the new world with former Spanish possessions; and concluded that "Romanism exerts a baneful influence on the industry and prosperity of a country." With the Latin American nations of North and South America in mind, the essayist begged Protestants to evangelize American Catholics as quickly as possible.²²

In May and June of 1844, representatives and senators who supported Texas annexation spoke of Manifest Destiny and utilized religious-tinged rhetoric similar to that of the anti-Catholic movement. They referred to the enlargement of "the area of liberty" or the "area of freedom," and foresaw the spread of "freedom's pure and heavenly light" and the regenerative power of republican principles throughout North America. They

from the respected Rev. William C. Brownlee, who in 1836 was already urging Americans to "cast your eyes over South America and Mexico. . . . Had the ignorance, vice, atheism, and priestcraft of those wretched republics, at this present time, been the curse and scourge of *the old thirteen states*, in '76, neither the wisdom of *the old Congress*, nor the skill and tact of the glorious Washington . . . could have prevented us from being devoured and annihilated by the British lion!" William C. Brownlee, *Popery: An Enemy to Civil and Religious Liberty, and Dangerous to Our Republic* (New York: John S. Taylor, 1836), 121.

²² "Civis," *Romanism Incompatible with Republican Institutions* (New York: American Protestant Society, 1845), 52, 56-58, 79, 91-92.

enhanced this vision by denigrating Mexicans in a manner very similar to nativist depictions of American Catholics or immigrants as a people dangerous to republicanism. Mexicans were barbarous, superstitious, unfit to rule over Anglo-Saxons and too dissimilar to live beside them, and unable to sustain republican government. In the words of Senator James Buchanan, who would soon serve as James K. Polk's Secretary of State, "our race of men can never be subjected to the imbecile and indolent Mexican race" that had failed to protect the liberty, property, and religion of the Texans.²³

Democratic congressman James E. Belser of Alabama depicted Texas as a land of promise and plenty for potential American immigrants from all sections of the country: "The adventurer, whether from the East or the West, the North or the South, would find a home there." More importantly, American Christians could take their Bibles to Texas and live "under a government which tolerates all religions and legalizes none, (whether Protestant or Catholic)." Providential design would lead to American "expansion with no limits," even to the "ancient palace of the Montezumas," making the United States (or the un-annexed but still Anglo-Saxon Republic of Texas) a bulwark of liberty in a despotic world. Belser's reference to religious freedom was an acknowledgement and denunciation of Mexico's constitutional guarantee that Roman Catholicism was forever to be the official state religion. It was designed to appeal to Northern congressmen who, not overly fond of admitting another slave state into the Union, might at least reconsider for reasons of religious liberty and the spread of the Bible.²⁴

²³ *Congressional Globe*, 28 Cong., 1 Sess., *Appendix*, 726; *ibid.*, 28 Cong., 2 Sess., 43, 86, 393.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 28 Cong., 1 Sess., 525; *Ibid.*, 28 Cong., 2 Sess., 43. Belser switched to the Whig Party in 1848 and by the mid-1850s had become a leading member of the American Party, serving as president of the

Congressmen from other slave states similarly made use of the religious liberty theme and often used harsh anti-Catholic language in their support of the annexation of Texas. Robert J. Walker, senator from Mississippi and soon to be Polk's Secretary of the Treasury, blamed incessant Mexican revolutions on Mexico's "mercenary army" and

a cruel, ambitious, and licentious priesthood, cruel and rapacious, ready to establish the inquisition, denouncing liberty of conscience as a crime, and yet with scarcely even a profession of piety, pre-eminent only for the most daring profligacy and the most revolting licentiousness. Such, with very few exceptions, are the army and priesthood of Mexico.

Walker went on to outline other reasons why Texas should become part of the United States, telling his fellow senators about the "ignorant and fanatical colored population upon the borders of Louisiana and Arkansas, in contact with the slave population," as well as the "mixed races" of Mexico. "Such a people," argued Walker, neither could nor should "subdue and govern the American race in Texas."²⁵

Some of Walker's colleagues spoke even more directly about an impending clash with Mexico. Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, who had proposed his own Texas annexation bill that sought to avoid war by requiring a treaty with Mexico before Texas' entry to the Union, argued that Anglo-Texans and Mexicans could not live side by side under the same government, because "natural and moral causes forbid it." Those

Alabama State American Republican Convention for the year 1855. Despite their inherent biases, apparently backing up Buchanan's and Belser's claims of the importance of religious liberty in the consideration of Texas annexation was Texas' own *Declaration of Independence*, in which the Texas delegates wrote of Mexico: "It denies us the right of worshipping the Almighty according to the dictates of our own conscience, by the support of a national religion, calculated to promote the temporal interest of its human functionaries, rather than the glory of the true and living God." *The Declaration of Independence Made by the Delegates of the People of Texas, in General Convention, at Washington, on March 2d, 1836* (Houston: Office of the Telegraph, 1838), 5.

²⁵ *Congressional Globe*, 28 Cong., 1 Sess., Appendix, 557.

"natural and moral causes" were differences in race, language, and religion. Benton presented Texas annexation as one aspect of a larger "conflict of necessity between two races," and noted with aplomb that "the vanguard of the Anglo-Saxon race would be obliged to conquer."²⁶

Representative John W. Tibbatts of Kentucky brought the rhetoric of republican Manifest Destiny to bear in his support of Texas annexation: "It will extend the principles of civil and religious liberty, for they march *pari passu* with the migrations of the Anglo-Saxon race." The Democrat quoted fellow Kentuckian and Whig Henry Clay. Although as the 1844 Whig presidential candidate Clay opposed the annexation of Texas, in 1820 he had urged Americans to emigrate to Texas:

The question was, by whose race it (Texas) shall be peopled. In our hands, it will be peopled by the sons of freemen, carrying with them our language, our laws, and our liberties; establishing on the prairies of Texas temples dedicated to the simple and devout modes of worship of God, incident to our religion; and temples dedicated to that freedom which we adore next to them. In the hands of others, it may become the habitation of despotism and slaves, subject to the vile dominion of the inquisition and superstition.

Tibbatts shrewdly used Clay's own words of nearly twenty-five years earlier regarding the settlement of Texas (not its annexation, as Tibbatts implied) to form the bulwark of what had become three of the main arguments for the republic's annexation: race, religion, and republicanism.²⁷

Northern congressmen also used similar racist and anti-Catholic language in support of Texas annexation. Some, like Democrat Alfred P. Stone of Ohio, invoked

²⁶ Ibid., 576; *Congressional Globe*, 28 Cong., 1 Sess., 655.

²⁷ *Congressional Globe*, 28 Cong., 1 Sess., Appendix, 446, 450.

“Providence” and the “destiny” of Americans to erect “temples dedicated to liberty . . . over the graves of the Montezumas.” Others, such as Massachusetts senator and Democrat Chester Ashley, praised the Anglo-Saxons of Texas, who unlike the weaker races of Mexico had successfully resisted European encroachment. William J. Brown, a House member from Indiana, predicted that republican government would eventually reach “to Patagonia’s snow-invested wilds.” While he refused to speculate on whether or not these future republics would join the American union as states, he assured his fellow representatives that “their destinies will be guided by Anglo-Saxon hands.” Indeed, according to Brown only devout Protestant Anglo-Saxons, in whose “veins coursed the blood of ancestors who had perished for liberty,” could sustain republican government.²⁸

Democratic Senator Sidney Breese of Illinois found it natural that people of “our own blood and lineage—of kindred institutions, manners, laws, customs, religion, and language” would want to join the United States. Breese’s Democratic counterpart in the House of Representatives, John A. McClernand, echoed the senator’s comments:

I am for extending the shield of the American Union over our kindred of Texas; they are bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. They are the same glorious Anglo-Saxon race, whose high destiny is to civilize and Christianize the world.

McClernand’s missionary language and expansionist talk matched well with the racial, cultural, and religious arguments of his colleagues.²⁹

New Hampshire Democrat Levi Woodbury described the Anglo-Saxon “mission on earth” to his fellow senators. The destiny of Americans was to spread “the school-

²⁸ Ibid., 28 Cong., 2 Sess., 96-97, 227, 286.

²⁹ Ibid., 622.

house and village church" all the way to the Pacific Ocean in a peaceful manner. The United States should never admit foreigners who were "pagans and monarchists" unfamiliar with American institutions, warned Woodbury, but it should always welcome states such as Texas that were governed by people similar in religion, race, language, and political practice. Moreover, the Texans had established a republic. Mexico, according to the senator, had infringed upon the settlers' rights of religion and freedom of conscience through the establishment of Roman Catholicism as the state religion. To see "Saxon blood humiliated, and enslaved to Moors, Indians, and mongrels" was more than Woodbury could stand. Annexation would further "the progress of humanity and civilization," liberty, and "religious freedom."³⁰

Those who opposed the entry of Texas into the Union used the Anglo-Saxonist and religious language of their opponents, but in a very different way. Most were Whigs from Northern or border states, although some Southern Whigs opposed annexation on constitutional grounds. The latter group's opposition also came from coastal states that feared a further loss of political power to the West. For example, representative Kenneth Rayner of North Carolina agreed with most others that Mexicans were indolent and lazy and that Texans were clearly lovers of liberty and heirs to the American republican dream. But he wanted to "rein in westward movement." He also believed that acceptance of another independent republic into the Union by Congressional act alone was unconstitutional. Senators John M. Berrien of Georgia and George McDuffie of South Carolina scoffed at arguments like that of Rayner's, pointing out that by simple

³⁰ Ibid., 236, 764-73; *Congressional Globe*, 28 Cong., 2 Sess., 299.

treaty the President could admit Mexico with its "mongrel race" and different casts and religions. Not to admit Texas on flimsy constitutional grounds, blessed as it was by God with Anglo-Saxon rule, was ludicrous.³¹

Despite the protestations of men like McDuffie and Berrien, others integrated religious and racial language in opposition to the annexation of Texas. The Whig senator from Kentucky, James T. Morehead, warned that if the United States could admit "white foreigners," then it could also welcome "black foreigners," Liberians, and even Chinese as American citizens. William L. Dayton of New Jersey agreed with Morehead. Invoking nativist fears, the Whig senator pointed out that German and Irish immigrants had received citizenship in the Republic of Texas after a residency of only six months. Such people still owed "allegiance to the sovereignties under which they were born," and could not yet be trustworthy citizens of the United States. Dayton noted that European immigrants arriving at Boston and New York had to wait at least five years before naturalization and full political rights. Moreover, "representation would be given for Mexican peasants, and Indians now admitted to citizenship in Texas" under the plan of annexation. Worst of all, Texas' entry to the Union would lay a precedent for "the extension of the representation of negro population," because blacks held citizenship under Mexican law in the areas of New Mexico that Texas claimed for its own territory.³²

³¹ *Congressional Globe*, 28 Cong., 2 Sess., *Appendix*, 384, 410; *Congressional Globe*, 28 Cong., 2 Sess., 335.

³² *Congressional Globe*, 28 Cong., 2 Sess., 281, 332; *Congressional Globe*, 28 Cong., 2 Sess., *Appendix*, 388-89.

The use of Mexico as an example of Catholicism run amok and as evidence demonstrative of Protestant America's greatness gained new effectiveness, thanks to the debate over Texas annexation. But this occurred not just on the floors of Congress or in strictly religious literature, but also in more generalized works on Mexico. Such books appraised Mexico in terms of race, culture, politics, and religion, and usually did so in a negative light. Through their portrayal of Mexicans, authors confirmed many of the nativist claims about Roman Catholics in the United States. Because they aimed at an audience wider than the more narrowly-defined nativist or anti-Catholic readership, these works ably transmitted many hallmark ideas of American anti-Catholic nativists without the burden of the nativist label. After 1844, following the violence in Philadelphia, that label would become even more burdensome and derided.

As early as 1836, the year of the Texas Revolution, Charles Joseph Latrobe described Mexico in much the same way as would nativists, anti-Catholic evangelicals, and soldiers ten years later during the U.S.-Mexican War. In his book, Latrobe argued that the Mexican government was feeble, due to its Spanish past and "the Roman Catholic religion in its blindest and most revolting form," a dark, vile, intolerant system of superstition that was even worse than European Catholicism. Thus, Mexico was only the mere facade of a republic and its inhabitants, being idolaters and "the most mongrel that can be conceived," were incapable of self-government. Latrobe used evidence such as this to lend support to Texas independence from Mexico.³³

³³ Charles Joseph Latrobe, *The Rambler in Mexico* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1836), 24-25, 87, 115-18, 125-27. In the 1844 Texas annexation debates, William L. Dayton used Latrobe's statistics to support his claims of Mexican racial inferiority. See *Congressional Globe*, 28 Cong., 2 Sess., *Appendix*, 388. See also Lyon Oliver Rathbun, "The Representation of Mexicans and the Transformation of

By the early 1840s, other books with anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish overtones similar to Latrobe's appeared, one of which was Henry Stuart Foote's *Texas and the Texans, Or Advance of the Anglo-Americans to the South-West*, published in 1841. The future Mississippi governor's Anglo-Saxonism was very apparent as he drew a picture of the history of Mexico based upon his tour of Texas in 1839 while a congressman. Foote argued that the Aztecs possessed an advanced and moral society with a "purer" religion which the Spanish soon destroyed with their ultra-Catholicism. Despite all of their military successes, the Spanish eventually failed in North America, while Anglo-Saxons found great success. According to Foote, the crucial difference between the two groups was the Protestant and republican principles of the Anglo-Saxons. By the 1840s, all of the greatness of Mexico's indigenous population had been stamped out by Spanish and Catholic superstition. Thus, "the degenerate and enervated race of Mexico" truly was inferior to the Anglo-Saxons of the United States and Texas, with the primary cause being their long degradation under the "spiritual darkness" of Catholicism. Foote concluded that no republic could exist in Mexico until the legal establishment of Roman Catholicism as the state religion was overturned, and even then the nation would only prosper with the help of "the chivalrous and freedom-loving Anglo-Americans."³⁴

American Political Culture, 1787-1848" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1994). Rathbun rightly argues that "Anglo-Texans had justified their rebellion against Mexican rule on the racial grounds that Mexicans were congenitally incapable of self-government" (199). What my research and conclusions add to studies like Rathbun's is the inclusion of religion in the justification for the Texas Revolution, as well as an important factor in the portrayal of Mexicans throughout the 1840s that, once it became wrapped inside the label of Manifest Destiny, culminated during the U.S.-Mexican War.

³⁴ Henry Stuart Foote, *Texas and the Texans, Or Advance of the Anglo-Americans to the South-West* (2 vols., Philadelphia: Thomas and Copperthwait, 1841), 1: 13-15, 24-32, 82-91, 103-10; 2: 7, 23, 27, 33-37, 56.

Much more influential on the American public's perception of Mexico than the books of Latrobe and Foote was William H. Prescott's immensely popular *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, published in 1843.³⁵ Written in a grand and entertaining style, this book described the rise of the Aztec Empire and its fall at the hands of the Spanish conquistadors. Prescott blamed the easy military success of Cortez largely on problems endemic to Aztec culture, in particular their "brutish," tyrannical religion and its integral connection to a despotic monarchy. "In this state of things," he argued, "it was beneficently ordered by Providence that the land should be delivered over to another race, who would rescue it from the brutish superstitions." Few Americans would have difficulty amid the Manifest Destiny sentiment of the 1840s in viewing themselves as the newest "race" who would follow their divine destiny to supplant or conquer the inferior culture and superstitious peoples of Mexico.³⁶

Prescott insisted that the Spanish conquest, at the very least, brought Christianity to the Aztecs, even if it also brought the terrors of the inquisition with it. He remarked positively that Roman Catholicism had "decided advantages" over "the cold abstractions of Protestantism" when it came to proselytizing "savages" and "the rude child of nature." The "dazzling pomp" of Catholicism, along with its use of statues and other material accompaniments, lent itself to easy adoption by the natives of Mexico. Prescott

³⁵ According to the publisher of Don Angel Calderón de la Barca's *Life in Mexico*, Prescott's *History* "took the American public by storm" in 1843. Indeed, Prescott's book went through numerous editions during the 1840s and beyond. Don Angel Calderón de la Barca, *Life in Mexico* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1913, 1960), v.

³⁶ William H. Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (3 vols., Chicago: Hooper, Clarke, and Co., 1843; reprint, London: George Rutledge and Sons, 1874), 1: 45-71; Rathbun, "The Representation of Mexicans," 240-48.

acknowledged that Catholics did not worship their “material representations of the Divinity,” but maintained that “this distinction is lost on the savage.” The best “weapons of the Church” in earning the endearment of the natives, however, were its “spiritual weapons . . . of love and mercy.” That affection allowed the Catholic clergy to gain inordinate power and wealth just as many ancient clerical religious structures, such as the priesthood of Egypt, had done. This claim was not unlike those made by anti-Catholic groups such as the New York Protestant Association, that the Roman Catholic Church sought to lull Americans into a false sense of security through its benevolence and charity. The conquistadors ignored these positive elements of their faith when they imposed religious obedience on the Aztecs. Yet thanks to missionaries bearing the above-mentioned “spiritual weapons,” Mexicans nevertheless developed a real love for their church and clergy.³⁷

Along with his statements about the initial good effects of Roman Catholic Christianity on the indigenous peoples of Mexico, Prescott had negative things to say as well. He asserted, for example, that “the spirit of Christianity was permitted to evaporate,” because of Spanish bigotry and immorality. Unlike the “purer Christianity” of the nineteenth century, the conquistadors’ Roman Catholicism lacked substance. While elaborate rituals initially helped in the conversion of ignorant peoples, such as the Indians of Mexico, “worship that [was] addressed exclusively to the senses” had eventually lost its vitality and the ability to effect moral righteousness in the believer. In the end, Catholic Mexico ended up the same as pagan Mexico: with a despotic clerical

³⁷ Prescott, *History*, 1: 71, 246-47, 305, 343; 3: 181.

hierarchy and an unrepblican connection between church and state. When combined with Spanish rule and the hegemony of the Roman Catholic clergy, the lingering effects of the Aztecs' autocratic culture meant that Mexicans seemingly were doomed forever to be a people incapable of republican government.³⁸

A year after Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico* had found a tremendous audience, George Wilkins Kendall, correspondent of the *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, published his influential but more personal *Narrative of the Texas and Santa Fe Expedition*. Texas President Mirabeau B. Lamar, hoping to extend Texan control over Santa Fe while ensuring that Texas absorb the trade that traversed the Santa Fe Trail, had sent out the expedition in 1841. With Kendall keeping a record of their journey, 321 men set out in June. Due to poor planning and implementation, the expedition soon found itself without a guide, nearly starving, and under Indian attack. In the fall of 1841, Mexican forces captured the Americans and Texans and marched them through Mexico all the way to Perote near Vera Cruz, where they were imprisoned. The Mexicans released most of the captives in April 1842 after American and Texan diplomacy. The incident, for the first time since the Texas Revolution, made the subject of Texas the dominant headline and topic of discussion in the United States. Although Kendall made use of the older work of Latrobe, his two volumes were mostly a first-hand account of the march through Mexico. His report became immensely popular as an informative book on Mexican culture and politics. It also contained a number of observations about Mexicans, their religious practices, and the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico. Kendall

³⁸ Ibid., 3: 298-99.

wrote sympathetically of the lower classes and poor of Mexico who, "with all their bad qualities," he found to be benevolent toward Americans. Among those "bad qualities" were superstition, vice, and ignorance, as well as the inability to sustain a viable republican government.³⁹

Kendall also found good and bad in the priests of Mexico. He described them as kindly disposed to strangers and complimented all Mexicans for a "holy feeling of charity towards the sick and helpless" that he believed grew out of their Roman Catholic faith. Yet he also derided the "nonsensical mummeries" and "barefaced impostures" which the "crafty priesthood" had foisted upon the people of Mexico. He blamed the clergy's bigotry toward industrious, hard-working Protestants, for keeping Mexicans ignorant, poor, and industrially backward. The indigenous Indian influences in Mexican Catholicism were particularly offensive and shocking to Kendall, and he laughingly mocked religious processions and the liturgical mannerisms of the Mass. As for the future of Mexico, Kendall invoked Manifest Destiny when he remarked:

The day is gone by when a priest-ridden population, governed by a military despotism, can make headway in the great race of advancement which has been commenced by Anglo-Saxon toleration, and by the civil and religious liberty which the latter race enjoy.

As if to emphasize this, Kendall predicted that Mexico could be regenerated by only one of two ways: by "a thorough and radical revolution . . . in the very nature of the inhabitants, or until the country falls into other hands." Leaving no mystery about who those "other hands" might be, Kendall proceeded to describe in detail the dangers, routes

³⁹ George Wilkins Kendall, *Narrative of the Texas and Santa Fe Expedition* (2 vols., New York: Harper and Brothers, 1844), 2: 131, 216, 343-44, 365.

of attack, and necessities of which an invading army of Americans would have to be aware.⁴⁰

Former Secretary of the Legation to Mexico, Brantz Mayer, also published a work on Mexico in 1844, the same year that he founded the Maryland Historical Society. In *Mexico As It Was and As It Is*, Mayer recounted his experiences as a diplomat between 1841 and 1843 and discussed the political future of Mexico. Like Kendall, the secretary both praised and condemned the Mexican clergy. He derided the priests as the "Pope's *eunichs* [*sic*]" and criticized their rites as decidedly Indian and "tasteless and barbaric," as opposed to European Catholic practices, which were at least relatively "civilized or intellectual." Mayer also criticized the immense wealth of the Mexican church and suggested that it be spent on Mexico's national debt. "Yet the wealth of the church has not been at all times devoted to base and sordid purposes, or used to corrupt its possessors and people." Mayer pointed to the rural clergy in particular as examples of "charity and ministers of mercy," and related the Mexicans' love of their religion to the charitable actions of many priests. But Mexico's population was still "ignorant, poor, and servile"; and Mayer argued that without foreign emigration the nation would never enjoy the reality of a truly stable republican government. However, unlike Kendall, Mayer did not advocate forced emigration or military occupation, but only hoped that Antonio López de Santa Anna would be able to improve the country.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Ibid., 1: 337-41, 378; 2: 34, 112-14, 214-17, 238, 294-95, 340-45, 365-66, 395.

⁴¹ Brantz Mayer, *Mexico As It Was and As It Is* (New York: J. Winchester, New World Press, 1844), 151-52, 327-31, 347-55.

In 1845 William Preston Stapp published his journal as member of the Texas prisoners taken at Mier in December 1842. Unlike the Santa Fe expedition involving Kendall, however, the men of the Mier expedition consisted of nothing more than an unsanctioned raiding party of Texans bent on plunder along the Rio Grande. After capture, the Mier prisoners were kept at Perote, where an attempted escape in February 1843 led Mexican authorities to execute every tenth prisoner. Mexicans set Stapp free in May 1844, but did not release the last prisoners until September. Stapp not only recounted his story from the vantage point of the prisoners, but also disparaged Mexicans as inferior to Anglo-Saxons. He condemned their culture, especially their politics and religion: "Their religion is of a part with their political darkness." Stapp complained that the Mexicans were a race degraded by superstition and the Spanish legacy of a despotic church. Unlike Kendall and Mayer, Stapp found little positive to say about the Catholic clergy of Mexico, whom he found "insatiable in avarice, and inflexible in the prosecution of their aggrandizements." He complimented the Mexican Revolution for decreasing the influence of the powerful priesthood. But he felt dismay at the fact that the Mexican Church had not been radically altered, in large part because its "past character and benevolences have won for it the hearts of the unenlightened mass."⁴²

All of these authors, especially Kendall, Prescott, and Mayer, helped shape American public opinion of Mexico as a nation comprised of ignorant, inferior people who were subject to a tyrannical military and priesthood. They whetted the American

⁴² William Preston Stapp, *The Prisoners of Perote, Containing a Journal Kept by the Author, Who was Captured at Mier, December 25, 1842, and Released from Perote, May 16, 1844* (Philadelphia: G.B. Zieber and Company, 1845), 118, 131-32, 139-44.

appetite for more works on the still mysterious pseudo-republic to the south. Publishers and authors by 1846 recognized the insatiable public demand for books on Mexico. As Mexico really came to the fore of the American consciousness in 1846, former minister to Mexico Waddy Thompson published *Recollections of Mexico* and Mayer issued a second edition of *Mexico As It Was and As It Is*. Other authors, such as Thomas Jefferson Farnham and former U.S. Consul in California Albert M. Gilliam, released journals of their experiences in Mexico.

Farnham created a systematic study of Mexico in terms of its geography, topography, climate, mineral wealth, inhabitants, and culture. Racial miscegenation, he argued, had created an immoral and inferior race of people in Mexico who were incapable of developing their natural resources and sustaining self-government. Indeed, Farnham proclaimed: "Mexico must eventually be peopled and governed by another race." As for Mexico's religion, he described clerical wealth and influence matter-of-factly with little embellishment. The author contended, however, that because of the Indian superstitions prevalent in Mexican Catholicism, "an American Catholic would scarcely recognize it as his own religion." Overall, the importance of Farnham's *Mexico* lay in its support of Anglo-Saxonist Manifest Destiny and the clinical nature with which his book intricately laid out information about Mexico to prepare for the American advance into the country.⁴³

Like Mayer's diplomatic past, Albert M. Gilliam's former position as U.S. Consul at San Francisco in the early 1840s gave added weight to his memoir, *Travels*. Despite

⁴³ Thomas Jefferson Farnham, *Mexico: Its Geography—Its People—and Its Institutions* (New York: H. Long and Brother, 1846), preface, 5-28, 69-74, 80.

his time in California, Gilliam had never entered a Mexican church (nor even a Catholic church) before his visit to Perote during the writing of his book. He found religion in Mexico to be little more than a business for the priesthood, the vast majority of whom he accused of lewdness and "Priestcraft." Gilliam wondered why the Pope had not purged "the Catholic religion in Mexico of heathen and heretical doctrines and festivities," and derided Mexican rites and beliefs as superstitious, foolish, and full of "pomp and show." He especially belittled Mexican devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe and the Virgin of Remedios. According to Gilliam, only religious and civil liberty could elevate Mexico. As a peremptory attack against charges of anti-Catholicism, Gilliam claimed that it was his duty to write truthfully about Mexican politics and religion. The two were so intertwined that the author called on readers to "uproot and overthrow the whole system, and on its ruined foundation erect a plan of pristine pureness, upon the truth as it is." But due to language and racial differences and the large number of Catholics in Mexico, Gilliam still opposed the American annexation of any Mexican territory other than California and whatever lay north of the Rio Grande.⁴⁴

If the minor positions of Gilliam and Mayer lent popularity to their books, then the more lofty position of Waddy Thompson as the late minister to Mexico catapulted his *Recollections of Mexico* to a status far higher than any of the other volumes on Mexico published in 1846. Indeed, Thompson's book would become the most read and quoted during the U.S.-Mexican War by everyone from soldiers and newspapermen to

⁴⁴ Albert M. Gilliam, *Travels over the Table Lands and Cordilleras of Mexico, During the Years 1843 and 1844* (Philadelphia: John W. Moore, 1846), 68-69, 72, 87-88, 109-11, 250, 280-81, 349, 356-61.

congressmen and preachers. Like nativists had done before in their criticisms of Catholic Mexico, Thompson compared the success of the English colonists in America with that of the Spanish in Mexico. The English colonies had evolved into a republic, whereas Mexico had descended into a military and religious despotism with very little hope of ever being a successful republic.⁴⁵

Among the reasons for Mexico's failure, Thompson cited the inferiority of the population. As evidence for this inferiority, he described his experiences at Mexican "processions, ceremonies, and mummeries." Perhaps, Thompson mused, Mexicans were too ignorant to grasp Protestant teachings and their "degraded" Catholicism was all that their feeble minds could understand. A land of impressive mineral and agricultural wealth was wasted on such a race, according to the author: "It is risking very little to say that if Mexico was inhabited by our race, that the produce of the mines would be at least five times as great as it is now." The former minister to Mexico predicted that the "spirit of acquisition of more territory on the part of our countrymen may well cause a race so inferior in all the elements of power and greatness to tremble. . . ." Yet Thompson did not advocate conquest, in part because he believed that most Mexicans, who "are as ignorant as the cattle which graze their wide plains and *die*," would make the nation's political regeneration difficult at best.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Waddy Thompson, *Recollections of Mexico* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1846), 8-9, 239.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 54-55, 58, 91, 101, 151, 186, 204, 243.

Thompson also described Mexican Catholicism and the extent of clerical wealth in great detail. Of Mexican religion and Roman Catholicism in general, Thompson declared:

I have visited no other Catholic country; but to one educated in the unostentatious purity and simplicity of the Protestant religion, there is something very striking in the pomp and pageantry of the Catholic ritual as it exists in Mexico, and I must say something equally revolting in its disgusting mummeries and impostures, which degrade the Christian religion into an absurd, ridiculous, venal superstition. If such things are not practised in other Catholic countries, why, then the priests of Mexico are alone responsible; but if these things are not confined to Mexico, the sooner and more generally they are exposed the better.

Along with his admitted ignorance of Catholic countries and rites and the accusation that Catholic priests were despots, statements such as this only exacerbated charges of anti-Catholicism against the author. Moreover, Thompson implied with a nativist flair that the United States might someday resemble Mexico, if indeed all Catholics behaved like their coreligionists in Mexico.⁴⁷

Thompson concluded with certainty "that our language and laws are destined to pervade this continent." As to the possible regeneration of the Mexicans themselves into a republican people, he instead foresaw the eventual Anglo-Saxon dominance of the country. "That the Indian race of Mexico must recede before us, is quite as certain as that that [*sic*] is the destiny of our own Indians," predicted Thompson. He did not advocate, however, the military takeover of any portion of Mexico other than California, and then only to stop a potential English advance. But Thompson's anti-Catholic, republican rhetoric of Manifest Destiny left the reader with little doubt that one way or another,

⁴⁷ Ibid., vi, 38-45, 55, 101-15.

Mexico would be colonized eventually by the Protestant Anglo-Saxons of the United States.⁴⁸

Throughout the war, Catholic publications set out systematically to dismantle the arguments of writers like Thompson. By doing so, they hoped to curb the racism, anti-Catholicism, and the plunderous hopes that the books engendered. The *Freeman's Journal* correspondent in Monterey, Mexico observed that "the Mexicans are, in my opinion, far above the standard of character given them by the tribe of tourists who have written of them, for the purpose of making money, by flattering prejudice." Of Thompson, a member of "the tribe of tourists," the writer opined: "I could not but regret that party strife should have placed, in times so difficult, so incompetent a man as Waddy, at the court of Mexico." According to the correspondent, upper class Mexicans and Mexico's "foreign residents" disliked Thompson. Consequently, they shut the diplomat out of "good Mexican society," thereby limiting his encounter with Mexican culture. Thompson thus based his claims on limited experience and bigotry. The *Catholic Telegraph* concurred that the Anglo-Saxonism and religious prejudice of Thompson and others led them to misrepresent Mexican morality, competence, and religious devotion.⁴⁹

In a lengthy review of Thompson's *Recollections* and Gilliam's *Travels*, the *U.S. Catholic Magazine* admitted that Catholicism was not perfect in Mexico. Still, the *Magazine* argued that Mexico had such a "Catholic tone and spirit" that religious bigots

⁴⁸ Ibid., 171, 235-39, 245.

⁴⁹ *Catholic Telegraph*, 28 October 1847; *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*, 24 April 1847.

like Gilliam, Thompson, and Prescott would find much to disparage. Pointing out that Gilliam did not even speak Spanish and had never visited a Catholic Church prior to journeying to Mexico, the reviewers labeled him as too ignorant to criticize Catholic worship. Tellingly, a footnote accompanied the review stating that the article had been written before the outbreak of hostilities, and that it should only be seen as a "vindication of Catholicity." Clearly, the editors wanted their readers in no way to construe the article as a disloyal attack on the war.⁵⁰

The editors of *U.S. Catholic Magazine* blamed Mexico's problems on demagogues who began to prey on the natives after the overthrow of Spanish rule, and accused Protestants in general of looking down on all darker people who were not Anglo-Saxons. The *Magazine* even argued that the Indians of Mexico were still better off than those within the boundaries of the United States. Similarly, the *Catholic Telegraph* found fault with Mexico's expulsion of most Spanish-born officials and clergy and "the evil effects produced by the intermarriage of the various races," for the general "neglect of religion." Of the critics of Mexican Catholicism in the American press, the *Telegraph* noted the irony that "They call us idolaters but no nation paid such cringing service to an idol" like Americans in search of Mexican wealth and gold. The *Telegraph* openly feared that racial and religious prejudice would lead soldiers to desecrate and plunder the wealthy and elaborate Catholic churches in Mexico that authors like Farnham and Thompson described so meticulously.⁵¹

⁵⁰ *U.S. Catholic Magazine* (October 1846), 522-24, 538-43.

⁵¹ *Catholic Telegraph*, 23 July 1846, 28 October 1847; *U.S. Catholic Magazine* (May 1846), 263, 265.

Soon after the war began, some American Catholics offered timid criticism of the Mexican church. The *U.S. Catholic Miscellany* announced a few months after the start of the war: "But thanks be to God, a brighter day has commenced to dawn upon the Mexican Church." That "brighter day" consisted of the Pope's attempts at reorganizing the ecclesiastical structure of the dioceses of Mexico and the introduction of new religious orders into the country. But it also included "the present chastisement of war," a term that was going to be used often by evangelical Protestants in reference to the conflict. Unlike American Protestants, however, the editors of the *Miscellany* declared that Mexico was being punished not because of its idolatry and Catholicism, but for mistreating Spanish prelates, "a truly edifying set of men." Thus, even though they criticized the Catholic Church in Mexico, American Catholics at the same time attacked the argument that Catholicism itself was the major corruptor of the country.⁵²

What tied all of the anti-Catholic rhetoric together, both political and religious, was the ideology of American republicanism. All nativists and anti-Catholics believed that a strong republic guaranteeing civil and religious liberty could only be built upon a Biblical foundation. Along with the sin of idolatry, superstition, and the despotic power of the Pope and his clerical hierarchy, the lack of Protestant Bibles in Catholic countries like Mexico prevented real republican institutions from taking a firm hold. Moreover, as long as priests and bishops took oaths in support of the Pope, they could never be true and patriotic citizens of any nation, including the United States.

⁵² *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*, 18 July 1846.

In 1844 the nativists could point to the troubles in Philadelphia as an example of Catholic lawlessness and anarchy. By 1845 and on into 1846, they could also cite the desire of the Americans in Texas for a permanently-assured independence from Catholic Mexico through annexation by the United States. Many nativists and anti-Catholics saw in Mexico the exact type of unrepublican despotism that they feared Roman Catholicism and its papal-controlled minions would eventually bring to the United States if not stopped. Although many Americans did not accept all of the nativists' claims about Catholics in the United States, they were much more willing to believe similar accusations when made against the non-Anglo-Saxon Mexicans. When war erupted in 1846, Americans were thus already armed with years of anti-Catholic and Anglo-Saxonist rhetoric that had become a significant part of the Manifest Destiny sentiment and could easily be used to support military conquest, the denigration of the enemy, and annexation.

CHAPTER TWO

"On Their Knees to Jesuits": Nativism and the Politics of War

In June 1846, Thomas O. Larkin, the American consul at Monterrey, California, informed Secretary of State James Buchanan that an Irish-Catholic priest had "proposed to President [José Joaquín de] Herrera to establish several thousand Irish in California." Herrera had heartily approved of the plan, according to Larkin, but General Mariano Paredes had objected "saying the Irish would join the Americans immediately . . . he wanted no emigrants whose native language was English." In the United States, rumors of the aborted Irish endeavor merged easily with conspiratorial anti-Catholic fears about Romanist designs on the West. But now, exacerbated by the advent of war with Mexico, the usual American anti-Catholic suspicions included a new reason for panic: a Mexican role in the papal conspiracy to subjugate the American republic.¹

Coming on the heels of ten years of heightened nativist and anti-Catholic rhetoric, the U.S.-Mexican War held obvious religious implications. American politicians, diplomats, and nativists recognized the important role played by the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico. For some this recognition informed their opinion of how best to treat Mexico, but for others it took the form of anti-Catholicism. American diplomats and consuls in Mexico, such as Larkin, often expressed their own religious opinions as they provided the Polk administration with news about the Mexican Catholic hierarchy. For

¹ Thomas O. Larkin to James Buchanan, 18 June 1846, Dispatches from United States Consuls in Mexico, Record Group 59, National Archives.

its part, the administration endeavored to prevent religious overtones from casting a shadow upon a war purportedly fought for territory and indemnity. Nevertheless, nativist Whigs and Native American politicians seized upon Polk's actions and the war itself to further their own causes. In the end, the interplay between anti-Catholicism and the war revealed that reasonable Americans could deal with Catholic Mexico without their actions being colored by religious bigotry. But many nativist Americans often ignored rational political choices in favor of their more emotional anti-Catholic impulses.

Even before the official start of hostilities in May 1846, Polk administration officials and American diplomats and consuls in Mexico discussed the Roman Catholic Church's part in the coming conflict. All agreed that the Church would be crucial to any war or peace negotiations with Mexico. Therefore, President Polk and Secretary Buchanan acted immediately to forestall the war's potential to take on an anti-Catholic, religious character. A coincidental turn of events simplified their efforts, because American Catholic leaders were meeting in Baltimore for their Sixth Provincial Council as news of the war broke in May. At Polk's behest Buchanan invited several bishops to the State Department to discuss the war. Meeting with Bishop John Hughes of New York and Bishop Mathias Loras of Dubuque, Buchanan told them that Polk wished to appoint Catholic chaplains to the army in hopes of "disabusing the minds of the Catholic Priests and people of Mexico" that war would be waged upon their property and religion. Both bishops agreed to assist the Polk administration and proceeded almost immediately to

nearby Georgetown College. Returning that same day, they informed Buchanan that the Society of Jesus had agreed to send a small number of priests to serve as army chaplains.²

On the evening of May 19, Secretary Buchanan introduced Bishop Hughes to President Polk. For over an hour, Hughes and Polk discussed a wide range of topics relating to the Catholic Church and the U.S.-Mexican War. Both men agreed that American priests might alleviate Mexican concerns about the safety of their church property and their freedom to practice Roman Catholicism. At some point during the meeting Polk offered Hughes the position of special envoy to Mexico, which the bishop eventually declined. According to Polk's diary, Hughes "expressed his willingness to visit Mexico himself if the Government desired it," because he and the Archbishop of Mexico City were friends. However, Buchanan and newspaper reports later claimed that the idea of the mission originated with Polk. Whatever the genesis of the proposal, following the meeting Polk and Hughes attended a large party at the presidential mansion and in that way news of their conference quickly spread throughout Washington.³

On the day after his meeting with Hughes, Polk met with Bishop Peter Richard Kenrick of St. Louis in another effort to enlist the aid of the American Catholic hierarchy in "conveying true information in relation to the free toleration of all sects of religion

² Milo Milton Quaife, ed., *The Diary of James K. Polk During his Presidency, 1845-1849* (4 vols., Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company, 1910), 1: 408; James Buchanan to John R. G. Hassard, 8 November 1864, in Thomas F. Meehan, "Archbishop Hughes and Mexico," *Historical Records and Studies* 19 (1929): 33-34. See also Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1938). Billington makes note of these activities, but provides no lengthy analysis.

³ Quaife, ed., *The Diary of Polk*, 1: 409-10; James Buchanan to John R. G. Hassard, 8 November 1864, in Meehan, "Archbishop Hughes and Mexico," 34. Bishop Hughes later would serve the U.S. government as an envoy to England during the Civil War.

under our constitution to the Mexican Priesthood & people.”⁴ Kenrick had just conferred with Secretary of War William Marcy and Senator Thomas Hart Benton regarding the appointment of Catholic chaplains, and he discussed the same topic with the president. Now feeling assured of American Catholic support, Marcy asked Fr. John McElroy and Fr. Anthony Rey to accompany General Zachary Taylor’s army as unofficial chaplains. Both men had been recommended for the job by the American bishops and Georgetown’s Jesuit administrators.⁵

The two-pronged policy aimed at Catholics in Mexico and the United States soon became public knowledge. News of a possible Bishop Hughes mission to Mexico broke in the press before the chaplain story. The *New York Herald* reacted with a vociferous denunciation of the idea that Hughes might serve the United States government in an official capacity. Although not necessarily anti-Catholic, the *Herald* had a disdain for Hughes that could be traced back to the bishop’s earlier efforts to secure state funding for Catholic schools after his failed attempts to stop the use of Protestant Bibles in New York schools. Thus, the *Herald* responded with bitter and hyperbolic language every time Hughes seemed to transcend a purely spiritual role. On May 29 the newspaper accused the bishop and his “friends and worshippers” of attempting to influence Polk so that Hughes could visit Mexico to fulfill his own ulterior motives: “Could the Catholic Church of Mexico be blended with that of the United States . . . the immediate reward would be a Cardinal’s hat. . . . The bishop does not overestimate the union between the

⁴ Quaife, ed., *The Diary of Polk*, 1: 411.

⁵ Ibid., 1: 411; William L. Marcy to John McElroy, 21 May 1846, in Thomas F. Meehan, “Catholics in the War with Mexico,” *Historical Records and Studies* 12 (1918): 61-62.

two churches.” Indeed, the *Herald* claimed that Hughes sought the wealth of the Mexican Church every bit as much as unruly volunteers bent on plunder. The *Herald* also claimed that Polk’s cabinet stopped the Hughes mission, because the prelate was too controversial and they feared a repeat of the 1844 nativist riots in Philadelphia. Nativist newspapers tried to portray the Hughes affair as another example of a “Foreign Party’s” control of the Polk administration and depicted the Baltimore Council as having successfully dictated terms to the president.⁶

The most scandalous claim relating to the appointment of the Catholic chaplains did not surface until June 1847. Then the Rev. William L. McCalla, an already controversial Presbyterian minister from Philadelphia and a prominent player in the anti-Catholic movement, alleged in a public letter to Native American Peter A. Browne of Philadelphia that in October 1846 Polk had told him that Fathers McElroy and Rey were being sent as “spies.” Lewis C. Levin’s nativist *Philadelphia Sun* was the first to print McCalla’s statement, followed closely by Louisville’s *Presbyterian Herald*. But only after publication in the *National Intelligencer* did the accusation attract widespread attention. Other newspapers soon followed with their own renditions of McCalla’s story.⁷

⁶ *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 30 May 1846; *Jonesborough Whig and Independent Journal*, 10 June 1846; *New York Herald*, 29 May, 2 July 1846; *New York Tribune*, 6 June 1846; Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 148-57.

⁷ *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 4 August 1847; *Christian Observer*, 6 August 1847; *Jonesborough Whig and Independent Journal*, 4, 11 August 1847; *Journal of Commerce*, 10 August 1847; *National Intelligencer*, 27 July 1847, 7 August 1847; *New York Herald*, 1, 5 August 1847; *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, 2 August 1847; *Washington Daily Union*, 9 August 1847. Both Browne and McCalla were well known nativist and anti-Catholic leaders in Pennsylvania. In early 1846, McCalla published *Romanism not “A Religion which comes from God”* (Philadelphia: J. Shipley Jones, 1846) and Browne published *Premonitory Letters, upon*

In his diary on July 29, 1847, Polk asserted: "The letter of Mr. McCalla contains a positive and absolute falsehood, to wit, that in conversation I had informed him that I had sent them to the army nominally as chaplains, but really as spies." Secretary of War Marcy, Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft, and Postmaster General Cave Johnson all encouraged Polk to refute McCalla's statement publicly. Yet Polk hesitated, wondering "whether I should descend from my station to notice him at all," especially on a "question of veracity." Polk correctly saw politics behind the accusations, noting that Browne was "a leading Native American" and McCalla was "a Whig & a religious fanatic" bent only on stirring up "a religious controversy." But after discussing matters with Buchanan, Polk decided that if he did engage in a public fray with the minister, he would write "a very positive but short denial of the statement."⁸

The Rev. McCalla's allegation caused a furor among American Catholics and therefore Catholic newspapers called upon President Polk to deny the charges. After numerous drafts, Polk wrote and published a final defense based largely on the account in his own diary. Indeed, in his diary on October 14, 1846, Polk described at length his meeting with McCalla. He called the Philadelphian "a bigoted fanatic without reason." McCalla claimed to have a letter of recommendation from Vice President George Dallas, as well as a petition signed by many Philadelphians against the employment of Jesuit chaplains. McCalla read the letter and the petition to Polk during the interview, but did not offer Polk a copy of either one. Polk described the petition as "a violent & most

the Subject of Romanism and the Pope, Addressed to the People of the United States (Philadelphia: Barrett and Jones, 1846).

⁸ Quaife, ed., *The Diary of Polk*, 3: 103-05.

intolerant attack on the Roman Catholics” that censured the administration for having hired Catholic priests. “I felt great contempt for Mr. McCalla and for his religion and gave him my mind freely,” Polk boasted. Even at the time, Polk suspected that McCalla’s request for a chaplaincy was a pretext for a future public attack.⁹

In early August 1847, the *Washington Daily Union* printed an official rebuttal of McCalla’s allegations, actually written by Polk. In it the president argued that the two priests had been sent to Mexico to minister to Catholic soldiers in General Zachary Taylor’s army and to assure Mexicans that the United States did not come to attack their religion. Polk also claimed that he wrote to defend the dignity of “the Revd. Gentlemen” who were engaged “in the sacred cause of humanity” more than his own honor. He explained that McCalla had asked for an appointment as chaplain to the army in a personal interview in October 1846 and had “brought with him the conclusive proof of his bitter hostility to the Catholic religion, which he had exhibited through years of controversy.” Not receiving a chaplaincy, McCalla had lashed out at Polk for Whig and anti-Catholic reasons. Anyone familiar with “McCalla’s knight errantry against the Catholic Church,” according to Polk, should have known immediately that the minister’s statements were “calculated” and “false.”¹⁰

Following the end of the controversy Bishop Hughes penned a long letter to Polk in which he thanked him for “condescending to notice, and contradict, the vile statement

⁹ Ibid., 2: 187-91; *U.S. Catholic Magazine* (September 1847), 504-05; *United States Catholic Miscellany*, 7 August 1847.

¹⁰ “Notes now Published on the Revd. McCalla’s false Publication about the Catholic Chaplains-1847,” James K. Polk Papers, Library of Congress; *Washington Daily Union*, 6, 7 August 1847.

of the Revd. Mr. McCalla." Hughes insisted that many people were already aware of "this poor man's infirmity" and implied that the minister was notorious for stirring up trouble. Still, noted the bishop, "his position as a recognized clergyman gave weight to his accusation. It produced quite a sensation among our people here. . . ."¹¹

The McCalla incident and the "sensation" it caused died down rather quickly, but controversy involving the Polk administration and Roman Catholic relations did not. The entire affair had been concurrent with another episode that potentially posed a greater threat to Polk's carefully cultivated relationship with American and Mexican Catholics. On May 11, 1847 Thomas Ritchie editorialized in the pages of the *Washington Daily Union*, the organ of the administration:

It is not as a religious body, but as an engine of state that the Catholics of Mexico look upon us with a hostile eye. It is for their own special political purposes—to retain their vast possessions, which impoverish the nation—to sustain their own hierarchy, which lords over the people—to preserve their power, which weighs down the rest of the community into the slough of ignorance and slavery—that they are thus solicitous and active. It is a zeal for the mammon of unrighteousness—not for the welfare of souls—which animates the Catholics of Mexico.

Already surprisingly anti-Catholic language for a Democratic newspaper, especially one with such a well-known and close relationship to Polk, the *Union* essay took its rhetoric a step further:

In this aspect of the case it, [sic] may become a matter of grave consideration, if the church continues to oppose a peace and furnish the fuel of war, whether the immense revenues of the church in Mexico shall be left untouched—whether they shall be suffered to remain at

¹¹ John Hughes to Polk, 10 August 1847, Polk Papers, LC. See Chapter Three for a discussion of the response to the chaplains by anti-Catholic Protestant ministers and voluntary societies.

the disposal of the enemy, and to be applied to sustain the war against us—whether justice and policy do not equally dictate that they should at least be sequestered during the continuance of the war. . . .

Ritchie's article created an immediate firestorm in the press, and extracts from his editorial appeared in newspapers throughout the country. Even though various papers, such as the *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, had supported the idea of forced contributions from Mexico since the beginning of the war, most had set aside church wealth as something that had to be "sacredly protected."¹²

Ritchie expressed astonishment at the public reaction. In a private message to Polk, he complained that the president wanted "to see me again about the article in the Union." Indeed, Ritchie blamed Buchanan for "making it rather worse than it really is . . . I have just read it over—and though there are a few expressions I would like to alter . . . yet I consider the general staple of the article to be good." But as push came to shove, Ritchie soon retracted the article in the pages of his own *Union* on May 18. He claimed that the article had been "hastily penned" and "was published not only without the knowledge of the President or any members of the cabinet, but is . . . opposed to the sentiment of one and all of them." Declaring that church property would always remain "inviolable under all circumstances," Ritchie blamed the "whig press, and its correspondents" for having "grossly perverted and misrepresented" his editorial. However, Catholic newspapers had only to quote directly from the *Union* to stir up

¹² *Washington Daily Union*, 11 May 1847; *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 11, 15 October 1846.

Catholic resentment and outrage, and many did so without the necessity or inspiration of Whig support.¹³

Whig newspapers attacked the Polk administration in spite of Ritchie's protestations. Most viewed the incident as an opportunity to tear away at Catholic allegiance to the Democracy. The *National Intelligencer* called the *Union* editorial a "Manifesto against the RELIGION of Mexico" and a "gross insult" to American Catholics. As for Ritchie's claim that the Polk administration had had nothing to do with the article, the *Intelligencer* pointed to the long delay between the original proposition and the retraction: "The *Union* throws out an idea to the public: if it takes, or escapes condemnation, it stands as semi-official; if it proves odious, the Editor makes himself the scapegoat, and exonerates the President." Like other Whig papers, the *Intelligencer* used the issue to call for an end to the war before it disintegrated further to "rifling the temples of God to aid the work of conquest and slavery."¹⁴

The *New York Evening Express* called upon Irish and German Catholics to end the war through the power of the ballot, alleging that the war was in part a conquest "of the Roman Catholic religion." Moreover, the *Express* claimed that the "Protestant race" of the United States would easily and eventually replace the Mexicans and their religion

¹³ Thomas Ritchie to Polk, ca. 12 May 1847, Polk Papers, LC; *Washington Daily Union*, 18 May 1847; *Catholic Telegraph*, 27 May, 3 June 1847; *U.S. Catholic Magazine* (September 1847), 559; *United States Catholic Miscellany*, 22 May, 12, 19, 26 June 1847.

¹⁴ *National Intelligencer*, 17, 19 May, 5, 9 June 1847. Judging from Ritchie's correspondence with Polk, it is unlikely that the editorial was a mere trial balloon of the administration designed to gauge public support for the possible sequestration of Catholic Church property in Mexico. Polk's diary is strangely silent about the controversy, although in April he had noted that Ritchie "might occasionally make mistakes, but he was always ready to correct them." Sometimes the president even wrote editorials for the *Union* to clean up troubles caused by Ritchie, but he did not do so in this case. Quaife, ed., *The Diary of Polk*, 1:351-53.

anyway, but to do so through warfare would be "unchristian." When Democratic papers chided the usually-nativist *Express* for its suggestions, the Whig paper merely quoted from the *Union* article and tied "the sagacious Government organ" to the Polk administration.¹⁵

Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune* also joined in the criticism of the *Union* and the "sinful rulers" who supported it: "It is to be a war not only of races, but of religion!" Following Ritchie's disclaimer of a relationship between his editorial and the administration, the *Tribune* offered only disbelief: "The proposition of the 'Union' for the appropriation of the church property was put forth with all the gravity and assurance of an official publication." The *Tribune* pointed out that the *Union* claimed to be "the organ of communication between the President and his party," and alleged that the article no doubt had the "formal christening" of Polk.¹⁶

William G. Brownlow, in the pages of his *Jonesborough Whig and Independent Journal*, also refused to believe Ritchie's disclaimer and found the "attempt of the editor to shift the responsibility of the proposition from the President's shoulders to his own" to be laughable. Brownlow called the idea of confiscating Catholic Church property "repugnant," despite having advocated the same thing one year earlier. Even as late as October 1847, the editor of the *Jonesborough Whig* continued to make political hay out of the Ritchie article. Brownlow portrayed the Whig party as a savior that used "all its

¹⁵ *New York Evening Express*, 22 May, 14, 16, 22 June 1847.

¹⁶ *New York Tribune*, 14, 21 May 1847.

power and force" to refute the "nefarious" designs of the Polk administration to steal Mexican Catholic wealth.¹⁷

So strong and incessant was the Whig criticism of the Democracy and the Polk administration as a result of Ritchie's call for the confiscation of Mexican clerical wealth that in July 1847 the *Union* launched an attack of its own against the Whig party based upon charges of anti-Catholicism. A letter writer calling himself "A Roman Catholic" portrayed the Whigs as notorious anti-Catholics who burned the Charlestown convent in 1834, destroyed churches in Philadelphia in 1844, and propagated the "Maria Monk" tale. But "Another Roman Catholic" soon responded in the *Intelligencer* and blamed all such activities on the Native Americans who were, as everyone knew, former Democrats. The crowning evidence in "Another Roman Catholic's" defense of the Whig party against the "false charges" was, of course, the *Union's* "'speculation' about robbing the Mexican churches." This press battle, fought within the context of the *Union's* call to seize the property of the Mexican Church and played out under the shadow of the larger religious questions of the war, demonstrates an increased sensitivity to the issue of anti-Catholicism between the two major parties.¹⁸

In his December 1847 Annual Message to Congress, President Polk planned to lay to rest all questions about his administration's policy toward the Catholic Church in Mexico and its vast wealth. Buchanan, Ritchie, and others helped Polk shape the final version of his message. Buchanan recommended that Polk discuss church property in the

¹⁷ *Jonesborough Whig and Independent Journal*, 9 July, 13 October 1847.

¹⁸ *National Intelligencer*, 2 July 1847; *Washington Daily Union*, 2, 29 June, 1 July 1847.

context of all private property, but Ritchie, as late as three days before the delivery of the message, still remained nervous about his editorial's ramifications. He urged the president to be very precise about the issue of church property "as to exclude the conclusion that you had *changed* your views in regard to the Church." Given to Congress on December 7, part of the Annual Message addressed Mexican fears

... that it was a war against their religion and their churches, which were to be desecrated and overthrown, and that their rights of person and private property would be violated. To remove these false impressions, our commanders in the field were directed scrupulously to respect their religion, their churches, and their church property, which were in no matter violated.

In the end and after much revision, Polk had chosen a mixture of Buchanan's and Ritchie's advice.¹⁹

While Polk directly engaged the Catholic question in his dealings with Hughes and the Jesuit chaplains and used his Annual Message to rebut the confusion over the *Washington Daily Union's* statements, Secretary of State Buchanan was also kept busy. Before the war, diplomats like John Slidell informed Buchanan of Mexico's constant seesaw between republican and monarchical government, all the while noting the extent to which the clergy and the army affected the tenuous balance.²⁰ But consuls and private citizens in the employ of the United States government were often more effective than professional diplomats, because they were in a unique position to experience and remark

¹⁹ James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1907* (11 vols., Washington, D.C.: Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1897-1908), 4: 546; Thomas Ritchie to Polk, ca. 4 December 1847, "Draft of Message 1847," "Rough Notes of paragraphs for President's Message of December 1847," "Mexico, Buchanan's Draft," Polk Papers, LC.

²⁰ John Slidell to James Buchanan, 27 December 1845, 6 February, 2 April 1846, in *House Executive Documents*, 30 Cong., 1 Sess., No. 60, pp. 32-35, 56-58, 78 (Ser. 520).

upon the war and the state of Mexican politics. Unlike Slidell, some consuls were able to stay in Mexico even after the advent of hostilities, making them very valuable indeed.

John Black, the American consul in Mexico City, never expressed anything related to the vehement anti-Catholic sentiment against the Mexican Church as did soldiers and American nativists. But he consistently notified Buchanan of his suspicions and opinions regarding the Mexican hierarchy. In April 1846, Black met with the Archbishop of Mexico City. The two men discussed mutual acquaintances, but the real substance of their meeting turned on the possibility of the establishment of a monarchy in Mexico. Black assured the Archbishop that the United States' opinion would be that it "would have nothing to say in the matter," if Mexico chose a new form of government. But he also reiterated the principles of the Monroe Doctrine and European non-intervention. Writing to Buchanan on April 21, Black warned that the Archbishop "pants for the splendour of the Court—but goes the whole for a Spanish Prince."²¹

Black again advised Buchanan in late May that "the leading dignitaries of the Church" were on the side of Paredes and the Monarchy party, and "her gold can secure the army." Black continued:

The United States will never occupy her just position in this Country until the Federal System is restored the greatest obstacle to this is the army, supported by the Church, but if the army was destroyed the political influence and power of the church, would then be circumscribed, by the power of the people, and the influence they have over the lower clergy.

²¹ John Black to James Buchanan, 21 April 1846, Dispatches from United States Consuls in Mexico, Record Group 59, National Archives.

In early 1847 when the Mexican military threatened to seize clerical wealth to support the army, Black claimed that men within the Mexican government, while unhappy with the moves, all agreed that "this ought to be undertaken with great caution, and to advance step by step." Indeed, "it was evident that the clergy were too rich and had too much influence . . . but this must be got rid of by degrees."²²

At least two American civilians petitioned James Buchanan for the opportunity to serve the United States as confidential agents in Mexico. In July 1846, nativist James R. Creecy begged Buchanan to send him secretly to Tampico, where he believed that he could bring great benefit to the United States. Creecy suggested that he be disguised as a naval officer and claimed that he had a "Spaniard contact" whom he could trust. All Creecy needed was federal money to support his mission. Buchanan never sent Creecy to Mexico, perhaps because of the North Carolinian's nativist political views. In April, Creecy had begun editing the *American Republican and Constitutionalist* in New Orleans. The newspaper espoused the principles of the American Republican Party, a counterpart to the Native American Party. In June, Creecy sent a complimentary copy of the first issue to President Polk, encouraging the president to "appoint none but your own countrymen to office; if you trust *foreigners* you will be *deceived*."²³ With news of the Catholic chaplains and a possible Hughes mission just beginning to appear in the press, Creecy obviously was not someone with whom the administration could work.

²² Black to Buchanan, 23 May 1846, 6 March 1847, *ibid*.

²³ James R. Creecy to Polk, ca. 7 June 1846, Polk Papers, LC; James R. Creecy to James Buchanan, 15 July 1846, James Buchanan Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; *American Republican and Constitutionalist*, 6 April 1846.

Buchanan could work, however, with Moses Y. Beach of New York, businessman and editor of the *New York Sun*. The two men conferred with each other several times in November 1846 and Beach also held a short meeting that month with Polk. Beach was already headed to Mexico City to ascertain the possibility of a Mexican national bank and a canal across the isthmus of Tehuantepec. Trusting in Beach's "patriotism, ability and discretion," Polk and Buchanan decided to appoint him "a confidential agent to Mexico." Beach's mission would be to "smooth the way to peace" in whatever way possible. He was to stay wary of the Mexicans' "wily diplomacy" and inform only Black of his real mission. Black would relay all of Beach's reports and correspondence back to Buchanan via the American navy. Beach's connections included Bishop Hughes, from whom he obtained a letter of introduction.²⁴

In April 1847, Buchanan received an apparently important communiqué from Beach. The secretary quickly met with Polk to discuss Beach's Mexican activities. Although Polk claimed not to remember ever having met with Beach regarding the editor's special mission, the president listened intently as Buchanan explained that Beach might actually be able to reach a treaty with the Mexicans. Polk later noted in his diary

²⁴ James Buchanan to Moses Y. Beach, 21 November 1846, in William R. Manning, ed., *Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States: inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860* (12 vols., Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1932-39): 8: 195-96; Quaife, ed., *The Diary of Polk*, 2: 476; David M. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation: Texas, Oregon, and the Mexican War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973), 477. Except for two letters contained in the Consular Dispatches, I have found no other relevant Beach correspondence in the consular dispatches, diplomatic letters, or James Buchanan Papers. The only germane document I have discovered is an anonymous report apparently in Beach's handwriting from January 9, 1847 regarding Mexican church property (Anonymous, "Occupation of the Church Property," Polk Papers, LC). Isaac McDaniel, in his dissertation, provides a good discussion of the Beach mission based largely on secondary sources, such as a description of the mission written by Beach's son. McDaniel finds Beach's own self-laudatory reports doubtful, as do I. McDaniel, "The Impact of the Mexican War on Anti-Catholicism in the United States" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1991), 143-47.

that in spite of the fact that Beach had no official diplomatic powers, if "it is a good one, I will . . . submit it to the senate for ratification." Polk added humorously that "it will be a good joke if he should assume the authority and take the whole country by surprise and make a treaty."²⁵

But Beach soon returned from Mexico without a treaty.²⁶ After meeting with Polk on May 11, he traveled home to New York City. The next month Beach wrote in glowing terms about his activities in Mexico. Beach claimed that he had established "friendly relations" with Valentin Gomez Farias and other leading Mexican politicians regarding the foundation of a national bank, even as he courted Santa Anna's friends about a Tehuantepec canal. As for the clergy, Beach insisted: "The higher clergy, in common with all the religious orders, were at first disposed to favor the continuation of hostilities as the probable means of destroying the military despotism which is crushing alike the church and the people." Beach claimed that he soon changed the minds of the clergy, including the influential bishops of Puebla, Guadalupe, and Michoachan, by pledging "the good faith of our Government for the protection of the Church and its freedom and property." According to his report, Beach also convinced the clergy to end a treaty with Santa Anna, to rescind liberal offers of financial support, and "to refuse all

²⁵ Quaife, ed., *The Diary of Polk*, 2: 476-77.

²⁶ See Fletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation*, 477. Fletcher calls Beach's diplomacy "more hindrance than help to the United States government."

aid, direct and indirect, in the prosecution of the war; and I am confident that whatever was afterward received from them . . . was yielded only to the pressure of force."²⁷

Beach claimed an even greater influence over Mexican affairs and portrayed himself as almost more critical in Scott's military success than the American troops or the general himself:

When the Government resolved to raise money on the Church property, I urged them to an organized resistance. They consented, and at the moment of General Scott's debarcation [*sic*] at Vera Cruz they made a most important diversion in his favor by raising the standard of civil war at the Capital, at Puebla, and in a degree at Michoachan. This occupied five thousand men and all the arms, munitions of war, and means of the government in the city of Mexico for twenty three days; effectually preventing them from assisting Vera Cruz, or strengthening Puebla.

The authenticity of all of Beach's vaunted claims is questionable. Scott's own extensive attempts at conciliating the Catholic clergy of Mexico no doubt relieved some of their fears, and Black's informative reports about the direction of Mexican military, political, and religious events underlay American success more than the purported actions of Beach and his reports to Buchanan. Extant internal conditions in the relationship between the Mexican military, Mexican politicians, and the Mexican Catholic hierarchy also played an important role in the rebellions, as did the foot-dragging of the Mexican Church in using its wealth for the war effort.²⁸

²⁷ Quaife, ed., *The Diary of Polk*, 3: 22; Beach to Buchanan, 4 June 1847, in Manning, ed., *Diplomatic Correspondence*, 8: 906-07.

²⁸ Ibid., 907. Justin H. Smith takes Beach's claims at face value and portrays the editor as a clever and heroic diplomat. Smith, *The War with Mexico* (2 vols., New York: Macmillan Co., 1919), 2: 11-13, 65, 243, 331-32. But Anna K. Nelson rightfully points out that "The Bishops of Mexico did not need an American publisher to advise them on their best interests." Nelson, "The Secret Diplomacy of James K. Polk during the Mexican War, 1846-1847" (Ph.D. Dissertation, George Washington University, 1972), 166.

While a simple recognition and attempted usage of Catholic ecclesiastical influence in Mexico seemed more prevalent in the Democratic administration and among diplomatic appointees than outright anti-Catholicism, the situation in Congress and the partisan press was far different. Six members of the Native American Party from New York and Philadelphia served in the Twenty-ninth Congress between 1845 and 1847, joined by numerous Whigs guided in part by nativist principles. Along with their parties' newspapers, Native American and Whig Congressmen used anti-Catholic themes in their war rhetoric. They especially emphasized the racial and religious differences between Americans and Mexicans. Moreover, even Democratic Congressmen and editors who unabashedly supported the war engaged in anti-Catholic rhetoric to bolster their positions. In any event, the Native Americans and both major parties proved that nativist sentiment could be molded to support a variety of positions.

The Democratic *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, for example, argued that the Spanish Catholic nature of Mexico would only produce problems in the future, if it were not conquered and annexed quickly. The *Ledger* devoted a lot of ink to refuting the view that the United States could never absorb such a different people. The *Washington Daily Union* also supported the war through the racial and religious denigration of Mexicans, arguing that Americans needed "to conquer a reluctant peace from that infatuated, priest-ridden and army-ridden people." The usually-independent, but solidly expansionist, *New*

York Herald supported the Democratic position and agreed that the best "prescription for civil and religious liberty" was a mixture of the Bible and the bayonet.²⁹

The *U.S. Magazine and Democratic Review* had a different opinion about annexation's benefits to Mexicans and Americans. A political combination of the two races was not feasible: "The very virtues of the Anglo-Saxon race make their political union with the degraded Mexican-Spanish impossible." The only choice was to "amalgamate" the races through the work of "missionaries of republicanism." Mexicans had forced war upon the United States. Yet the benefit to Mexico had been huge, because Americans had brought to "a down-trodden race the blessings of civil and religious liberty," where formerly the Spanish-dominated "church establishment" had been the greatest obstacle to peace, prosperity, and happiness.³⁰

Unlike their party newspapers, Democratic legislators in Congress in 1846 and early 1847 mostly avoided discussion of race and instead pointed to Mexican outrages in Texas and the abuse of American merchants. They argued that Mexico owed the United States a large indemnity and blamed Mexican arrogance and political incompetence, not President Polk, for starting the war. Democrats did, however, acknowledge the important role played by Mexico's Catholic faith in the conflict. But when the Catholic question did enter into their speeches, it always did so in a way that reassured Mexican and American Catholics that the war was not

²⁹ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, 20 August, 4 September 1846; *Washington Daily Union*, 13 April 1847; *New York Herald*, 13 September 1847.

³⁰ *U.S. Magazine and Democratic Review* (February 1847), 100 (April 1847), 296-99 (August 1847), 93-101.

against the oppressed people of Mexico, nor their priesthood, nor their religion. Show them that you will respect their temples, treat their images with deference, and, however much you may differ from them their religious opinions, teach them that they will be entitled to freedom of thought, and the most perfect liberty.³¹

Democrats in the House and the Senate would wait until 1848 and the "All Mexico" debate to infuse their pro-war rhetoric with racially-tinged language that at times would make use of anti-Catholic sentiment.

The exception to this rule was Charles J. Ingersoll of Pennsylvania, Democratic representative from Philadelphia and a constant competitor of the city's Native American congressmen. During the Texas debate, Ingersoll had tried to convince his colleagues that annexation would never lead to war, because Mexicans and Anglo-Saxons could never mix; moreover, natural desert boundaries between the two countries would always prevent such an occurrence. With the war between the United States and Mexico now in full swing, Whigs happily and frequently threw Ingersoll's words back at him. To defend himself and the U.S.-Mexican War, Ingersoll eloquently appealed to Manifest Destiny and Americans' providential mission in North America. He compared Mexicans to Indians and asked: "Do we not always civilize, humanize, and reclaim vanquished savages?" If even Pope Pius IX could propagate "liberal institutions," then how could the United States be censured for "giving free institutions to ignorant, barbarous, and degraded people?"³²

³¹ *Congressional Globe*, 29 Cong., 2 Sess., 459.

³² *Congressional Globe*, 29 Cong., 2 Sess., *Appendix*, 130. Ingersoll referred to Pius IX's attempts at liberal reforms in Rome, which were the topic of much discussion in American newspapers beginning in 1846. Many Americans did not believe that the Pope was a serious reformer, while others called for public support of Pius IX's efforts as a means of encouraging republican values in both the Catholic Church and

Whig opinion of the U.S.-Mexican War and Manifest Destiny, as expressed in their party papers, vacillated now and then but evolved relatively little throughout the war. Generally opposed to westward expansion for fear that their northeastern political power would be further diminished, Whigs resorted to arguments they believed could easily make their case. They laced their arguments with racist and anti-Catholic language. In June 1846 the *National Intelligencer* asked:

Do we expect we can melt into our population eight millions of men at war with us by race, by language, by religion, manners, and laws?
Do we hope we can make citizens of the seven millions of Indians that are bigoted, ignorant, idle, lawless, slavish, and yet free?

Four months later the *Intelligencer* again stressed the religious differences between the United States and Mexico in opposition to annexation of any kind. The *Intelligencer* and other Whig papers implied that Mexico would have to become Protestant in order to be truly American, pointing out that Mexico's state religion had caused that nation's problems in the first place by depriving it of the "energetic Anglo-Saxon." Yet, such a religious change had always proven an historical impossibility, because Spanish Catholic countries rarely submitted to conquest. Therefore, the *Intelligencer* concluded, annexation of even the smallest swath of Mexico was neither reasonable nor feasible.³³

Early in the war, the *National Intelligencer* disclaimed any possibility that the United States was "hostile to the Catholic religion, and that this war is waged in part

Europe. For examples of both opinions, see *Catholic Telegraph*, 9, 16 December 1847; *New York Herald*, 10 November 1847; *New York Tribune*, 30 November, 2 December 1847; *U.S. Magazine and Democratic Review* (April 1848), 301-08; *Proceedings of a Public Meeting of the Citizens and County of Philadelphia, Held January 6, 1848, to Express their Cordial Approval of the Liberal Policy of Pope Pius IX* (Philadelphia: Joseph Severns and Co., 1848), 3-24, passim.

³³ *National Intelligencer*, 12 June, 31 October 1846; *Nashville Whig*, 21 May 1846.

against the religion professed by the Mexicans.” To prove this, they cited the appointment of the two Catholic chaplains to the army. But by October 1846, the Whig paper realized the possible political benefits to be gained from criticizing the administration along religious lines. The *Intelligencer* argued that Taylor’s pledges to Mexico that their religion and churches would be protected “are about to be broken by the same authority by which they were made.” The army was deep in Mexico and short on funds and supplies. How else could the American army pay for its provisions and necessities while in Mexico, the *Intelligencer* ominously asked?³⁴

As American military victories mounted in 1847, the *National Intelligencer* continued to oppose the absorption of Mexico, because it feared that the “ignorant, bigoted, superstitious” “mixed race” of Mexicans would be unable to function as citizens in an Anglo-Saxon republic. Manifest Destiny, according to the *Intelligencer*, was a meaningless term designed by Democrats and meant to obscure the needlessness of the war. Even though permanent occupation might introduce the Bible to Mexico and rescue “seven millions of people from extinction by sowing among them the seeds of a true Christian faith,” the Whig paper had no conviction that a republican endeavor comprised of two different peoples could ever succeed. Stated succinctly, “even if annexation were good for Mexico, it would bad *for us*.”³⁵

Like their leading newspaper, Whig Party representatives in Congress used republican concerns and racist language to oppose the war. For example, Meredith P.

³⁴ *National Intelligencer*, 27 July, 5 October 1846.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 30 June, 17, 18 October 1847.

Gentry of Tennessee claimed that the war was unconstitutional and threatened the very idea of republicanism and liberty. Indeed, Polk had usurped "this free republic" by engaging in the war. William L. Yancey of Alabama agreed. Although he believed in American Manifest Destiny and supported the spread of republicanism, Yancey argued that expansion should never be accomplished "by the sword." Milton Brown of Tennessee also attacked the war in the name of republicanism. He doubted that Mexicans even had the capacity for self-government. Polk had goaded Mexico into war and united it by threatening its homes and religion. Even if Mexicans could support American republican institutions, they had to do so by their own choice without the threat of force. As a group, these Whigs maintained that the regeneration of a religiously and racially inferior population like that of Mexico was impossible. Moreover, any attempt to do such a thing would inevitably harm the very republican values with which the war's supporters claimed they wanted to inculcate Mexico.³⁶

In June 1846, Representative Alexander Stephens of Georgia called for a peace agreement to be made as soon as possible. Like Brown, Stephens feared the results of "unnecessary violence" perpetrated by American soldiers. He warned that any "outrage upon the religion of Mexico" or "desecration of temples" would harm efforts to end the war quickly. The Georgian advocated the spread of republican institutions "from ocean

³⁶ Meredith P. Gentry, *Speech of Mr. M. P. Gentry, of Tenn., upon the resolution to refer so much of the President's Message as Relates to the Mexican War* . . . (no publication data, ca. 1847), 2-5, 13-16; Milton Brown, *Speech of Mr. Milton Brown of Tennessee on the Causes and Origin of the Mexican War* (Washington, D.C.: J. and G. S. Gideon, 1847), 7, 10-12; *Congressional Globe*, 29 Cong., 1 Sess., Appendix, 956.

to ocean," but agreed with Gentry and Yancey that Americans should not complete that task "by the sword."³⁷

Northern Whigs were largely in agreement with their Southern brethren. In the House, Luther Severance of Maine called the war a "work of butchery." He predicted that the war would be very long and protested that there was nothing worth taking in Mexico. All of the mines were in poor shape or were owned by Englishmen, according to Severance. Furthermore, volunteers bent on plundering Mexican churches were in for a surprise when they arrived in the country: "The churches will be stripped of their silver before any sacrilegious Anglo-Saxon robber can reach them." Mexico stood to gain far more than the United States, if it were annexed. Besides, Americans should allow the growing, indigenous republican movement in Mexico sufficient time to work. If the United States forced republican institutions on Mexico, it would "bring republicanism into disrepute and bring monarchy to our very doors on the South."³⁸

By early 1847 when it appeared that the annexation of Mexican territory was to some degree imminent, Whigs in Congress stepped up their talk of racial and religious differences with Mexico. For example, James Pollock of Pennsylvania called the acquisition of Mexican lands and people an "evil" and "valueless" indemnity, because any conquered regions were "semi-barbarous and inhospitable." Furthermore, the lands of Mexico already under American control were inhabited by "a population as degraded as superstition and ignorance can make them." Plus, the provinces of Mexico contained

³⁷ *Congressional Globe*, 29 Cong., 1 Sess., *Appendix*, 949-50.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 683, 687.

people "of every possible shade and variety of color and complexion." According to Pollock, such people were not worth the expense of "the blood and treasure" that it would take to control them. If Americans really favored "the extenstion [sic] of our civil and religious priveleges [sic] . . . the pure principles of republican institutions," they could effect their aims more successfully through sheer example than they could through compulsion.³⁹

The war was quite popular in Ohio, but not among its Whig Congressmen and Senators. In the House, for example, Daniel R. Tilden of Ohio objected to the war and defended himself and the Whigs against charges that they were just like the Federalists who had opposed the War of 1812. Tilden claimed that he would have supported the War of 1812, because, unlike the war with Mexico, it had been based on solid principles. Luther Giddings, also a Whig representative, similarly criticized American clergy in general for providing support for the "physical and moral death, now rolling over Mexico" in the name of the extension of Anglo-Saxon civilization.⁴⁰

Thomas Corwin, one of the Whig senators from Ohio, opposed the war even more strongly than Tilden and Giddings. Corwin called Mexicans a "half savage, half civilized race" of fanatics who would never part with their territory. Mexico might be blind, but by attempting to conquer the "sister Republic" Americans had certainly opened Mexican eyes: "Your chaplains of the navy throw aside the new Testament and seize a bill of rights." The spread of republican institutions in such a way was an embarrassment,

³⁹ Ibid., 29 Cong., 2 Sess., *Appendix*, 132-33.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 29 Cong., 1 Sess., *Appendix*, 763; Luther Giddings, *Speech of Mr. Giddings, of Ohio, upon . . . The Mexican War* (Washington, D.C.: J. and G. S. Gideon, 1846), 12.

according to Corwin. When news of Corwin's fiery speech reached the Ohio volunteers in Mexico, in "a unanimous movement of both regiments" they burned the senator in effigy.⁴¹

On the floor of the House, the six Native American representatives in 1846 and 1847 used their relatively limited time to focus mainly on naturalization, protective tariffs, and maritime issues local to Philadelphia and New York City. William W. Campbell of New York and Lewis C. Levin of Philadelphia played the most prominent roles in their party. They left their opinions of the war and much of their strongest anti-Catholic rhetoric relating to the conflict to their party organs, like the *Philadelphia Daily Sun*. Their reaction to the conflict with Mexico was similar to their response to Texas annexation and the Oregon debate. Levin had opposed Texas statehood in 1845, but always favored any annexation of Canada, because that combination "exists in nature" and was thus part of the United States' "manifest destiny." According to Campbell, Anglo-Saxons in Europe and America had a common destiny "to colonize and Christianize the world." Indeed, based on this belief all of the Native Americans had supported the American right to the Oregon territory up to the 49th parallel but no farther. They had opposed war, however, and unsuccessfully sought legislation to ensure that all army officers sent to the territory be native-born Americans. In addition, they claimed that only native Americans should have full citizenship rights during wartime. The

⁴¹ Thomas Corwin, "Speech of Mr. Corwin of Ohio, on the Mexican War," in *Speeches on the War with Mexico, 1846-8* (no publication date, ca. 1848), 8, 18-19; *Washington Daily Union*, 12 August 1847.

nativists suspected that Irish-Americans favored war with England as a means of aiding Daniel O'Connell's Repeal movement in Ireland.⁴²

Native American congressmen transferred their nativist line of thinking on the Oregon question to the debate over the U.S.-Mexican War. In May 1846, Campbell spoke in favor of raising the salary of volunteers. Complaining about the presence of foreign Catholics in the army, he maintained that a well-paid army would attract trustworthy native Americans. That, in turn, would help avoid future desertions and treachery by foreign-born soldiers, since the army would be comprised "of our own citizens."⁴³

In a speech on naturalization laws in early 1847 Levin similarly connected the signature Native American issue of immigration with the war. Levin warned "that a storm was gathering over our land" and that it was comprised of European immigrants and their "bigoted superstition." To prove his claim that Irish immigrants were undeserving of citizenship, Levin cited the rumors of Irish desertions from the army. When another congressman interrupted Levin to point out that the "majority of the deserters were Americans," the always flamboyant Levin quipped that at least when Americans deserted, they did not join the ranks of the enemy.⁴⁴

Lewis C. Levin edited the *Philadelphia Daily Sun*, the Native American organ in Philadelphia and the leading Native American newspaper in the nation. The opinions of

⁴² *Congressional Globe*, 29 Cong., 1 Sess., 261, 623-4; *Congressional Globe*, 29 Cong., 1 Sess., Appendix, 96-97, 605, 608, 619, 621, 671.

⁴³ *Congressional Globe*, 29 Cong., 1 Sess., 813.

⁴⁴ *Congressional Globe*, 29 Cong., 2 Sess., Appendix, 387.

the Native American Party as expressed through the *Daily Sun* during the war revealed something very important about the often misunderstood party. The Native Americans were far more than just politically-oriented, overly nativist Whigs in disguise. Indeed, the high level of religious anti-Catholicism in their party quickly became apparent as they expressed their opinions about the war, the other two political parties, President Polk, Mexico, and annexation.⁴⁵

Levin and his *Daily Sun* attacked Polk at the beginning of the war upon hearing rumors of the Catholic chaplains and the purported mission to Mexico by Bishop Hughes. The *Daily Sun* noted the two priests and asked what was to stop the appointment of Jesuits in other parts of the government? As for Bishop Hughes:

⁴⁵ Many historians emphasize politics or ethnicity to the detriment of a religious interpretation in their studies of the nativist political parties of the 1840s. Ira M. Leonard stresses local New York issues and unhappiness with factionalism in the Whig and Democratic parties for the brief success of the American Republican Party. Leonard, "The Rise and Fall of the American Republican Party in New York City, 1843-1845," *New York Historical Society Quarterly* 50 (1966): 151-92. Leonard Tabachnik portrays the Native Americans as prominent, almost progressive reformers bent on rooting out political and civic corruption. Tabachnik, "Origins of the Know-Nothing Party: A Study of the American Party in Philadelphia, 1844-1852" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1973), 1, 150-54, 175. Dale T. Knobel interprets the nativist hatred of the Irish in ethnic terms, whereas David Grimsted de-emphasizes ethnicity and goes the furthest of the political interpreters, arguing for a new emphasis on what he sees as the political origin of the Philadelphia Native Americans. Knobel, *Paddy and the Republic: Ethnicity and Nationality in Antebellum America* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1986), xi, 83, 130-31, 160-68; Grimsted, *American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 219. I have found Lawrence J. McCaffrey's monograph, *The Irish Catholic Diaspora in America*, and Judith Amanda Hunter's impressive "Before Pluralism," to be the most consistent with my own research on the Native American Party during the time period of the U.S.-Mexican War. McCaffrey criticizes Knobel for underestimating the importance of religion in the nativists' disdain for Irish immigrants and stresses anti-Catholicism as the "core of nativism from the 1830s through the 1850s." McCaffrey, *The Irish Catholic Diaspora in America* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 92. Hunter argues that Native Americans in Philadelphia were far more than just "homeless" Whigs. She acknowledges the importance of religious bigotry by stressing that anti-Catholicism was part of a larger, unique political culture among Philadelphia nativists. As for the Native American support of the war, Hunter and I agree that religious opinions overrode the political liabilities of supporting westward expansion and a Democratic war. Hunter, "Before Pluralism: The Political Culture of Nativism in Antebellum Philadelphia" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1991), 10, 32, 44, 51, 104-09, 178-80. Clearly, religious anti-Catholicism and a prideful/patriotic belief in Manifest Destiny account for a large part of the Native Americans' rabidly pro-war and pro-annexation stance, considering the party's usual desire to exclude foreigners and especially Catholics from America.

Are the free people of this great Republic to be placed at the mercy of a Church, whose entire history is stained with the blood of persecution and butchery and intolerance, because a certain Bishop of that Church can influence a certain number of Catholic voters for any party who may choose to purchase them?

The *Daily Sun* challenged President Polk to say whether or not he had sought Hughes, or the Bishop had sought him. In either case, Polk had committed “an outrage” and “proved a traitor to his own party” merely for considering the possibility of employing the same Catholic bishop under “the glorious flag that he gave orders to his Irish myrmidons at Kensington to trample under the feet and tear into fragments.” With this common nativist accusation that Irish Catholics had desecrated the flag during the deadly Philadelphia riots of 1844, the *Sun* revealed its misconception that Hughes was the leader of all American Catholics, even those outside of New York. Thus, nativists dredged up the two-year-old unrest in Southwark and Kensington and combined it with their disdain for Hughes in order to criticize Polk’s war policy.⁴⁶

The *Daily Sun* combined the Hughes issue and the possibility of Mexican annexation in an effort to support Levin’s and the other Native American congressmen’s call for the alteration of American naturalization and voting laws. The paper cited the very possibility of a “Romish bishop” working as an American diplomat as more than enough proof that Americans needed to change their naturalization laws to limit foreign Catholic influence as soon as possible. Indeed, the “atrocious abuses” of the Democratic Polk administration proved to America that

... the potato rot is a far greater *political* curse to this country, than it

⁴⁶ *Philadelphia Daily Sun*, 3, 9 June, 18, 22 July 1846.

has proved a physical scourge to the old world. If we look towards Mexico, we are menaced by the accession of *eight millions of foreigners*, not only entirely ignorant of our institutions, but ignorant of everything, uncultivated in mind, brutal in manners, steeped in the worst of all superstitions, and slaves to the tyranny of monks, and the exactions of a church. . . .

Although the *Daily Sun* early on supported the annexation of "All Mexico," it criticized Democrats for doing the same thing in an effort to create a larger foreign vote.⁴⁷

As for "Mr. Polk's Romish Priests," the *Daily Sun* chided the president for a decision that was sure to "plunge himself into such unredeemable ruin." Because the American people "are fundamentally Protestant," the *Daily Sun* called for a mass protest meeting by Protestants against the administration. "If the President can *recognize* the Romish religion, he can *establish* it," the paper warned. Levin used a July 4 Temperance celebration in Georgetown as the demonstration called for by his paper. Before a large crowd gathered in the Odd Fellows Hall, Levin spoke of the threat that "Romish minions" posed to the Bible and civil and religious liberty in America. The use of the chaplains and Hughes, according to the *Daily Sun's* editor, were a crucial part of that threat.⁴⁸

Even as Levin took the opportunity of the Independence Day holiday to rail against the "Romish minions," his paper in Philadelphia printed a lengthy editorial detailing the overall Native American position on the U.S.-Mexican War. The *Daily Sun* described Mexico as an unhappy nation "who only want to drink at a pure fountain in order to become pious and exemplary Christians." But they were caught between an

⁴⁷ Ibid., 18 July, 16 September 1846, 10 February 1847.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 7, 22 July 1846.

abusive, rapacious clergy and a despotic military. "Mexico is a Popish military hierarchy—ruling a population steeped in ignorance, besotted with superstition, and bereft of all energy and resolution of character." Intelligent Mexicans, the Native American organ claimed, looked to the United States with a mixture of hope and envy. Regardless of the positive or negative aspects of the aggrandizement of territory, the spread of civil and religious liberty was a worthy cause that all patriotic Americans should support:

On general principles, Americans are bound to the diffusion of our own system of government over every enslaved people. In poor, degraded Mexico, even the first elements of civilization are wanting—and these are, respect for property, and the right to worship God according to their own conscience. To extend our free system into such a country would be the brightest stretch of mercy. Benevolence alone would dictate the kind office.

Mexicans either had to be exterminated or civilized, because of their proximity to the United States. The *Daily Sun* preferred civilization, yet because of their religion Mexicans were unable to accomplish the feat by themselves: "How could Mexico ever expect to develop here vast resources, under a Church system of bigoted Popery?"⁴⁹

The long editorial in the *Daily Sun* showed that the Native Americans were much more than just pure political nativists or displaced Whigs. Unlike nativist Whigs, the vehement nativists who made their home in the Native American Party were more moved by anti-Catholicism and their concern for Protestant-American supremacy than they were by political considerations and anti-Democratic sentiment. The Democrats were power hungry, and the Whigs were factionalized. Only the Native Americans, according to the

⁴⁹ Ibid., 4 July 1846.

Daily Sun, were truly patriotic in all things without the encumbrance of political considerations. The Native Americans supported the enlargement of "the area of freedom" precisely because such an extension of superior American institutions would eventually dissolve the "connexion between church and state" that prevailed in Mexico. Moreover, the *Daily Sun* labeled as traitors any Americans who called for peace; the responsibility for peace lay with Mexico, not the United States. To stop the war short of complete conquest would not sufficiently transform Mexico.⁵⁰

When President Polk requested three million dollars from Congress in early 1847 to help barter a peace, the *Daily Sun* again mixed its anti-Catholic and pro-war sentiment with anti-Polk rhetoric. The Tennessean had already proven himself "unscrupulous" in garnering the Catholic vote for his election and in appointing Jesuits, so he surely could not be trusted with such a huge sum of money. Furthermore, the Catholic clergy were the real rulers of Mexico, "so that in fact Mr. Polk and Congress lay taxes on the American people, in order to fill the pockets of the priests of Mexico. . . ." Purchasing a peace from Mexico would also establish a bad precedent:

. . . it will be fraught with the most direful consequences in the event of a future rupture with that perfidious republic—when the Church, acting from the experience of the past, will submit to more extensive extortions to support her armies, in waging hostilities against us . . . so that we shall, in fact, *pay* Mexico, for waging war against us, and become a mere *tributary* to her monks, priests, and cock-fighters. Mr. Polk and the twenty-ninth Congress must feel all the pride of glorification that can result from being patrons of the church and cockpit of our illustrious sister Republic.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 30 June, 6 July 1846. The *Daily Sun* had opposed war with England over the Oregon territory, while still claiming to have been patriotic in that instance, too. The difference, according to the newspaper, was that unlike Mexicans, the English were "a nation with whom we boast a community of feeling, language, sympathies and religion—connected by a common descent. . . ." Ibid., 17 July 1846.

Lastly, the *Daily Sun* called the buying of peace unseemly and recommended that Americans dictate a peace, once they stood in the Halls of the Montezumas.⁵¹

Along with newspapers, public addresses, and congressional speeches, the Native American Party also spread its word through the use of broadsides. One particular incident among the soldiery in Mexico provided the Native Americans with much rhetorical ammunition in the summer of 1847. In Jalapa, Mexico an American officer, in his efforts to follow orders to respect the Mexicans' religion conspicuously, had commanded his soldiers to kneel as a Catholic procession passed in the streets. The Native American Party of Kentucky worked the story into their congressional candidate's campaign. Stating that "the integrity and perpetuity of our free Institutions are in imminent peril," the broadside cited the Jalapa incident as proof:

... these scenes, we say, will be reenacted in the streets of this Union, and we shall witness men high in authority, doing homage to Roman Catholicism, by bearing the holy candle in procession through *our* streets; and free born American citizens as well as soldiers, compelled to bend the knee and doff the hat, as the consecrated wafer—that remnant of superstition—is borne by. This, fellow citizens, will be our fate, unless while the power is yet with us, we use it to avert the threatened danger.

Along with their newspapers, Native American broadsides such as this one left no doubt that their party could not only support the U.S.-Mexican War for anti-Catholic reasons, but also they could make good use of incidents like Polk's appointment of Catholic chaplains and the Jalapa episode to further their anti-Catholic political agenda.⁵²

⁵¹ Ibid., 14 August 1846, 26 February, 17 March 1847.

⁵² "An Address to the Native Americans of Fayette Congressional District," 1847, broadside, Filson Club Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

One way in which the Native Americans tried to use the war for their own purposes was in the presidential nomination fight at their national convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in May 1847. The party needed a candidate in 1848 who could broaden the base of their party. Many, including Levin with the backing of his *Daily Sun*, pushed hard for Zachary Taylor's candidacy, calling the general a true and patriotic American. Other Native Americans sought out Henry Clay, Charles Stewart, and Ogden Edwards. Convention delegates wrote to all four men inquiring about their views on immigration and other important nativist issues. All four men responded politely but declined the nomination. Taylor, who was encamped at Monterey in July 1847, wrote that as a general he did not feel "at liberty to express my frank opinion." He also claimed he could never support any particular party. Despite Taylor's negative response the Native Americans, hoping to latch onto his growing popularity, nominated him anyway.⁵³

Anti-Catholic rhetoric relating to the war also dominated nativist newspapers that were not official organs of the Native American Party. Unlike the *Daily Sun*, the *New York Journal of Commerce*, as the leading nativist paper in New York City, opposed the war in early to mid-1846. The *Journal* filled its pages with condemnations of the Jesuit chaplains, concerns about Bishop Hughes' power and Jesuit control of the Polk administration, accusations of treason against American Catholics, and derogatory descriptions of Mexicans based upon their race and religion. "Priest-ridden, with no Bible to guide her," Mexico was "more entitled to our pity than our vengeance." But,

⁵³ *National Intelligencer*, 11 August, 16, 17 September 1847; *New York Herald*, 10, 11 September 1847; *Philadelphia Daily Sun*, 24 February, 15 May 1847; *Washington Daily Union*, 11 September 1847.

while the war was bad in many respects, the *Journal* admitted in June 1846: "The only consolation for us in this matter is, that with the spread of *our* race is secured the spread of liberty, civilization and Christianity."⁵⁴

Even as the *Journal of Commerce* continued to oppose the war in late 1846, it offered further conflicting signals rooted in its anti-Catholic ideology. For example, the *Journal* blamed "the Romish Church, with her exclusiveness" for being "the grand barrier in the way of Mexican improvement." If the war could free Mexico from "bondage" to the Catholic Church, the editor of the *Journal* maintained that Mexico eventually could be elevated in every way. In the words of the editor:

If this unhappy war in which our country is now engaged with Mexico, shall open the door for *religious toleration*, if it shall emancipate the enslaved minds of the Mexicans, and dispose them to give unrestrained circulation to the Sacred Scriptures, and to permit the Protestant Religion to stand upon an equality with its present exclusive and exacting faith; order will soon arise from her confusion . . . ; We have already expressed our desire that Congress . . . will hasten this war to a close. But if this cannot be, our hope is, that it may result in some triumph for Liberty of Conscience, and a pure Protestant Christianity.

These statements of the *Journal of Commerce* handily demonstrate that the emotional religious bigotry that colored nativist opinion and anti-war sentiment overpowered the more reasonable political necessity of opposing expansion and Mexican annexation. This religious intolerance also diluted the normal anti-foreign rhetoric, in large part because a Catholic country was now at the receiving end of American military action.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ *New York Journal of Commerce*, 15, 19, 27, 30 May, 3, 5, 10, 20 June, 17 July 1846.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 5, 15 August 1846.

In 1847 the *Journal* continued to oppose the war while hoping that any peace would help the United States establish civil and religious liberty "in that land of superstition and anarchy." Race and "Anglo-Saxon *blood*" were not the primary differences between Mexico and the United States in the eyes of the *Journal of Commerce*. Rather, "the Bible has made us to differ," and the countries are distinctive because "one nation is full of Christians, the other is full of Catholics." As long as Mexico remained "3/4 Indians, bigoted, superstitious, semi-barbaric, wretched" and Catholic, annexation would be out of the question.⁵⁶

Nativist literature published during the war also demonstrated the uses to which the war with Catholic Mexico could be put. In *Party Spirit and Popery*, the anonymous author writing under the title "American Citizen" expressed concern that the Protestant United States was filling up with ignorant, papist immigrants. Both parties were beasts being ridden by popery, and by extension, Rome. Politicians of both parties strained themselves to please the foreign papist hordes in order to secure the Catholic vote, so much so that Polk had appointed priests to the United States army. Meanwhile, Whigs and Democrats reviled Native Americans as bigots and fanatics for merely defending their country. The writer complained that Protestants paid too much attention to politics, and not enough to religion, while Catholics gave all of their strength to religion and used politics to advance it.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ibid., 7 April, 5, 15 May, 2, 30 June 1847.

⁵⁷ American Citizen, *Party Spirit and Popery: or, the Beast and his Rider* (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1847), 126.

As evidence to support the accusation that Catholics sought to extend their power over the military and government, *Party Spirit and Popery* cited the church celebrations that followed the news of General Taylor's victories in Mexico:

... all the Protestant churches ... were closed and silent: the Romish cathedrals and churches were brilliantly illuminated ... Native Protestants refusing to join in senseless rejoicing, although for victories over a Romish enemy; Romanists themselves hypocritically professing to aid a triumph which they did not feel, and chanting Te Deums for the slaughter of their own brethren in the faith.

The author doubted the sincerity of the Catholics' "profane burlesque" and refused to believe that "foreign priests" could rejoice for American victories. He instead suspected the darker and more sinister motive of cultivating pro-Catholic opinion among voters.⁵⁸

The author of *Party Spirit and Popery* complained also that the national press fawned all over every move of Irish volunteer companies in Mexico. Moreover, Whigs and Democrats were both "on their knees to Jesuits" and willing accomplices to the Pope, because their policies forced Protestant soldiers to attend Catholic festivities in order to please Catholic voters. Protestant troops had to "march in the procession of the idol host" or stand guard at Mexican churches "while the priest recites the mummary of the Mass." Like the Native American broadside from Fayette County, Kentucky, *Party Spirit and Popery* predicted that the Jalapa incident and others were just prophetic signs of the impending doom to come: "If our military resources may be used to assist in popish

⁵⁸ Ibid., i - iv.

mummeries now, why may they not be employed in shooting down all who refuse to conform to the foreign ecclesiastical will?"⁵⁹

The U.S.-Mexican War was fraught with religious connotations from the very beginning. Americans immediately questioned the patriotism or sought the support of American Catholics as a means of heading off these religious implications. Moreover, people of all political stripes especially acknowledged the powerful role that the Mexican Catholic hierarchy and the religion of the Mexican people could play in the war. Their reactions differed, but what all politicians and parties had in common was that they tried to use the war and address the Catholic question in a manner that furthered their own political, religious, and nationalist interests. For their part, President Polk and Secretary Buchanan crafted policies that looked toward ensuring progress in the war effort, while at the same time preserving Catholic support for the Democratic Party. Whigs combined their belief in America's superior republican institutions with anti-Catholic and racist themes. The result was a coherent anti-war stance on the part of the Whig Party. Most Democrats supported the war in 1846 and 1847, but did so by appealing to patriotism and national honor in the face of Mexican intransigence and arrogance.

Caught in the middle, the Native American Party vociferously championed the war even as it criticized the Polk administration for appeasing American Catholics and their leader, Bishop John Hughes. The activities and rhetoric of the Native American Party during the war, best seen in its newspapers, amply demonstrated the extent to which the party rested upon the religious appeal of anti-Catholicism. That appeal also revealed

⁵⁹ Ibid., 118-22.

the deep relationship between evangelical Protestantism and nativist politics. In the end, the U.S.-Mexican War proved a boon to nativists who found in the conflict, and in the Anglo-Saxonist, Manifest Destiny rhetoric that accompanied it, a means of advancing their politico-religious cause.

CHAPTER THREE

Errand into a New Wilderness: Protestant Evangelicals and the Advantages of War

On May 20, 1846, in Claiborne, Alabama, William F. McRee had an idea for a solution to the war. A Protestant preacher and longtime correspondent of James K. Polk, McRee proposed to the president that the war be decided "by single combat." "Let two chaplains be selected by each Gov.," suggested McRee. Both men would face off on horseback at one hundred yards, using whatever weapons they wished. The Alabaman had in mind someone in particular to represent the United States: "Choose me on the part of our Nation, & trusting in the God of our Fathers I would bring that Papal priest to his mother earth." Barring Polk's approval of this surefire plan, McRee asked for an appointment as chaplain to the U.S. army. Alas for McRee, Polk heeded neither of his suggestions.¹

McRee was not the only American preacher to see the war immediately as a religious conflict, although he may well have been the most creative. Like other Americans, evangelical Protestant ministers, newspaper editors, and members of voluntary societies expressed their views about the causes, justice, and probable results of the war. They all believed to some degree that the Manifest Destiny of the United States clearly included the spread of Protestantism, along with American territorial expansion. Wrapping their opinions in republican language, these men viewed the war as an opportunity to improve and evangelize Catholic Mexico. Even those who protested the

¹ William F. McRee to Polk, 20 May 1846, James K. Polk Papers, Library of Congress.

war's legitimacy, such as many northeasterners and abolitionists, reluctantly searched for some good in an evil war. The subject of the war also steadily worked its way into the literature of the anti-Catholic movement as writers mined the conflict for fresh examples that demonstrated the dangers and errors of Roman Catholicism.

Most Protestant denominations consciously chose not to comment extensively on the war. For example, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South offered no statement when its ministers met for the first time as a body just as the war was getting under way. As for Methodist conferences in the North, they not only supported the war officially, but considered Mexican territory to be under their jurisdiction before the land had even been annexed. Perhaps they did so in expectation of missionary competition with their recently-separated Southern brethren.²

Official Presbyterian opinion was divided, and not just along Old School and New School lines. Sectional differences were also important. Old School Presbyterians cautiously condemned the war at their General Assembly in 1847. Yet the Rev. J. W. Miller of the Brazos Presbytery in Texas argued before the Board of Domestic Missions that "Now is the time to strike." Both Texas and the "millions of Mexico" were waiting for someone "to counteract . . . Popery" and "infidelity," according to Miller. The clergyman begged for help from the Board and it approved Miller's suggestions. Presbyterian colporteurs and missionaries left for Texas even as their Board of Foreign Missions prayed for peace and commented in 1847 that "it is not her [the Presbyterian

² Clayton Sumner Ellsworth, "The American Churches and the Mexican War," *American Historical Review* 45 (1940): 303-04.

Church's] province to subvert monarchies and institute republics." At their general assemblies and in regional presbyteries in the North, New School Presbyterians lamented the war as evil. However, like with their Old School counterparts, their adherents and newspaper editors did not necessarily agree.³

The Presbyterian Synod of Mississippi spoke more forcefully than its coreligionists. Toward the end of the war in 1848 it independently approved the following resolution:

In view of the present relations of our Government with Mexico, and of the door that by the Providence of God is now opened for missionary efforts, by means of Colporteurs, Tract and Bible distribution, and for the preaching of the Gospel in the valley of the Rio Grande and in many of the ports and cities of Mexico: Resolved, That this Synod do . . . take into especial consideration the propriety of embracing in their field of operations such parts of Mexico as may be occupied by the American armies.

The Mississippians thus took the stand that however new lands were opened to the Gospel, proper Christian zeal required that missionaries be sent immediately. Noteworthy also was that the resolution's language carefully related the occupation of Mexico to the Providence of God, rather than to the success of worldly arms.⁴

Southern Baptists, both in the pulpit and in the pew, were much more united in their support of the war than Presbyterians. At its first meeting ever, in June 1846, the Southern Baptist Convention's Committee on Foreign Missions officially praised the war as the first step toward giving Mexico a pure gospel and saving it "from the withering

³ Ibid., 312-13; *New York Observer*, 5 June 1847; *Southern Presbyterian Review* (September 1847), 103, 105.

⁴ *Daily American Star*, 25 January 1848.

reign of the Man of Sin.”⁵ Northern Baptists took no official position on the war in their official newspaper organ and did not meet as a body between 1846 and 1848.⁶

A major form of political and community expression in the antebellum period was the voluntary society, and Protestant organizations oftentimes better reflected evangelical opinion than did the more measured official denominational statements. The American Home Missionary Society (AHMS) was one of the largest and most active Protestant missionary societies during the 1840s. Twenty years old at the onset of the war, its mostly northeastern membership of over 4500 men and women included prominent ministers like Lyman Beecher and Horace Bushnell, as well as politicians such as Henry Clay and Theodore Frelinghuysen. The AHMS also had semi-autonomous, subsidiaries in major cities like New York and Philadelphia. Although the vast majority of the society’s supporters were Congregationalists and Presbyterians, Lutherans and the German Reformed Church used the AHMS as their main vehicle for missionary work. The overriding motive of the AHMS was to save the West from Catholicism, thereby preserving the territory for Anglo-Saxons, republican institutions, and Protestantism. The general anti-Catholic feeling of the 1830s and 1840s propagated by men like Lyman Beecher and Samuel F. B. Morse catapulted the AHMS into the forefront of Protestant missionary organizations in the United States. In *The Home Missionary* and on the lecture circuit, the AHMS expertly used to their advantage native American fears of a

⁵ Quoted in Ellsworth, “The American Churches,” 306.

⁶ Ibid., 311.

Jesuit conspiracy to conquer the West and subdue republicanism and Protestantism in North America.⁷

When a military conflict replaced the spiritual battle for souls in the West in 1846, the AHMS faced a moral dilemma. Many of its members were northeastern anti-slavery advocates and a successful war against Mexico clearly would lead to the expansion of slavery. As ministers they also feared rampant intemperance and Sabbath desecration among young soldiers so far from their homes. Some clergymen opposed warfare of any kind on the grounds that the New Testament forbade killing. However, despite all of these negatives, any new territory would also attract American citizens. The members and leaders of the AHMS thus argued that the injustice of the war could not change the fact that any Mexican cession would soon be peopled by American Anglo-Saxons in danger of frontier barbarism and encroaching Romanism, both of which could only be avoided through Protestant teaching and churches. Indeed, the AHMS had used the fear of Romanism for so long as a driving motive behind its western enterprises that its missionaries quickly prepared to head into the newly conquered territories even as they denounced the war as evil and barbarous. The Rev. George B. Cheever of New York expressed this pragmatic sentiment clearly when he declared that the AHMS should hurry with its missionary work, "beginning it before the minions of Rome shall come back

⁷ Ray Allen Billington, "Anti-Catholic Propaganda and the Home Missionary Movement, 1800-1860," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 22 (1935-36), 361-372, 381; American Home Missionary Society (AHMS), *Twenty-First Annual Report* (New York: William Osborn, 1847), 4-6, 114-42; AHMS, *Fourteenth Annual Report* (New York: William Osborn, 1840), 86. See Chapter One of this dissertation for details on the theories of Morse and Beecher.

again, to re-occupy, under the shelter of our flag, the positions from which they were driven by Mexican oppression.”⁸

Most Protestant clergymen affiliated with the AHMS carefully avoided facing head-on the contentious theological claim of finding good in a war that was evil. Instead, they portrayed themselves as merely fulfilling their obligation to evangelize their countrymen regardless of how or why the United States gained new territory. The Rev. William Bement of East Hampton, Massachusetts argued in one of his sermons on the war that religion existed for the very purpose of abolishing war. He went on to decry American outrages against Mexican civilians. Yet he acknowledged that “God in His wisdom often brings good out of the wickedness of men.” If the U.S.-Mexican War gave Mexicans “rational freedom and Scriptural religion” and if reports of American troops participating in Masses and processions increased anti-Catholic feeling in the United States, then Bement admitted that “good effects” could result incidentally from “an unrighteous war.” Thus, at the same time he attacked the war and the notion that good effects could indeed arise from evil causes, Bement nevertheless implied to his listeners (and, more importantly, to his readers) that the war would nevertheless produce the good fruits of republicanism and Protestant Christianity in Mexico.⁹

⁸ Horace Bushnell, *Barbarism the First Danger: A Discourse on Home Missions* (New York: American Home Missionary Society, 1847), 20-27; *The Home Missionary* (February 1849), 237. Evangelicals like Cheever believed in a variant of what Norman Graebner identifies in *Empire on the Pacific* as the real motive behind Manifest Destiny: Pacific ports that could enable Americans to reach markets in Asia; see Norman Graebner, *Empire on the Pacific: A Study in American Continental Expansion* (New York: Ronald Press, 1955). Cheever argued in the above sermon that Americans could now spread the Gospel to the Sandwich Islands and east Asia, because of the annexation of California and its valuable ports.

⁹ William Bement, *The Mexican War and War in General, Considered in Two Sermons, Preached at East-Hampton, October 17, 1847* (Northampton: John Metcalf, 1847), 7, 13-14

As a vice president of the AHMS, Dr. Absalom Peters of Williamstown, Massachusetts ominously warned in the autumn of 1846 that even as American borders expanded to the detriment of Catholic Mexico, "the stealthy movements of the man of sin, with his foreign patronage and allegiance, are strengthening the power of Rome." Even though the United States military seemed poised to reduce Catholic power in the very territory that the society had deemed the major battleground between Protestantism and Catholicism, Peters could not relinquish twenty years of AHMS anti-Catholic rhetoric regarding the West. Moreover, rather than declare an outright victory Peters announced that Romanists now endangered the American republic more than ever before.¹⁰

Another Protestant evangelical society that played a vital role in the anti-Catholic movement and missionary work of the 1840s was the American Tract Society (ATS). The ATS originated in 1825, when several tract societies from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and other cities merged. The ATS stressed Sabbath observance and Sunday school attendance, but by 1842 its workers concentrated mainly on the "millions of bigoted Romanists" who had emigrated to American territory west of the Appalachian Mountains. The ATS tended to work in tandem with other organizations, including the AHMS, and believed that the best way to spread a pure gospel in Catholic countries or among rural Americans and immigrant Catholics was through the distribution of tracts and Bibles by colporteurs.¹¹ The ATS paid particular attention to Texas, because of "the

¹⁰ *The Home Missionary* (October 1846), 137-38.

¹¹ According to the American Tract Society (ATS), the colportage system originated in France. A colporteur was the bearer of religious books mainly to the unchurched, but also to Catholics, and the term

great influence its inhabitants must exert upon Catholic Mexico.” With the onset of the U.S.-Mexican War, the ATS thus wasted no time in finding colporteurs to serve American soldiers and Mexicans.¹²

ATS colporteurs first targeted New Orleans, the major port of departure for American troops on their way to Mexico. The Rev. F. Y. Vail, the ATS agent in New Orleans, distributed religious books to volunteer companies. Following a sermon by Vail “on the power of the press in perpetuating our free institutions,” prominent citizens, including the Whig mayor of New Orleans, A. D. Crossman, Governor Isaac Johnson, and a number of state legislators and army officers, raised the necessary funds of almost \$1000. Vail and other ATS workers also convinced soldiers and chaplains to serve as colporteurs in Mexico. Vail clearly expressed to the colporteurs that they would be tending to the souls of more than just American soldiers: “When religious freedom is secured in Mexico, we can propose to carry our Spanish works into the heart of that country.”¹³

By the time American troops occupied Vera Cruz in March 1847, the ATS employed Ann Chase, wife of the United States consul at Tampico. In June 1846, Chase had been abandoned by her husband, Franklin, who had fled “in order to save my valuable store of goods, and Household effects.” Filling in as consul until Franklin’s

was first used to refer to American missionaries in 1841. Edwin S. Gaustad, ed., *The American Tract Society Documents, 1824-1925* (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 12, 23-24, 50-58.

¹² Secretary of the American Tract Society, A, *Home Evangelization: A View of the Wants and Prospects of Our Country* (New York: American Tract Society, 1849), 9, 69; Gaustad, ed., *The American Tract Society Documents*, 13-18, 98-108; *Christian Advocate and Journal*, 22 July 1846.

¹³ *Boston Recorder*, 18 June 1846; *New York Evangelist*, 18 June 1846, 6 August 1846; *New York Journal of Commerce*, 12 June 1846; *New York Observer*, 20 June 1846; *New York Tribune*, 16 June 1846.

return in January 1847, Ann apparently divided her time among evangelizing, informing Secretary Buchanan of Mexican political and military activities, and avoiding robberies. Protestant newspapers heralded her after she reputedly pulled down the Mexican flag at Tampico and raised the Stars and Stripes as the American navy approached in November 1846. Chase claimed that she could distribute as many tracts as the society could send to her. She pointedly asked for tracts in the Spanish language and alleged that the local bishop approved of her activities. She objected to the "gambling, Sabbath-breaking priesthood" of Mexico and concentrated much of her work on handing out tracts that explained proper Sabbath observance. In this way, she wanted to circumvent the Mexican clergy and "diffuse evangelical religion among the benighted people."¹⁴

Stories about Chase inspired ATS members around the United States; and therefore in June 1847 the ATS put out an "Appeal for Mexico" in northeastern newspapers requesting donations and colporteurs. They received both. The Rev. William F. McRee, finally getting his chance to meet Mexicans face-to-face, was among the missionaries who traveled to Mexico. Supported by Baptists and Presbyterians, he worked in Tampico and Vera Cruz as a colporteur throughout most of 1848. With regard to funding, one anonymous \$500 donor addressed the sensitive issue of the justice and morality of the conflict in a letter to the ATS published by the *New York Observer*:

But whatever views of the war may be taken by a Christian . . .
there is no reason why he should not take a larger view of events
which God has permitted, and ask in a moral view, as a christian

¹⁴ Franklin Chase to James Buchanan, 18 June 1846, 31 January 1847, Ann Chase to James Buchanan, 9 September (two separate letters), 8 November 1846, Dispatches from the United States Consuls in Mexico, Record Group 59, National Archives; *Boston Recorder*, 16 December 1847; *Presbyterian*, 25 December 1847; *Washington Daily Union*, 24 December 1847.

soldier, there is not another kind of war to be waged in Mexico. . . . We may regenerate, disenthral, bless Mexico. Never was there a more opportune moment for doing good to a whole nation. . . . We can give them the Bible; we can give them our Tracts and Sunday Schools; we can teach them the economy of our Christian, and through them, our civil institutions.

The writer's argument illustrates two key points about the ATS' purpose and guiding philosophy. First, by citing the mysterious workings of Providence the ATS skirted around the troublesome accusation that the war was evil and incapable of producing good results. Protestant missionary work in Catholic Mexico thus depended not on how the country was opened to a pure gospel, but only that it was indeed opened up. Second, supporters of the ATS saw a dynamic relationship between their spiritual mission and the republican, civil institutions of the United States. They were joined in this opinion by most other American anti-Catholic groups and individuals.¹⁵

The American Tract Society's colporteurs in Mexico also passed out Spanish Bibles given to them by Bible societies in the United States. Bible societies, such as the American Bible Society (ABS), the American and Foreign Bible Society (AFBS), and similar or affiliate organizations in major cities, all participated in evangelical work comparable to that of the AHMS and the ATS. They believed that only Protestant Bibles could provide nations with enduring foundations of civil and religious liberty. In cities around the United States these groups gave New Testaments and Bibles to American soldiers headed to Mexico.¹⁶

¹⁵ *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer*, 5 July 1848; *New York Observer*, 3 July 1847; *Presbyterian*, 26 February, 13 May 1848.

¹⁶ *Annual Report of the American Bible Society* (New York: American Bible Society, 1847), 56-57; *Annual Report of the American Bible Society* (New York: American Bible Society, 1849), 101, 104;

At their annual meeting in Boston in May 1846 the AFBS called for "*the whole Bible translated*" to defeat the Jesuit and Papist advance in North America. The next month, as the conflict with Mexico widened, the AFBS solicited money to fund the distribution of Spanish Bibles in Mexico and Texas. Their method involved the use of newspaper articles that negatively portrayed Holy Week activities in Mexico, combined with a call to give "the unadulterated, *unconcealed*, truth of God to all nations."¹⁷

Other Bible societies initially moved more slowly than the AFBS in sending Bibles to Mexico and Texas. Headed by no less a personality than the 1844 Whig vice-presidential candidate, Theodore Frelinghuysen, the ABS had supported auxiliary societies in Texas since the 1830s. Yet they had never ventured into the rest of Mexico. The war, however, offered to them an unprecedented opportunity to expand their field of operations. Not only did the ABS wish to save souls with its activities, but also it held firmly to the belief that the Bible "is the only basis upon which republican institutions can safely rest." Thus, it strove to bless Mexico with pure religion and republicanism at the same time.¹⁸

[Luther Giddings], *Sketches of the Campaign in Northern Mexico* (New York: George P. Putnam and Co., 1853), 21; Albert Lombard, *The "High Private," with a Full and Exciting History of the New York Volunteers* (New York: Printed for the Publisher, 1848), 45-46; Daniel Runyon to Asa R. Runyon, 9 October 1847, Runyon Family Papers, Filson Club Historical Society, Louisville; John Scott, *Encarnation, or the Prisoners in Mexico* (Louisville: G.H. Monsarrat and Co., 1848), 73; *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer*, 25 June 1846; *Catholic Telegraph*, 23 September 1847; *Christian Reflector*, 27 May 1847; *Jonesborough Whig and Independent Journal*, 10 November 1847; *Lincoln Journal*, 9 July 1846; *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 9 September 1846; *Presbyterian*, 26 February, 20 May 1848; *Washington Daily Union*, 16 April 1847.

¹⁷ *Christian Reflector*, 25 June 1846; *Christian Watchman*, 22 May 1846.

¹⁸ *Annual Report of the American Bible Society* (1847), 120-23, 146; *New York Evangelist*, 18 May 1848.

In March 1847 an army chaplain distributed fifty Spanish "gospels" for the ABS in Monterey. That same month the secretary of the ABS-affiliated Texas Bible Society, James Burke, called upon Bostonians to obtain for Mexicans "the gospel printed in their own language." That May the Rev. John C. Smith, a Presbyterian pastor from Washington, D.C. and leader of the Washington City Bible Society, submitted the following resolution to the ABS:

Resolved, That in the present state of Mexico, there is an opening for the circulation of the Scriptures, and that in the view of this Society, it is expedient and proper to supply every family in Mexico with a copy of the Bible, as published by the Society, with the least possible delay, and that we do now pledge ourselves to commence this work at the earliest moment.

Smith wanted American soldiers to protect anyone willing to distribute Bibles in Mexico. The ABS did not pass the Rev. Smith's proposal, because it feared the danger posed to American missionaries by the Mexican people and their priests. Nevertheless, by the middle of 1847 the ABS had already sent a number of Spanish Bibles to California, nearly 1,000 to Mexico, and over 2,000 to Texas.¹⁹

The ABS greeted the year 1848 with much excitement, proclaiming in New York at their annual anniversary: "The door is opening in Mexico for the distribution of the Bible there." In February 1848, the ABS appointed the Rev. W. H. Norris as its agent in Mexico. A Methodist Episcopal minister and a former missionary to South America, Norris was to ascertain "what can be done by the Society for the circulation of the Spanish Bible in that country." But with the war's end the ABS soon recalled Norris in

¹⁹ *Boston Recorder*, 11, 18 March 1847; *Christian Advocate and Journal*, 26 May 1847; *New York Journal of Commerce*, 29 May 1847; *Presbyterian*, 10 July 1847.

late 1848. Even so, he proudly claimed that while in Mexico he had distributed Bibles in such a way "that they will not be subject to the order of wicked priests, but will be preserved and read." Indeed, the only leftover Bibles in Norris' possession were those printed in English and meant for American troops. He wanted the books to be transported to the frontier regiments in order to inspire pious officers then to obtain and distribute Spanish Bibles. By 1849, however, the ABS grew increasingly interested in the evangelization of Asia and the Pacific, and turned its attention from Mexico and toward California and its valuable ports.²⁰

The American Protestant Society (APS), another inter-denominational voluntary organization like the ABS, also addressed war issues between 1846 and 1848. The APS' self-proclaimed mission was to prove to the world that the United States was "the cradle of civil and religious liberty for the human race." Contingent upon that endeavor was the prosyletization of Catholic immigrants, because "Popery is the unchanging enemy to freedom of opinion and thought." Romanism and Protestantism could not coexist in the same country, due to the fact that the two religions were as opposite as "light and darkness." The APS believed that the battle against Romanists should be ecumenical, peaceful, and concentrated within the United States only, particularly in the trans-Appalachian West. In their magazine, the *American Protestant*, the APS published news of its activities, horror stories of immorality and life in Catholic countries (including Mexico), and reports of the movements of the "Mystery of Iniquity, Mother of

²⁰ *Annual Report of the American Bible Society* (1849), 68-69, 98-100, 103; *Boston Recorder*, 25 February 1848; *New York Evangelist*, 18 May 1848; *Presbyterian*, 12 February, 20 May 1848.

Abominations, and Man of Sin" in America. Among the society's guiding members and supporters were Lyman and Edward Beecher, George B. Cheever, Henry P. Tappan, John Dowling, and Samuel Burchard.²¹

The APS remarked little on the rising Manifest Destiny sentiment in early 1846, other than to state that the destiny of the country had to be one of civil and religious liberty that avoided the "poison" of Rome. When the United States and Mexico commenced hostilities in April 1846, the APS initially was silent on the war's religious implications. But by July, when knowledge became widespread that President Polk had appointed two Jesuit chaplains to accompany General Zachary Taylor's army in northeastern Mexico, the APS protested on the grounds that the priests could unduly influence American Catholic soldiers among an enemy who were "all of the same bigoted persuasion, as these chaplains. We would not trust them." By late 1846, the APS warned that Polk was "more Catholic than Guizot," and that, along with Bishop John Hughes of New York, was using the war with Mexico to increase the number of Roman Catholics within the boundaries of the United States. This would increase Hughes' power as a religious leader and add to the political strength of the Democracy at the same time. For proof of this conspiracy, the APS pointed to Polk's appointment of the chaplains and offered a new brand of horror stories based upon the priests' behavior in Mexico.²²

²¹ *The American Protestant* (June 1845), 1-5 (July 1845), 40 (August 1845), 98-105 (November 1845), 164, 171-74 (December 1845), 206, 222 (March 1846), 289 (April 1846), 323 (May 1846), 23; *Circular: To Christians and Citizens of the United States* (New York: American Protestant Society, 1847), 16.

²² *The American Protestant* (July 1846), 44-60 (November 1846), 164-83 (December 1846), 215-16. Due to the lack of a law allowing field chaplains, Polk could not officially appoint the Jesuits. The two priests simply accompanied the army in an unofficial capacity. See Chapter Four for a full account of the Catholic chaplains.

The APS commented on the war from time to time throughout 1847. In its magazine it continued to accuse Catholic soldiers and the Jesuit chaplains of subversion. Although the APS claimed to be an apolitical organization, it persisted in criticism of Polk as too pro-Catholic, due to the army's conspicuous efforts to respect Mexico's religion and churches. It also censured General Winfield Scott for participating in a Catholic liturgy at Vera Cruz. The APS argued that such incidents were

an ostensible surrender of the great principles of freemen, and awarding homage virtually to the potentate of the Vatican, by a magnificent Papal triumph in accommodation to the idolatrous sentiments of a vanquished Papal nation!

The APS implored Protestant evangelicals throughout the United States to speak out against the war, regardless of the political consequences, because the war was Catholicizing the United States from the army and federal government on down.²³

The American Peace Society, of course, officially condemned the U.S.-Mexican War as wicked and in opposition "to our republican institutions, to our religion." The Peace Society had implored Polk to avoid war with Great Britain over Oregon, because of racial, linguistic, and religious links between the two nations, as well as a common Anglo-Saxon evangelical mission to spread the gospel to the rest of the world. Yet some members of the society found difficulty in offering equally fervent opposition to a war with Mexico. At the American Peace Society anniversary gathering in May 1847 the Rev. Edward N. Kirk "took two views of the war now existing, its evils on the one hand, and the design of God on the other." One of the most prominent anti-Catholic, Protestant

²³ Ibid. (March 1847), 318-19 (April 1847), 63 (August 1847), 80-81 (November 1847), 177-79 (December 1847), 204-06, 221-22.

evangelicals of the 1840s, Kirk argued that God would bless the next generation of Catholic Mexicans with a pure gospel through the war commenced by the United States. Kirk maintained that this fact did not justify the war, but only proved that God overruled the actions of humanity. Still, Kirk's anti-Catholicism clearly colored his opinion of the war and shocked the more passionate peace supporters present in the audience.²⁴

Protestant evangelical ministers and preachers other than Kirk, regardless of their denominational and societal affiliations, also offered their personal opinions of the war in their sermons between 1846 and 1848. Some gave the war only cursory treatment out of fear that others would accuse them of political meddling. Yet others devoted entire homilies to the causes, execution, and probable results of the war with Mexico. In many cases, as a natural outgrowth of their ongoing struggle against papal inroads in North America, they dealt also with the conflict's relationship to the anti-Catholic movement. Few preachers published overtly and unapologetically pro-war sermons, but the vast majority of published sermons came from the New England area where anti-war sentiment was strongest.²⁵

The Rev. John N. Maffit occupied the extreme pro-war position. A Methodist Episcopal minister, Maffit hailed from New York but had lived in Tennessee and Kentucky at various times in his life. In the summer and fall of 1847, the Rev. Maffit went on a speaking tour of a number of cities, including New York, Cincinnati, and

²⁴ George C. Beckwith, et al. to Polk, 19 February 1846, Polk Papers, LC; *Christian Reflector*, 27 May 1847.

²⁵ Northeastern anti-war preachers were dutiful in the publication of their sermons. In contrast, most of the evidence for pro-war sermons exists only in bits and pieces in newspapers, remarks by soldiers in their journals, and disparaging references to such homilies in the sermons of others.

Philadelphia. He preached primarily about the U.S.-Mexican War and argued "that the conquest of that country is part of the design of Providence for reforming the religion and morals of that country." Indeed, Maffit not only unapologetically supported the war effort but also the conquest and entire subjugation of Mexico in the name of evangelization.²⁶

On the other end of the spectrum from preachers like Maffit, anti-war sentiment often overshadowed anti-Catholicism. Congregational minister George Putnam told his Roxbury, Connecticut congregation that any soldier willing to fight under the slogan "Our country, right or wrong" was either a liar or a victim of his own self-delusion. New Hampshire pastor Andrew Peabody blamed the war on American arrogance. On the annual fast day in April 1847, Peabody admitted that the Mexicans were enemies, but quoted Scripture to his congregation about the need to feed, clothe, and love one's enemies.²⁷

The prominent Unitarian preacher, the Rev. Theodore Parker, also vehemently opposed the war. Parker saw the U.S.-Mexican War as little more than a thinly-veiled attempt to extend slavery. Parker argued in numerous sermons that the Mexicans were wretched and inferior compared to the advanced Anglo-Saxons of the United States. He even predicted that the Anglo-Saxon race and its Protestant Christianity inevitably would

²⁶ Rev. John N. Maffit and *His Late Unfortunate Marriage* (New York: J. Carner, 1849), 32; *National Intelligencer*, 11 September 1847; *Philadelphia North American and U.S. Gazette*, 27 August 1847; *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, 8 November 1847.

²⁷ Andrew Peabody, *The Triumphs of War: A Sermon Preached on the Day of the Annual Fast, April 15, 1847* (Portsmouth: John W. Foster, 1847), 5-6; George Putnam, *God and Our Country: A Discourse Delivered at the First Congregational Church in Roxbury . . .* (Boston: William Crosby and H. P. Nichols, 1847), 6, 15-20.

control the whole continent of North America. But he could not approve of warfare as a means of civilizing and Christianizing any group of people, especially if it rested on such an evil foundation as that of the extension of the slave power. For Parker, then, Americans would have to fulfill their Manifest Destiny through peaceful means.²⁸

One of the more popular preachers on the anti-Catholic circuit in the 1840s was Rufus W. Clark. In 1846 and 1847, Clark penned two separate series of newspaper articles on the war and "Popery and the United States." Still, he opposed the war, primarily because he believed that it would extend the evil institution of slavery. Clark wanted to send men to Mexico "armed with bibles, and tracts, and the rich treasures of Christianity," not with "instruments of death." Pastor Richard Tolman of Third Congregational Church in Danvers, Connecticut similarly lamented the death and destruction meted out by the American army in Mexico: "Acknowledge Jesus as your Captain, and under him go forth and conquer, not in cruel mockery, but in deed and truth." In May 1848, the American Peace Society invited the Rev. Orville Dewey of New York to address its twentieth anniversary celebration. Like Tolman and Clark, Dewey argued that the vast amount of money spent on the war could have been better used to evangelize Mexico in a peaceful manner.²⁹

²⁸ Theodore Parker, *A Sermon of War, Preached at the Melodeon, on Sunday, June 7, 1846* (Boston: I. R. Butts, 1846), 26; Theodore Parker, *A Sermon on the Mexican War, Preached at the Melodeon, on Sunday, June 25th, 1848* (Boston: Coolidge and Wiley, 1848), 52-54; Theodore Parker, *Speeches, Addresses, and Occasional Sermons* (2 vols., Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1861), 2: 114.

²⁹ Rufus W. Clark, *War with Mexico: A Sermon Preached in the North Church, Portsmouth, N.H., Sept. 7, 1845* (Portsmouth: C.W. Brewster, 1845), 16; Richard Tolman, *Evil Tendencies of the Present Crisis: A Discourse, Delivered July 4, 1847* (Danvers: Courier Office, 1847), 15-16; *Boston Recorder*, 30 June 1846, 2, 9, 30 December 1847; Orville Dewey, *An Address Delivered before the American Peace Society, Boston, May, 1848* (Boston: American Peace Society, 1848), 15-16.

Most Protestant evangelicals who were also anti-Catholic occupied a middle ground between the complete anti-war stance of Parker and the fiery rhetoric of John N. Maffit. At the same time their coreligionists complained about the lives and money wasted on a war with a country that needed a pure gospel more than it needed to be crushed militarily, these Protestant evangelicals grudgingly acknowledged the opportunity for evangelism that American conquest of Mexico offered. The Rev. Edward N. Kirk's speech before an assembly of the American Peace Society in May 1847 was one example of the belief that "God was going to bless the next generation of Mexicans through the wickedness of the American nation." In a Thanksgiving sermon in 1847, Burdett Hart claimed that he did not believe in Manifest Destiny, nor did he think that the inevitable triumph of the Anglo-Saxon race had to be rushed by force of arms. The Fair Haven, Connecticut pastor, who also served as a lifetime director of the AHMS, blamed slavery for causing the war. Yet he admitted that the war "may benefit the world – I believe it will result in good to Mexico. But that is because God overrules the affairs of nations, and because He causes the wrath of man to praise him."³⁰

Hart and Kirk were not alone in their conviction that the war, while unwanted and evil, might in the end benefit Mexico through that nation's Protestantization. In a sermon before his congregation in April 1847, Pastor Thomas N. Lord, a lifetime AHMS supporter, called the U.S.-Mexican War an unrighteous conflict caused by slavery. Yet as he closed his remarks, Lord posed this question: "But will no good result from this

³⁰ Burdett Hart, *Better Things than War: A Discourse Delivered at the Congregational Church in Fair Haven, on the Annual Thanksgiving of 1847* (New Haven: Peck and Stafford, 1847), 5-8; *Christian Reflector*, 27 May 1847.

war?" He answered affirmatively by posing a complex theological argument in which he did not shrink from his blame of the slave power for the sinful war:

God does bring good out of evil. . . . He over-rules the wickedness of men, so as to promote his own glory, and the general good. Perhaps the present war will prove, in the event, the source of blessing to coming generations. It may be the way by which God means to disenthroned the man of sin where he is now keeping his palace, and disenthral a people from their spiritual bondage. . . . So, if this war results in good to Mexico, no thanks to American slavery, no lessening of her guilt.

The Rev. John Leyburn, a Presbyterian pastor from Virginia, echoed Lord's reasoning a few months later. Leyburn prayed with his congregation that the war would end soon in a just and happy manner, because in doing so "we may be enabled to push forward also the principles of civil and religious liberty, and the true knowledge of the Gospel. Thus evil shall be overruled for good, and the wrath of man shall be made to praise God."³¹

New York Presbyterian minister Samuel D. Burchard, also a life member of the AHMS, attacked the ideas of men like Pastor Lord and the Rev. Leyburn. In his own Thanksgiving Day sermon in 1847, Burchard called the idea that God could bring good out of the war with Mexico and "break the spell of a false religion, and introduce to the darkened minds of her children, the light of pure Christianity" a "papal dogma."

Burchard actually blamed such convoluted moral theology on an increase of immorality in the United States brought on by poor Sabbath observance, slavery, and the increasing "power of the Pope." Pastor John Weiss of New Bedford, Massachusetts similarly

³¹ Thomas N. Lord, *Cause, Character and Consequences of the War with Mexico: A Discourse Delivered on the Day of the Annual Fast, April 8, 1847* (Portland: Thurston and Co., 1847), 15; John Leyburn, *National Mercies, Sins, and Duties: A Discourse, Preached to the Congregation of the Presbyterian Church, Petersburg, Virginia, On the Sabbath Morning, July 5th, 1846* (place unknown: n.p., 1846), 22-23.

lamented that the war had led fellow Christians to believe that a good end could justify the use of evil means.³²

A few Protestant ministers opposed the war for nativist, anti-Catholic reasons. Pastor Milton P. Braman of the First Congregational Church in Danvers, Connecticut tried to convince his flock that the most important war was not the one fought against Mexico, but a battle to stamp out "ignorance, irreligion, Romanism." Braman warned that already "the Papists are flooding us with priests, and building their cathedrals, and establishing their nunneries." With the new territory gained from Mexico, "the stream of immigration" will "pour itself like a deluge all over the land." In Braman's opinion, the United States already had enough to worry about "with all the additions of the Romanists from Europe." To annex Catholic Mexicans, along with a huge expanse of land that would only invite more Catholic immigration from Europe, would be exceedingly dangerous.³³

Pastor Samuel Harris of the Conway Congregational Church had already given a similar nativist warning in his Thanksgiving sermon of 1846. Harris cautioned that the acquisition of new territory would endanger American liberty by creating a dissimilar and diverse population that would be difficult to govern. To illustrate the dangers of

³² Samuel D. Burchard, *Causes of National Solicitude: A Sermon Preached in the Thirteenth Street Presbyterian Church, New York, on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 25, 1847* (New York: S.W. Benedict, 1848), 21-22; John Weiss, *Conscience the Best Policy: A Fast-Day Sermon, Preached on April 6, 1848* (New Bedford: Henry Tildon, 1848), 15.

³³ Milton P. Braman, *The Mexican War: A Discourse Delivered on the Annual Fast, 1847* (Danvers: Courier Office, 1847), 18-20.

annexing Mexican territory, he offered the example of an incident in Santa Fe, New Mexico:

After taking Santa Fe, Gen. Kearny and his staff, in full dress, bearing lighted tapers, accompanied through the streets a Popish procession in honor of some saint or relic. Indignation struggles with emotions of the ridiculous in reading this. If we must conquer Mexico, let us not be compelled to hear of such contemptible hypocrisy, jesuitry, and idolatry in our military officers. But the fact speaks volumes as to one sort of influence which would be exerted on our candidates in office, on public measures, and the community generally by the extension and annexation of our conquests.

Whereas some ministers supported the war only out of an anti-Catholic desire to proselytize Catholic Mexicans, Harris' religious bigotry led him to oppose to the war.³⁴

Protestant newspapers were much more widely read than published sermons or official denominational documents, and consequently were more reflective of evangelical opinion. Many pacifistic, anti-Catholic periodicals faced the same moral dilemma as preachers during the U.S.-Mexican War: How to characterize a war they believed to be evil that nevertheless might open the way for a pure gospel into a previously closed Catholic country? Some newspapers used the opportunity of war with a Catholic nation, along with disparaging stories told by American soldiers about Mexico, to elaborate further upon the dangers of lax Sabbath observance and the evils of Romanism and priestcraft. Others delved further into the issues surrounding the conflict. Many

³⁴ Samuel Harris, *The Mexican War: A Sermon Delivered on the Annual Thanksgiving, at Conway, Mass., November 26, 1846* (Greenfield: Merriam and Mirick, 1847), 19. The Rev. Edward N. Kirk offered a solution to the nativist dilemma of men like Harris in sermons he preached in Brooklyn and New York in mid-1848. Kirk agreed that all of North America would be ungovernable as one republic and that total annexation would endanger everybody's liberties. However, he welcomed the Mexican conquest as well as European Catholic immigrants, because he believed that Americans could thus better evangelize both groups. Kirk argued that once given a pure Gospel, both Mexican and naturalized European Catholics would be able to function as active citizens of any republic. See Edward N. Kirk, *The Church Essential to the Republic* (New York: American Home Missionary Society, 1848), 1-21, passim.

newspaper editors' opinions evolved as the war progressed toward the obvious finality of territorial annexation. In this way, the war worked its way into the long tradition of anti-Catholic flavored stories and editorials. As a general rule, Southern newspapers were more explicitly pro-war than those in the North.³⁵

Newspaper editors addressed the possibility of war with both England and Mexico in early 1846, largely because of the debates swirling around the Oregon question and the earlier annexation of Texas. In February, the Presbyterian *New York Evangelist* called upon its readers to pray for peace and avoid a sinful war of "monstrous iniquity" with England. Before receiving news of the outbreak of hostilities with Mexico, the

³⁵ *Banner of Peace*, 3 July 1846; *New York Evangelist*, 16 July 1846; *Presbyterian*, 2 May, 6 June 1846. See Ellsworth, "The American Churches," 301-27. Ellsworth provides a good survey of denominational opinion as found in newspapers and official proclamations. In a mostly sectional interpretation he concludes that Southern Methodists and Southern Baptists were the most pro-war; Presbyterians of all stripes, Northern Baptists, and Northern Methodists offered mainly lukewarm support; Congregationalists (because of their northeastern ties) opposed the war; and Episcopalians, Lutherans, and the Dutch Reformed Church were too guarded in their attitudes to allow for a firm conclusion. Ellsworth associates opinions mostly with geographical proximity to Mexico and a denomination's traditional theological views of war. He makes only passing mention of anti-Catholicism, although he correctly identifies evangelization as one motive that led certain churches to support Manifest Destiny. Still, I have taken issue with parts of Ellsworth's method, as well as his arguments. Ellsworth examines churches only with regard to their overall view of the war's goodness or harm, and makes no place for editors' opinions on such issues as the Jesuit chaplains and the Bishop Hughes mission. He also mischaracterizes all Congregationalists as ardently anti-war, which they were not, and does not allow for the evolution of opinions over time as the war progressed. His refusal to comment on the opinions of Episcopalian editors due to their "silence" belies a number of clear statements made by the *Episcopal Recorder*. Moreover, any complete analysis of Protestant views of the U.S.-Mexican War requires an examination of trans-denominational evangelical groups, abolitionists, and a more extensive study of sermons than Ellsworth's article-length study can provide.

In discussing Protestant evangelicals and the U.S.-Mexican War, Ted C. Hinckley, in "American Anti-Catholicism during the Mexican War," *Pacific Historical Review* 31 (1962), 121-37; John R. Bodo, in *The Protestant Clergy and Public Issues* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 222-23; Richard J. Carwardine, in *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 142-52; and Donald K. Gorrell, in "American Churches and American Territorial Expansion, 1830-1850" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Western Reserve University, 1960), 93-102, 125-26, all base their conclusions upon Ellsworth's article. Differences among these studies exist only in that Hinckley offers a consensus interpretation that maintains most Protestants did not view the war in religious terms, because of their heterogeneity and the unbridled optimism of the 1840s, and Gorrell comes to a conclusion regarding Episcopalian opinion that is similar to my own.

Evangelist claimed that a war with Mexico would punish the United States for its sins. The *Evangelist* argued also that the bloody war was counter-productive to the spread of republican institutions and Protestant Christianity to Mexico.³⁶

Presbyterian newspapers in Philadelphia, however, indicated their hope that the war might actually aid the introduction of Protestantism to Mexico. A minister residing in Texas called the readers of the *Presbyterian* to action: "Should toleration of the gospel throughout the Mexican territory spring out of the present war, it becomes our church . . . to go up speedily and possess the land." A missionary for the American Sunday School Union similarly challenged the *Christian Observer*:

Now is the time for incipient measures for the evangelization of that interesting portion of the world. The people inhabiting the Valley of the Rio Grande, will, doubtless, exert a great influence upon Catholicism in Mexico. They will be *living specimens* of Protestantism. . . . There are to be trained the "*advance guard* of the great *Protestant army of occupation*," which is destined to overthrow the corrupt system of Popery, which now so extensively prevails throughout that benighted land.

Indeed, the importance of strengthening the Presbyterian evangelical presence in Texas was most urgent, because of the new state's proximity to Catholic Mexico.³⁷

Smaller branches of Presbyterianism exhibited gradations of support for the war in their newspapers. The Reformed Presbyterian Church's *Covenanter*, one month before General Zachary Taylor's troops clashed with the Mexican military, called Mexico a "popish and priest-ridden country" where the inhabitants spent their Sabbaths in the most unholy manner of any nation in the world. By May 1846 the *Covenanter* feared that the

³⁶ *New York Evangelist*, 19, 26 February, 12 March, 14 May 1846.

³⁷ *Presbyterian*, 26 September 1846; *Christian Observer*, 16 October 1846.

war would spread slavery and a spirit of conquest. But they held out one hope for the war with Mexico: "Still there is a Providence which will bring good out of our evil. In this truth alone can we find comfort. . . ." ³⁸

The Cumberland Presbyterian *Banner of Peace* in Tennessee likewise mixed an overall anti-war opinion with grudging support in the name of Providence. The *Banner* claimed that "all lovers of civil and religious liberty, however much they may deprecate the horrors of war," must view the U.S.-Mexican War as "a great blessing to the human race." This "blessing" would arise from a change in "the established religion of Mexico":

May we not hope that the result of the struggle with Mexico shall be the disenthralment of a great people from tyranny? Let the way be opened for the entrance of a Protestant ministry, and it would be the dawning of a day of glory for that nation. The yoke of Roman superstition would be broken, and civilization and the liberty of the Gospel would prevail. ³⁹

Northern Baptist newspapers which regularly printed anti-Catholic articles reacted to the war in much the same way as did the *New York Evangelist*. By and large they opposed the war as an evil outgrowth of slavery that was dangerous to republicanism. In 1846 while they mocked "Popery in Mexico," detailed Mexican clerical wealth with excerpts from Waddy Thompson's *Recollections*, and argued that Mexicans had no "rational idea of true religion," editors of New York and Boston Baptist newspapers did

³⁸ *Covenanter* (April 1846), 290 (May 1846), 320.

³⁹ *Banner of Peace*, 5, 12 June 1846.

not deviate from a consistent anti-war stance.⁴⁰

Southern Baptist editors largely mirrored the pro-war public opinion throughout their section of the union. The vehemently anti-Catholic Rev. William Buck of Louisville, Kentucky's *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer* anticipated that the march of liberty would soon dispel "the darkness of popery" in Mexico and leave a "door opened for the Bible and the missionary of the cross, to the vast multitudes of Priest-ridden Mexicans and benighted Indians, who sit in that region of the shadow of death." By June, Buck pointed out to his readers that the ultimate cause of the war was Mexican religious oppression of American emigrants to Texas in the 1820s and 1830s. Although the *Baptist Banner* "regretted" the war for Texan independence, it also argued that at least Texas was now "an enlightened land." Thus, war against the "deeply degraded and sinful Mexicans" could achieve the same result, thanks to "the hand of the Almighty" and "the influence of our institutions."⁴¹

Like Baptists, Congregationalists differed in their treatment of the war in their newspapers in 1846. But because Congregationalism existed almost entirely in New England, where Whig anti-war sentiment was strong, these differences were all the more striking. The New Haven *New Englander*, a nominally Congregationalist publication, astounded most of its anti-war coreligionists when it agreed with the argument that God in his providence would produce good from the evil war and benefit "the Protestant cause." The *Boston Recorder* attacked those who "suggested that the War with Mexico

⁴⁰ *Christian Reflector*, 12 October, 10, 17 December 1846; *Christian Watchman*, 18 September, 16 October 1846.

⁴¹ *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer*, 30 April, 4 June 1846.

might prepare the way for the introduction of Protestant missionaries into that country.” The *Recorder* admitted that God could do so, but “to presume beforehand on God’s doing this, would be to insult him with the most shocking presumption of impiety.” Instead, the influential and usually anti-Catholic paper feared that “the Roman Catholics of Mexico will learn to look upon Protestantism with more hatred than ever,” and therefore delay any real Protestantization of Mexico.⁴²

In late 1846 the official organ of the Northern Methodist Episcopal Church, the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, finally broke its silence on the war. The paper condemned all wars as calamitous and the war with Mexico in particular as unjust and evil. But it compared the U.S.-Mexican War to England’s Opium Wars with China. Just as the Opium Wars had opened “heathen” China to evangelical Christian efforts, the *Christian Advocate* hoped that “this Mexican war may, therefore, be overruled for good” and weaken the “Romish priesthood” that had degraded Mexico for three hundred years.⁴³

Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison and his *Liberator* joined many other Protestant northern newspapers in their opposition to the war in 1846. Garrison primarily did so on anti-slavery grounds, but he also denounced the prevalent sentiment among volunteers and war boosters that Americans might plunder the clerical and mineral riches

⁴² *New Englander* (January 1847), 141-42; *Boston Recorder*, 23 July 1846. The *Liberator* criticized the *Congregational Journal* for supporting an argument similar to that of the *New Englander*. *Liberator*, 8 January 1847.

⁴³ *Christian Advocate and Journal*, 11 November 1846.

of Mexico. The anti-war opposition of the *Liberator* was unrelenting in 1846.⁴⁴ In the early months of 1847 Garrison continued to fill the pages of the *Liberator* with condemnations of "archbishop Polk" and "Bishop Taylor" for "spreading their gospel among the Catholic heathen of Mexico." Garrison's paper also found fault with anti-slavery advocates who either supported the war or offered only token opposition to it.⁴⁵ Moreover, the *Liberator* attacked American Catholic supporters of the war, who "have but to *will* peace, and it will come almost instantly." Yet despite this general tone, in April 1847 the *Liberator* reprinted without comment the following article from the *New York Observer*:

There is but one light in which we are able to look upon the war with any other feelings than those of deepest regret. It is this: it is in the power, and we trust, in the purposes of God, to make this war contribute to the political and moral renovation of Mexico. The printing press and the Bible, the school-master and the colporteur, will follow the army, and when the latter retires, the former will remain; the people now ridden with petty tyrants and wicked priests, will learn the principles of civil and religious freedom: popery, the sworn and natural enemy of liberty, will be compelled to quail before the advancing light of truth. . . .

Clearly, by mid-1847 even Garrison and the *Liberator* were susceptible to the evangelical Protestant argument that through God's power, the U.S.-Mexican War might produce good results.⁴⁶

In the Spring of 1847, Philadelphia's Presbyterian *Evangelical Repository*, with

⁴⁴ *Liberator* 24 April, 15, 22 May, 12, 19 June, 7 August 1846.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 22 January, 3 December 1847. This group included Cassius M. Clay of Kentucky and the Rev. Dr. Brisbane of Philadelphia, Baptist editor of the Liberty Party's *American Citizen*.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 30 April, 21 May, 15 October 1847.

Old Testament fervor, summed up the growing sentiment among anti-Catholic Protestant evangelicals that God might bless Mexico through the punishment of war:

The Sovereign of the universe has his own purposes to accomplish upon the wicked, treacherous and idolatrous people of Mexico; and He is making the United States, as He made Assyria of old, in relation to the "hypocritical nation" of the Jews, the *rod of his anger* against them.

Other Protestant and evangelical newspapers' opinions also evolved and changed toward this position as it became increasingly obvious that the United States stood to gain substantial territory at Mexico's expense.⁴⁷

The *New York Evangelist* did not go as far in its endorsement of the war as had the *Evangelical Repository*, but by July 1847 it joined the *Presbyterian* in offering reluctant approval. Writing for the *Evangelist*, the Rev. John S. C. Abbot criticized the Mexican "Romish Priesthood" for its immense wealth and influence. Abbot predicted that the wealth would not stay unmolested for much longer: "The rapid progress of civil and religious liberty must soon roll over all the barriers which priestly pride and power have reared to arrest their progress." Blinded by the issue of Mexico's Catholicism, the *Evangelist* implicitly joined the ranks of those who ignored the immorality of the war.⁴⁸

The *Covenanter* continued to criticize Mexicans and their priesthood as immoral, miserable, and indecent. This Reformed Presbyterian paper used Mexico as an example of a nation that followed "the popish system," but did not necessarily advocate war or any

⁴⁷ *Evangelical Repository* (May 1847), 621. In 1847 only the Congregationalist *Boston Recorder* continued its unwavering opposition to the war, although it did stop from time to time to point out that Mexico's problems stemmed from a Catholic disdain for the Bible. See *Boston Recorder*, 13 May 1847.

⁴⁸ *New York Evangelist*, 8, 15 July 1847.

type of crusade against Mexico. However, the misnamed Cumberland Presbyterian *Banner of Peace* supported the latter. In May 1847, the *Banner* printed a clarion summons, initially published in the *New York Recorder*, after receiving the news of the American takeover of Vera Cruz: "Why should not such a moment be improved for scattering the Bible and wholesale religious books there?" The questioner believed that the Mexican clergy would relent and sue for peace all the sooner if they knew "that the triumph of American arms would be the triumph of religious liberty – a thing which the Catholic Church hates and crushes."⁴⁹

The increasing likelihood of large territorial acquisitions in 1847 led to cracks in the anti-war stance of Northern Baptist newspapers. Using information gained from soldiers and correspondents in Mexico, Boston's *Christian Watchman* remarked that annexing such a sinful country where "the people are worse than the soil on which they live" might be a mistake. But the paper looked upon the conflict with an air of inevitability and pride in future evangelization: "The home mission work spreads out with increasing splendor and interest . . . its last trophy will be displayed by a line of churches whose members will be baptized in the Pacific Ocean."⁵⁰

Meanwhile, the abolitionist *Christian Reflector*, with whom the *Watchman* would soon unite to form a single newspaper, appealed to New Englanders at least to understand those Baptists and other evangelicals who supported an obviously aggressive, pro-slavery war. It blamed the Roman Catholic Church for creating such a "superstitious, cowardly

⁴⁹ *Covenanter* (April 1847), 269 (June 1847), 351; *Banner of Peace*, 21 May 1847.

⁵⁰ *Christian Watchman*, 20 August 1847.

race of people" like Mexicans in the first place. Therefore, how could one blame some evangelicals (and even abolitionists and anti-slavery advocates) for wanting to bring to Mexico "the blessings of a purer religion?" Perhaps God really would "overrule the wrath of man, in respect to Mexico," and use the war to advance Protestant Christianity. In support of this contention the *Reflector* throughout 1847 ran disparaging articles about the Mexican clergy and South American nations, along with appropriate excerpts from Waddy Thompson's *Recollections* and Brantz Mayer's *Mexico*.⁵¹

In 1847, the Louisville, Kentucky *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer* heightened both its anti-Catholicism and its number of articles dealing with Mexico. The paper continued to praise missionary work in Texas as a precursor to similar action in soon-to-be conquered Mexico. By November 1847, however, editor Buck feared that a Mexican cession might strengthen Catholicism in the United States. The *Baptist Banner* offered its official appraisal of the war the next month: the U.S.-Mexican War was just, because it had been fought in self-defense and not for conquest. Therefore, territorial acquisition was morally acceptable. Astonishingly, Buck's November worries had already faded, and he wrote instead of great alarm among the Mexican clergy: "Now they probably fear an invasion of Methodist preachers as they did the incursions of the American army. Their dread of ultimate annexation and the consequent irruption [*sic*] of Protestant professors, may incline them to peace."⁵²

⁵¹ *Christian Reflector*, 29 April, 20 May, 1 July, 14, 28 October 1847.

⁵² *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer*, 4 February, 11 March, 1; 8 April, 18 November, 9 December 1847. At the time of the war, the role of missionary work in the Christian faith remained a contentious issue among many Baptists. Methodists, however, were famous for evangelical activity and had already established western missions in the Oregon Territory.

After finally remarking in late 1846 on the war between Mexico and the United States, the Northern Methodist *Christian Advocate and Journal* continued to do so in even stronger language in 1847 that indicated a growing support for the annexation of Mexican territory. In January this Methodist organ still hoped that the war would result “in the political and religious amelioration of the condition to which a degrading superstition has reduced the Mexican people.” Mexico’s “long subjection of three hundred years to the Papacy” would soon be over. Still, the editors’ logic seemed confused as they continued to condemn the war as “a terrible curse,” even as they claimed that only war could sow the seeds from which a Protestant Mexico could eventually grow. Recognizing this disconnect in their line of reasoning, by mid-February the *Christian Advocate and Journal* simply concluded that any subversion or change of Mexico’s culture of “idolatrous superstition” was acceptable by any means: “If good is to come of it, then war is justifiable.”⁵³

The abolitionist *National Era* of Washington, D.C. joined the fray in the late summer of 1847. It offered its own plan for the future cession of the entirety of Mexico, entitled “United States and Mexico – Plan of Pacification and Continental Union.” The *National Era* envisioned an Anglo-Saxon, English-speaking republic stretching across the continent, because the Mexicans had proven that on their own they could not sustain a viable republic. But the paper also argued that such a vast republic must accept new states freely. One major benefit of such a plan would be giving “to Mexico the principle of Religious Toleration, without interfering with her religious faith.” That alone would

⁵³ *Christian Advocate and Journal*, 6 January, 17 February 1847.

improve everything from agriculture and commerce, to the political power and influence of the new Union. "Some might object that this wholesale admission of Mexico would give to Catholicism an undue influence in this country," noted the *National Era*, but in an open field of competition it asserted that Protestantism would triumph easily against a false and ungodly religion.⁵⁴

Between 1846 and 1848, three specific issues relating to the war succeeded in uniting much of the Protestant press in open opposition to the Polk administration. The first such issue was President Polk's appointment of two Jesuit chaplains in the middle of 1846 to accompany General Taylor's army. Baptist, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Episcopal newspapers criticized their appointment as "a flagrant outrage upon the Constitution," because Catholics aimed at "the predominance of their church and society over all governments." Anti-Catholic editors feared that these two priests would consort with the Catholic enemy and drive Catholic soldiers to desert. When Mexican bandits killed one of the Jesuits in mid-1847, the *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer* mocked the incident as an example of how "faithful children of the papal church" behaved toward one another.⁵⁵

The second issue involved Polk's attempted use of New York's Bishop John Hughes as a diplomat to Mexico with the hope that he could somehow influence the Mexican clergy toward peace. Hughes declined the offer, but the incident coincided

⁵⁴ *National Era*, 19 August 1847.

⁵⁵ *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer*, 8 October 1846, 7, 28 January, 13 May, 6 June 1847; *Boston Recorder*, 23 July 1846; *Episcopal Recorder*, 12 October 1846; *New York Observer*, 18 July 1846, 22 August 1846.

neatly with the chaplain controversy in that it involved Polk's dealing in an official capacity with the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. The *Episcopal Recorder* and the *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer* warned that the Polk administration was purposefully on the road toward papal government.⁵⁶

The third issue that united Protestant discontent was the conspicuous respect paid to the Mexican clergy, churches, and religious festivities by General Winfield Scott and other officers. Southern and Northern Presbyterian and Baptist newspapers condemned the participation of Scott and General Edmund Gaines in religious processions. However, Colonel Thomas Childs' order to his soldiers to kneel during a Jalapa procession created the most controversy. If Catholic chaplains and the possibility of the Hughes mission had not convinced some wavering anti-Catholics that the American Catholic hierarchy held sway over the government, then stories of the United States army "kneeling to the papal host" did. The *Christian Watchman* issued an ominous warning about "the evil to come." The *Watchman* lambasted the Polk administration for holding cabinet meetings on Sundays and the army for landing at Vera Cruz on a Sunday. But the "worst evil" was that the army forced soldiers not only to violate the Sabbath, but also to participate in idolatrous Catholic ceremonies. The more successful the war, contended the *Watchman*, the worse that "the overthrow of religious principles" would become. As a consequence of the "outrage" at Jalapa, a number of evangelicals allegedly sent a

⁵⁶ *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer*, 11 February 1847; *Episcopal Recorder*, 13 June 1846; *New York Observer*, 18 December 1847.

petition to Congress demanding an investigation and official rebuke of Colonel Childs.⁵⁷

Just as some newspapers used the conflict with Mexico to further their own anti-Catholic aims and arguments, so too did authors of anti-Catholic literature. But instead of warning of the dangers and inadequacies of Catholicism through the time-tested examples of sordid nunneries and corrupt prelates, writers now had a new array of tales, thanks to the war. With derogatory descriptions of Mexican religious practice appearing almost daily in newspapers, and with controversies over the Catholic army chaplains, Bishop Hughes' mission to Mexico, and the Jalapa incident, anti-Catholic writers drew an easy connection between their cause and present events. One such writer, in *The Trial of the Pope*, even cited the appointment of Jesuits to the United States army as damning evidence in a mock trial of the Pope, wherein everyone from the apostle Peter to the American president offered testimony against the "Man of Sin" for "High Treason Against the Son of God."⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *Banner of Peace*, 23 July 1847; *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer*, 22 July 1847, 5 May 1848; *Boston Recorder*, 6 May 1847; *Christian Advocate and Journal*, 4 August 1847; *Christian Watchman*, 21 May, 10 September 1847; *New York Observer*, 1 May 1847; *Presbyterian*, 26 June 1847. I write "allegedly," because despite a diligent search I have been unable to find evidence of the petition in the Congressional record.

For a good study of the relationship between antebellum Sabbatarianism and politics, see Richard R. John's "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously: The Postal System, the Sabbath, and the Transformation of American Political Culture," *Journal of the Early Republic* 10 (1990): 517-67. John argues that Sabbatarianism enjoyed widespread support among evangelicals from all areas of the country, not just New England. But in the Puritan tradition they sincerely believed that market forces and the federal government, by making men work on Sundays, forced Christians to violate their covenant with God. Like other reform movements of their day, however, the Sabbatarians in "America's first great antimodern crusade" hoped to influence public opinion rather than Congress. According to John, however, those concerned with Sabbath observance eventually gravitated toward the Whig party. I would argue that perhaps their party affiliation accounts, in part, for their very vocal opposition to Polk's supposedly anti-Sabbath policies during the war.

⁵⁸ *The Trial of the Pope. The Antichrist, or Man of Sin, for High Treason Against the Son of God, on the Testimony of the Sovereigns of Europe, the President of the United States, and the Reformers and Martyrs*. . . (New York: New York American and Foreign Christian Union, 1847; reprint, 1856), 90. The only name

In 1846, the Rev. Samuel J. Cassels, a Presbyterian minister from Norfolk, Virginia, published *Christ and Antichrist*. This huge tome of almost four hundred pages argued that Jesus was the Messiah and that the Pope was the anti-Christ. In arguing this, Cassels advocated the spread of the Protestant Bible into all Catholic countries as the necessary first step in the overthrow of the papacy. Taking a page from current headlines, he used a traveler's description of jubilant Mexican Sabbath activities to demonstrate the depravity of Roman Catholic nations. Although he did not comment specifically on the war, the Rev. Cassels' book illustrates the increasing use of Mexican examples in the anti-Catholic literature of the late 1840s.⁵⁹

William Hogan, a Whig and former American consul to Cuba who also claimed to have served Secretary of State Abel P. Upshur on a secret mission to Mexico to investigate the machinations of the Mexican hierarchy in 1844, addressed the war at great length in *High and Low Mass in the Roman Catholic Church*. Published in late 1846, the book ostensibly was an exposé explaining how "popish priests" used the "solemn mummeries, antic tricks, and ingenious jugglery" of the Mass to control Catholics. Yet in the text Hogan ranted in several places and at great length about papal inroads in the United States government and warned of a Catholic conspiracy to abolish slavery and overthrow the American republic. The conspirators included President Polk, the Mexican and American Catholic hierarchies, soldiers, sailors, and federal government officials

attached to this work was that of Herman Norton, author of the introduction and corresponding secretary for the American Protestant Society.

⁵⁹ Samuel J. Cassels, *Christ and Antichrist, or Jesus of Nazareth Proved to be the Messiah and the Papacy Proved to be the Antichrist Predicted in the Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1846), 332, 346-47.

who willingly consorted with "the harlot of Rome." Perhaps because Hogan wrote the book during the war, he found Polk's most glaring crime to be the appointment of Jesuit army chaplains. The priests were just one more facet of the winnowing away of American liberties. Hogan criticized Polk's inability to recognize that Roman Catholicism was "at variance with every Protestant principle recognized by our government, or indirectly embodied in our Constitution."⁶⁰

In 1847, Rufus W. Clark offered his own thoughts on "Papal operations in our country" with the publication of *Popery and the United States*. Like Hogan, the Portsmouth pastor warned that Catholics and their supporters sought to overthrow both Protestantism and American civil liberties. But by 1847, as the possibility of a large Mexican cession grew more and more likely, territorial conquest now found a role in the conspiracy. Clark argued that even if the war with Mexico opened up more of the continent to free government and pure religion, new territories would inevitably attract even more Catholic immigrants from Europe. The United States had already demonstrated itself superior to Mexico and South America in both arms and industry, and this fact would attract Catholic immigrants who sought to escape their own blighted lands. The problem, according to Clark, was that immigrants would bring their anti-republican and anti-Protestant priests and bishops with them. Indeed, the United States

⁶⁰ William Hogan, *High and Low Mass in the Roman Catholic Church; with Comments* (Nashua: Charles T. Gill; Boston: Jordan and Wiley, 1846), 45-48, 65-66, 172-202. Hogan also claimed to be an ex-Catholic priest.

would become a victim of its own success.⁶¹

Samuel F. B. Morse, one of the anti-Catholic movement's guiding hands, best summed up the predominant sentiment among anti-Catholic, Protestant evangelicals during the U.S.-Mexican War:

The Mexican race is a worn-out race, and God in his Providence is taking this mode to regenerate them. Whatever may be the opinions of some in relation to the justness or unjustness of our quarrel, there ought to be but one opinion among all good men, and that should be that the moment should be improved to throw light into that darkened nation, and to raise a standard there which, whatever may become of the Stars and Stripes, or Eagle and Prickly Pear, shall never be taken down till all nations have flocked to it. Our Bible and Tract Societies and missionaries ought to be in the wake of our armies.⁶²

Indeed, evangelical societies, preachers, and denominations were forced to contend with an intellectual conflict between their pro-peace and anti-Catholic views. Most Protestant evangelicals found a middle ground where with a sense of mission they could approve of the results of the war for evangelical and anti-Catholic reasons, while at the same time condemning the conflict itself and the politicians behind it as unjust and evil. As one Methodist writer noted hopefully about the new wilderness into which Americans had entered: "Under the enlightened sway of the Anglo-Americans the wilderness shall be made to rejoice and blossom as the rose."⁶³

⁶¹ Rufus W. Clark, *Popery and the United States, Embracing an Account of Papal Operations in Our Country, with a View of The Dangers Which Threaten our Institutions* (Boston: J. V. Bean and Co., 1847), 4-8, 11-19.

⁶² Samuel F. B. Morse to Sidney Morse and Family, 29 October 1846, in Edward Lind Morse, ed., *Samuel F. B. Morse: His Letters and Journals* (2 vols., Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1914), 1: 270.

⁶³ *Methodist Quarterly Review* (October 1848), 635.

CHAPTER FOUR

"This Barbarous Catholic Country": The American Soldier's Encounter with Roman Catholicism in Mexico

The American soldiers who fought in Mexico went forth from a nation pervaded by nativism, anti-Catholicism, and a multi-faceted belief in Manifest Destiny. This Manifest Destiny clearly included the spread of republican institutions, Protestantism, and Anglo-Saxons across the continent of North America. Many of these men actually encountered Catholicism for the first time while in Mexico, and their experiences confirmed and solidified their preconceptions of Roman Catholicism and its anti-republican nature. Racialism was a critical component of Manifest Destiny, and most U.S. soldiers considered the racial attributes and religious practices of Mexicans as an inseparable whole. To be Mexican was to be Catholic, and anything Catholic was naturally despotic and decrepit. As the foot soldiers of Manifest Destiny, these men had the opportunity to test first-hand their beliefs about Mexicans, Anglo-Saxon Americans, Catholics, and Protestants. Others, especially Catholic soldiers, blamed racial inferiority and miscegenation for the anarchical state of affairs in Mexico. For a variety of reasons, many American soldiers harbored some level of anti-Catholic sentiment, and these beliefs affected their view of, and conduct in, the U.S.-Mexican War.

From the enlistment and recruitment phase to their arduous sojourn in Mexico, American troops came into contact with Roman Catholicism in many forms. By some estimates, nearly one-quarter of the regular army was foreign born, and nearly one-fifth was Roman Catholic. Because of nativism, immigrants wishing to join volunteer units

often found it necessary to form their own ethnic companies. Many Americans, including fellow soldiers, questioned the loyalty of Catholic soldiers in a war against a Catholic country. Contemporary American literature about Mexico and newspaper correspondents played a prominent role in shaping the initial opinions American troops held of Mexico. Once south of the Rio Grande or in New Mexico, these same Protestant soldiers had the opportunity to expound upon their views of Mexicans and Catholic rites and rituals. This was true of General Zachary Taylor's and General Winfield Scott's troops, as well as the men serving in the New Mexican theater of operations. Moreover, soldiers complained loudly about official attempts to respect Catholicism through the appointment of Catholic chaplains, and the showy participation by some U.S. Army officers in Mexican religious processions and Masses.

Motives for enlistment in volunteer companies varied. In their journals and letters, American soldiers cited reasons common to enlistment in most wars. These included patriotism, the defense of national honor against perceived Mexican insults, the necessity of inflicting a just punishment, and the desire to appear masculine. In some cases, the army simply offered a steady salary that, although small at \$7.00 per month, at least insured room and board for the period of enlistment.¹ Lt. John J. Peck of Brooklyn thought that a dispute over Texas was not worth the loss of life. Nevertheless, he believed that "... our national honor is in question and it has fallen to my lot to be one

¹ Maurice Garland Fulton, ed., *Diary and Letters of Josiah Gregg* (2 vols., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1941, 1944), 1: 199-200; Douglas W. Richmond, "Andrew Trussell in Mexico: A Soldier's Wartime Impressions, 1847-1848," in Douglas W. Richmond, ed., *Essays on the Mexican War*, (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1986), 96; *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer*, 16 July 1846.

of those entrusted with its defense, and I must yield . . . to the demands of the American people."² This strong sense of duty was quite common. Even regulars exhibited similar nationalist motives. Although he would much later in life write that the U.S.-Mexican War was unjust and unrepugnant, in 1846 a young Ulysses S. Grant vigorously claimed: "I would volunteer to come to Mexico as a private if I could come no other way."³

Soldiers summed up this sense of patriotism in the phrase, "Our Country, Right or Wrong." Volunteers and regulars alike had misgivings about conquest and also about the extension of slavery, not to mention political differences with the Democratic Polk administration. Both groups, however, comforted themselves with the notion that defense of one's country was a higher ethical law than upholding objective righteousness.⁴ U.S. soldiers loudly echoed this sentiment throughout the war. So, too, did American newspapers published in Mexico by and for U.S. troops. The editors of the *Daily American Star* claimed that "Our Country, right or wrong" was an "idea of patriotism . . . second alone to love of God."⁵ Abolitionist Cassius M. Clay stunned his anti-slavery contemporaries by volunteering to fight in a war that they blamed on a Southern, pro-slavery conspiracy. In a speech before a crowd of 5,000 people in Lexington, Kentucky, Clay avowed that, despite the evils of slavery and his opinion that

² Richard F. Pourade, ed., *The Sign of the Eagle: A View of Mexico - 1830-1855* (San Diego: Union-Tribune Publishing Co., 1970), 31, 54.

³ Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant* (2 vols., New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1894), 1: 53; Ulysses S. Grant to Julia Grant, 28 July 1846, in John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* (24 vols. to date, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967-), 1: 99.

⁴ James Lynch, *With Stevenson to California* (Tierra Redonda: n.p., ca. 1896), 34.

⁵ *Daily American Star*, 23 February 1848.

the Nueces River was indeed the proper boundary of Texas, he would serve his country out of patriotic duty whether the war itself was right or wrong. Privately, Clay pushed this line of thinking further by claiming that he could not fight for liberty at home, if he did not first do so abroad.⁶

Not all soldiers had ethical and/or patriotic motives for going to war. A conflict with Mexico offered the possibility of booty in many forms, from the rich mines and agricultural lands of the northern and central Mexican states to ecclesiastical wealth and the costly decorations of hundreds of churches and cathedrals. Tennessee volunteer John Blout Robertson matter-of-factly believed that "it is contrary to the genius of the Yankee to suppose that when once his greedy eyes have fallen upon so extensive a tract of fair and fertile country, he will be long finding the means to possess himself of its soil." Anglo-Saxons, according to Robertson, had been waiting for years to move from north to south to make use of Mexico's resources, and wherever "the restless Anglo-Saxon" goes, "the weaker races sink before him."⁷ This sentiment about the role of territorial conquest among Anglo-Saxons stretched from lowly volunteers like Robertson all the way up the command ladder to officers like General William J. Worth. The general knew that the best thing for other races to do, once Anglo-Saxons had eyed their land, was to step aside.

⁶ Horace Greeley, ed., *The Writings of Cassius M. Clay* (New York: Harper, 1848), 475-76; Cassius M. Clay to Mrs. Clay, 29 December 1847, Cassius M. Clay Papers, Filson Club Historical Society, Louisville.

⁷ John Blout Robertson, *Reminiscences of a Campaign in Mexico; by a Member of "The Bloody-First"* (Nashville: John York and Co., 1849), 101-02; 211.

"Have not our Anglo Saxon race been land stealers from time immemorial and why shouldn't they," he asked?⁸

Many soldiers marveled particularly at the possibilities of the fertile areas of Mexico between the Rio Grande and Mexico City. Indeed, the expansion of tillable land attracted many Southern men into the burgeoning armies of Taylor and Scott.⁹ Jotting down his first impressions of the agricultural possibilities of Mexico while marching to Camargo, a captain in the 1st Mississippi Regiment of volunteers remarked: "The land from Matamoras to Camargo . . . is well adapted to cultivation and when the Anglo-Saxons get to work on it will lay the region of the lower Mississippi in the shade."¹⁰ Northerners and southerners agreed that Anglo-Saxons could use Mexican lands more productively and wisely than did the natives. As one Ohio volunteer alleged, the best evidence that the Mexicans did not deserve their own territory was that after so many years of living on the border of the industrious, enterprising United States, Mexico still remained degenerate. Despite the opportunity to live a Jeffersonian, pastoral life, Mexicans remained unhappy, weak, and immoral.¹¹ As American troops ventured farther

⁸ George Winston Smith and Charles Judah, eds., *Chronicles of the Gringos: The U.S. Army in the Mexican War, 1846-1848, Accounts of Eyewitnesses and Combatants* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1968), 57-58.

⁹ Wiley Pope Hale to Mother, 26 July 1846, Mexican War Collection, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville; Ruth C. Carter, ed., *For Honor, Glory, and Union: The Mexican and Civil War Letters of Brig. Gen. William Haines Lytle* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 52; Robertson, *Reminiscences*, 101-03.

¹⁰ Joseph E. Chance, ed., *The Mexican War Journal of Captain Franklin Smith* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 11.

¹¹ [Luther Giddings], *Sketches of the Campaign in Northern Mexico. In Eighteen Hundred Forty-Six and Seven. By an Officer of the First Regiment of Ohio Volunteers* (New York: George P. Putnam and Co., 1853), 53-54.

into Mexico, this agriculturalist hope for territory coincided nicely with the idea that Mexican racial characteristics and Roman Catholicism had retarded Mexican growth, prosperity, and intelligence in the first place. Wartime experiences would thus reinforce pre-war and initial impressions of Mexican sloth and indolence.

The most obvious, readily attainable wealth in Mexico for most soldiers lay not in its territory, but in the Roman Catholic clergy and their churches, monasteries, and cathedrals. Instances of enticing volunteers to enlist with the possibility of church plunder were many and not confined to any one region of the country.¹² American recruiters, clergymen, and politicians all offered such temptations. For example, speeches like that of former Congressman Henry Wise of Virginia offered "the boundless wealth of captured towns, and rifled churches, and a lazy, vicious, and luxurious priesthood" as more than ample pay for volunteers. Wise hoped that plundered church wealth would induce volunteers to "proclaim a crusade" against the other Latin American states and conquer all the way to the shores of the Pacific Ocean. He also hoped that rather than creating heretical, Catholic images out of Mexican gold, American eagles could be created instead: "I would cause as much gold to cross the Rio del Norte as the mules of Mexico could carry, aye, and make better use of it than any lazy, bigoted priesthood under Heaven."¹³

¹² *National Intelligencer*, 17 June 1847.

¹³ William Jay, *A Review of the Causes and Consequences of the Mexican War* (Boston: Benjamin B. Mussey and Co.; Philadelphia: Uriah Hurt and Co.; New York: M.W. Dodd, 1849), 79, 80-81; *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 28 May 1846.

On May 20, 1846, pro-war forces held a massive meeting in Central Park in New York City. Drawing an estimated 50,000 people, recruiters erected stages around the park for various speakers. In his speech as leader of the nativist gang, the Bowery B'hoys, Captain Isaiah Rynders alluded to robbing Mexican churches.¹⁴ Standing on the steps of City Hall before thousands of men, New York City lawyer Alexander Wells delivered a fiery speech explaining the necessity of the war. Convinced of the justice of Mexican conquest, Wells proclaimed: "Have we not existing cause to level all their temples to the dust?" At this point, several among the crowd began to scream, "No, no; let us have no church burning." Ignoring them, Wells proceeded to declare that the Mexicans should be left to the mercies of God, "and if their priesthood can save them, be it so." At this, Irishmen present in the milling throng grew even more unhappy with Wells' intimations. Now hissing and yelling wildly, the crowd soon drowned out the rest of Wells' speech.¹⁵

On another platform at this rally, the eloquent and popular attorney James T. Brady also acknowledged the attraction of Mexico's clerical wealth. But, to cheers and outbursts of "No church burning," the Democrat loudly proclaimed that the desecration of Mexican temples was not a sufficient reason to go to Mexico. American men needed only the enticement of patriotism to fight. Still, some New Yorkers enlisted for the express purpose of plunder, church or otherwise, and other promised benefits such as women, whiskey, and a steady salary. According to Albert Lombard, an unhappy

¹⁴ Paul W. Foos, "Mexican Wars: Soldiers and Society in an Age of Expansion, 1835-1855" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1997), 263.

¹⁵ *New York Herald*, 21 May 1846.

volunteer of the 2nd New York Regiment, officers offered privates not only strong drink, money, and beef, but also "golden Jesuses." Lombard's discontent lay in the fact that once in Mexico, these very same officers officially forbade the promised looting of Mexican churches that they had used to recruit the men in the first place.¹⁶

The offering of "golden Jesuses" by both official and unofficial recruiters as a lure was not confined solely to New York or sectarian and nativist newspapers. By 1847, the phrase "Golden Jesuses" came to represent any possible loot gained from church plunder. The rich balustrades and gem-bedecked statues in Mexican churches, which figured so prominently in contemporary travel accounts and histories, tantalized prospective soldiers who had never been far from home or even entered an American Catholic Church. While waiting in New Orleans for shipment to Mexico, one transplanted Bostonian running for lieutenant of his Illinois company strenuously appealed to his companions with talk of reveling in the Halls of Montezuma and raiding Mexican churches for "Golden Jesuses." Officers and recruiters used similar speeches among the men of the famed Palmetto Regiment of South Carolina as well. Upon entering some of the churches in Mexico, American soldiers would later express disappointment and even anger that there were no "Golden Jesuses" after all.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid.; Albert Lombard, *The "High Private," with a full and exciting history of the New York Volunteers* (New York: privately printed, 1848), 8. See also DeAlva Stanwood Alexander, *A Political History of the State of New York* (3 vols., Port Washington, N.Y.: I. J. Friedman, 1909), 2: 178, 325, 333. Alexander calls Brady "the most popular man in New York City," and notes that the politically active attorney advocated slave-holding rights in the Mexican cession.

¹⁷ Samuel E. Chamberlain, *My Confession* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), 31; H. Judge Moore Diary, 24 January 1847, as quoted in Paul W. Foos, "Mexican Wars," 197; Robertson, *Reminiscences*, 115.

One of the best examples of holding out the wealth of the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico as a reason to volunteer was the formation of a volunteer company by nativist William G. Brownlow of Tennessee. A Whig and a Methodist, Brownlow had engaged in anti-Catholic rhetoric for years as a good means of attacking the Democratic Party. Brownlow also was a longtime believer in the conspiracy theories of Samuel F.B. Morse and Lyman Beecher. As early as the middle 1830s, Morse and Beecher had warned of an impending Catholic takeover of North America spearheaded by Rome and Austria and led by Jesuits commanding an army of Catholic immigrants. Exemplary also of the convergence of theological anti-Catholicism and the more political nativist variety, the parson also supported the efforts of Protestant organizations dedicated to opposing Romanism at home and abroad. Following the war, Brownlow would continue to be active in the anti-Catholic movement throughout the 1850s.¹⁸

Upon hearing about Polk's appointment of Roman Catholic army chaplains, Brownlow, along with Hezekiah Bayless and Joseph Wolff, founded a volunteer company called the Protestant Invincibles. Brownlow had already written in his own newspaper that President Polk should "let out the Mexican war on contract, to East Tennessee: for the privilege of plundering the rich Churches of Mexico, and coining their golden gods into money. . . ." Accordingly, Brownlow proposed that his own Protestant Invincibles, a company of ninety-two men, undertake the war for one-half of the booty as

¹⁸ William G. Brownlow, *A Political Register, Setting Forth the Principles of the Whig and Locofoco Parties in the United States* . . . (Jonesborough: Published at the Office of the "Jonesborough Whig," 1844), 75-78, 86, 99-100, 110-12, 117-19; William G. Brownlow, *Americanism Contrasted with Foreignism, Romanism, and Bogus Democracy, in the Light of Reason, History, and Scripture* (Nashville: Published for the Author, 1856), 3-5, 7, 34, 89.

their only salary, "counting the *fun* of the thing at least a half compensation." In this case, then, "Golden Jesuses" inspired not just individual men but an entire company to volunteer. On June 6, the officers of the Invincibles wrote to Major-General William Brazelton, head of the East Tennessee Militia, informing him that their company would gladly serve. However, they offered two conditions: no Roman Catholic chaplains could be appointed and appointment of generals in the army would not be made on partisan grounds. The Protestant Invincibles then reported for service with thirty-four other companies. Yet, the state of Tennessee did not accept the Invincibles, ostensibly because of these conditions. The large turnout of companies, Brownlow's Whig affiliation, along with the Polk administration's attempts to assuage the concerns of American and Mexican Catholics about the safety of their church, likely figured in the state's decision as well.¹⁹

After a large Independence Day rally in July 1846, where the Invincibles drilled and marched in uniform, Brownlow and his fellow officers sent another request to Brazelton. This time they offered to pay for their own Protestant chaplain to insure that they would not "hear the prayers, sermons, and dogmas of a *Catholic Priest*" and be forced by Jesuits to "join with Mexicans . . . in the worship of the Beast."²⁰ By this time, Brownlow already knew that his Invincibles would not be allowed to fight in Mexico. All that was left was to make as much political hay as possible over the Polk administration's appointment of Jesuit chaplains. News of the Protestant Invincibles

¹⁹ *Jonesborough Whig and Independent Journal*, 10, 17, 27 June 1846.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 8 July 46.

reached soldiers already in Matamoras, who readily approved of Brownlow's attempts to organize the company. The editors of the American-run *Matamoras Reveille* praised the "fighting parson of Tennessee" for raising the Protestant Invincibles, exclaiming, "Roll on, *parson*, you are the kind of men we want."²¹

The Catholic press challenged these early attempts to give the war a religious character. In one incident, the *New York Express* openly doubted the ability of American Catholics to remain patriotic in the face of widespread calls for looting churches and Protestantism evangelism in Mexico. If such activity were to occur, the *Express* intimated that the American Catholic hierarchy would order Catholic soldiers to stop fighting. In response to this questioning of Catholic loyalty, the *U.S. Catholic Miscellany* reaffirmed Catholic patriotism by denying that any such plunder would ever occur in the first place. The *Miscellany* proclaimed that the very history of the United States' religious toleration opposed efforts to excite visions of church plunder and the supplanting of Catholicism in Mexico with Protestantism. After all, large numbers of the military were loyal Irish Catholics and President Polk had already appointed two Catholic chaplains to the army to reassure Mexican Catholics that Americans would respect their churches.²²

The works of Waddy Thompson, Thomas Jefferson Farnham, Albert M. Gilliam, Samuel Gregory, Brantz Mayer, George W. Kendall, and William Prescott inspired visions of gold and silver crucifixes, gem-laden statues, gilded altar rails, and other

²¹ *Matamoras Reveille*, 15 July 1846.

²² *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*, 13 June 1846.

valuable church decorations.²³ Starting in mid-1846, newspapers around the country excerpted or paraphrased large portions of these books under titles like “Church Wealth of Mexico.”²⁴ In many ways, these texts provided the framework in which Americans, including soldiers, viewed Mexico. The *National Intelligencer*, in its Whig opposition to the war, criticized many of the new histories of Mexico. In particular, it accused Thompson in his *Recollections* of revealing finally his anti-Catholic prejudice and providing fuel for the fire of conquest, plunder, and annexation. The *National Intelligencer* declared: “Faster than our own eagerness to get and to examine his volume—the journals of the Southwest are seizing upon and spreading, as incentives to the invasion of Mexico, his accounts of the golden altars and balusters [*sic*] of the Mexican shrines!”²⁵

Even while writers like Thompson extensively detailed church wealth, they also offered their own opinions about civil and religious liberty, the Roman Catholic Church, and Mexican racial characteristics. Each author also remarked on what he supposed were

²³ These books on Mexico included brief ruminations, and sometimes lengthy sections, on Roman Catholicism in Mexico, as well as on the Mexican clergy’s wealth and power: Thomas Jefferson Farnham, *Mexico: Its Geography—Its People—and Its Institutions* (New York: H. Long and Brother, 1846); Thomas Jefferson Farnham, *Travels in the Californias, and Scenes on the Pacific Ocean* (New York: Saxton and Miles, 1844); Albert M. Gilliam, *Travels over the Table Lands and Cordilleras of Mexico, During the Years 1843 and 1844* (Philadelphia: John W. Moore, 1846); Samuel Gregory, *Gregory’s History of Mexico* (Boston: F. Gleason, 1847); George Wilkins Kendall, *Narrative of the Texas and Santa Fe Expedition* (2 vols., New York: Harper and Brothers, 1844); Brantz Mayer, *Mexico as it Was and As It Is* (New York: J. Winchester, New World Press, 1844); William H. Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (3 vols., Chicago: Hooper, Clarke, and Co., 1843; reprint, London: George Rutledge and Sons, 1874); Waddy Thompson, *Recollections of Mexico* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1846).

²⁴ *Christian Reflector*, 25 June 1846; *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer*, 17 June, 2 July 1846; *Journal of Commerce*, 15 July 1846; *Christian Advocate and Journal*, 27 October 1847; *Daily American Star*, 3, 4 December 1847; *Boston Recorder*, 21 October 1847; *New York Herald*, 28 May 1847; *New York Tribune*, 2, 3 May 1846; *North American* (Mexico), 12-14 January 1848.

²⁵ *National Intelligencer*, 8 June 1846.

the reasons for Mexico's tottering republic and apparent backwardness. The former positions of Thompson and Mayer as minister and secretary of legation to Mexico, respectively, gave added credence to their observations of Mexican culture and geography. The journals of soldiers reveal that many had read or were aware of one or more of these books, with Thompson and Mayer being the most popular. Some troops even took copies of the new works with them to Mexico. Excerpts and paraphrases from these works undergirded the visions of plunder entertained by a number of soldiers, even as they also helped shape preconceptions of Mexicans as a lazy, indolent people trapped in religious bigotry and the superstition of a despotic church.²⁶

Songwriting soldiers and poets transferred these visions of ecclesiastical gold and silver into war songs. The writer of the "Song of the Volunteers" hoped that "when we've punished them enough, We'll make them sell us out the stuff."²⁷ Even more straightforward was this song sung to the tune of "Yankee Doodle":

We're the boys for Mexico
Sing Yankee Doodle Dandy,
Gold and silver images,
Plentiful and handy.
Churches grand, with altars rich,

²⁶ John R. Kenly, *Memoirs of a Maryland Volunteer. War with Mexico* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Co., 1873), 293-294, 417; H. Judge Moore, *Scott's Campaign in Mexico* (Charleston: J.B. Nixon, 1849), 40-43; Madison Mills Diary, 31 July 1847, Filson Club Historical Society; [Giddings], *Sketches*, 26; Fitch Taylor, *The Broad Pennant: Or, A Cruise in the United States Flag Ship of the Gulf Squadron, During the Mexican Difficulties . . .* (New York: Leavitt, Trow, and Co., 1848), 70; William Preston Journal, 27 November 1847, Preston Family Papers, Typescript, Filson Club Historical Society; John F. Meginness Journal, 26 February 1848, University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections; Richard McSherry, *El Puchero: Or, A Mixed Dish from Mexico . . .* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, and Co., 1850), 137, 146-47; William S. Henry, *Campaign Sketches of the War with Mexico* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1847), 114; Joseph E. Chance, ed., *Mexico Under Fire, Being the Diary of Samuel Ryan Curtis . . . 1846-1847* (Ft. Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1994), 61.

²⁷ William McCarty, ed., *National Songs, Ballads, and Other Patriotic Poetry, Chiefly Relating to the War of 1846* (Philadelphia: William McCarty, 1846), 36.

Saints with diamond collars,
(That's the talk to understand,) ²⁸
With lots of new bright dollars.

Such songs as these were popular among the volunteers, as were ballads derogatory of Mexico's Catholic clergy.²⁹ The *Liberator* mocked such martial poetry with its own farcical songs:

There are Spaniards, and Indians, and Blacks, and
Castillians,
Who have silver and gold in their flimsy pavilions;
And the wild dogs and vultures shall banquet on mil-
lions,
There are maidens to ravish, and churches to plun-
der,
And their loveliest vales shall resound to our thunder!³⁰

Evidently, these songs demonstrated the far-reaching influence upon soldiers of authors' descriptions of Mexican Catholic wealth.

Overall, Manifest Destiny, and its accompanying beliefs in the providential spread of Anglo-Saxons, republicanism, and Protestantism, overshadowed the more base desire for the outright looting of the Mexican Church's wealth. This Manifest Destiny sentiment was still anti-Catholic and infused with a deep racism, but it channeled negative views of Mexicans, their culture, and Catholicism into a workable expansionist philosophy based upon race and religion. Americans carried this complex ideology into Mexico. Soldiers, correspondents, and other travelers in Mexico commonly expressed a belief that Mexico was a barbaric and backwards nation. They cited race and religion as

²⁸ An American Officer, *The Rough and Ready Songster* (New York: Nafis and Cornish, ca. 1848), 20.

²⁹ *American Star*, 21 November 1847.

³⁰ *Liberator*, 29 May 1846.

the two main causes of Mexico's problems and insisted that the cure was the introduction of true republicanism accompanied by a pure gospel. This would civilize and modernize Mexico through the advent of religious and civil liberty. The American invasion, or even partial annexation, would thus be favorable to Mexico. This was the more positive American view. A smaller segment of the soldiery believed that Mexico was not ready at all for a republican form of government and perhaps never would be.³¹ Such men often viewed Mexico as an American "Promised Land," and the Mexicans as Canaanites who had to be removed to make way for God's favored people. One Ohio volunteer, using Biblical language, called "the enterprising blue-eyed Saxon--the chosen people of the age."³²

Soldiers found Mexican culture, dress, and manners to be so different from their own that they invariably ranked Mexicans as savage and inferior. Americans, Protestant and Catholic alike, also agreed that Mexico was indeed a backward nation in an age of market and industrial expansion. However, when looking for causation Catholic soldiers were more apt to point to race or the Mexican military, while Protestants more often than not added religion into the mix. According to anti-Catholics and nativists, Catholicism

³¹ D.E. Livingston-Little, ed., *The Mexican War Diary of Thomas D. Tennery* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 37-38; *The North American* (Mexico), 17 February 1848; Richmond, ed., *Essays on the Mexican War*, 98.

³² [Giddings], *Sketches*, 54. See also Albert K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansion in American History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1935). Weinberg claims that Manifest Destiny "harmonized Calvinistic pride and equalitarianism." According to Weinberg, the mission of the United States was not necessarily to elevate Latin Americans, but rather to provide for the free development of Americans, who had been blessed by God with liberty (128-29). Frederick Merk identifies the concept of religious freedom as an important feature of Manifest Destiny. However, in his discussion of the U.S.-Mexican War he does not explore the relationship between anti-Catholicism and this drive for religious liberty. Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), viii-ix, 29-30.

was by its very nature anti-republican. The leap in logic, then, was quite small toward connecting Mexico's social backwardness and political troubles with Catholicism. Perceived and real corruption in the Mexican Catholic Church did little to alter this view.³³

Polk and his generals aimed at quelling anti-Catholicism in the ranks of the army and quieting Mexican fears that the war would take on a religious character. They did not concern themselves with issues of racial caricature. American soldiers usually perceived Mexicans as a unique entity, but at times when criticizing the country they divided its populace into subgroups, such as Spanish, Indian, Mixed, and Negro. Most soldiers blended race and religion together, sometimes labeling Mexicans as members of a Catholic race. Soldiers blamed all these groups for everything from Mexico's political troubles to its perceived ignorance and backwardness. John Scott, a prisoner during much of the war, offered this description of a Mexican: "Hardy, cruel, unrelenting, savage, treacherous, dirty, vulgar, and obscene, the essence of these qualities make up his composition." Many other American soldiers depicted Mexicans in a similar fashion.³⁴

³³ Edward Constantine Davidson to Brother, 3 February 1848, Edward Constantine Davidson Letters, University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections; Eleanor Damon Pace, ed., "The Diary and Letters of William P. Rogers, 1846-1862," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 32 (1929), 268, 271; William W. Carpenter, *Travels and Adventures in Mexico* . . . (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1851), 285-88; Rhoda van Bibber Tanner Doubleday, ed., *Journals of the Late Brevet Major Philip Norbourne Barbour* . . . (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1936), 70; Smith and Judah, eds., *Chronicles*, 126.

³⁴ John Scott, *Encarnation, or the Prisoners in Mexico* (Louisville: G.H. Monsarrat, and Co., 1848), 8; [Giddings], *Sketches*, 51, 53-54, 87; Lawrence R. Clayton and Joseph E. Chance, eds., *The March to Monterrey: The Diary of Lieutenant Rankin Dilworth, U.S. Army* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1996), 35; William H. Daniel Military Diary, no date, page 12, Filson Club Historical Society; Tennessee Cavalry, 2d Regt. Journal, 12, 20 April 1847, University Of Tennessee, Special Collections Library; Samuel C. Reid, *The Scouting Expeditions of McCulloch's Texas Rangers* . . . (Philadelphia: G.B. Zieber and Co., 1847), 42; William King to Mother, 22 September 1846, William King Papers, University of Tennessee, Special Collections Library; William A. McClintock, "Journal of a Trip through Texas and Northern Mexico in 1846-1847," 3 pts., *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 34 (1930-31): 144, 157, 232; Columbus Goodwin to

The Spanish portion of Mexico's heritage occasioned many remarks from Americans. Indeed, some Americans in Mexico referred to Mexicans as only Spanish or Spaniards. Those who blamed Spain for the degradation they found in Mexico often intermixed their criticism of the Spanish with that of the Catholic Church. Spain and Rome working together, according to one soldier, had succeeded in stifling industry and creating a serfdom in Mexico.³⁵ "Do the Spaniards take everywhere a moral contagion?" asked another soldier in reference to the Catholic Church's legacy in Mexico and California. Another remarked that "the Mexicans became mere animals" at the hands of the Spanish, and "the ministers of this task were the priests."³⁶ Americans often blamed Spaniards for ruining what was formerly a superior, Indian race. Some Protestant Christians went so far as to claim that the religion of the Aztecs was more pure than that of Catholic Christianity. Others found the Navajos of New Mexico to be a more impressive people than "Spaniards." In any case, Catholicism was the primary curse placed upon Mexico by Spain.³⁷ The *American Star* summed up this view when it called for the occupation of Mexico in order to preserve republicanism in Mexico, noting that Indians had "a fertility for the social virtues which the Hispano-Mexican has despised."

Tom, date unknown, Columbus Goodwin Letter, Filson Club Historical Society; L.W. Jordan, "A Letter from Mexico," *Tennessee Historical Magazine* 9 (1926): 280.

³⁵ George Ballentine, *Autobiography of an English Soldier in the United States Army . . .* (New York: Stringer and Townsend, 1853), 232-33.

³⁶ Philip St. George Cooke, *The Conquest of New Mexico and California in 1846-1848* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1878; reprint, Chicago: the Rio Grande Press, 1994), 275; Robertson, *Reminiscences*, 10-11.

³⁷ Graham A. Barringer, ed., "The Mexican War Journal of Henry S. Lane," *Indiana Magazine of History* 53 (1957): 426; Jacob S. Robinson, *A Journal of the Santa Fe Expedition Under Colonel Doniphan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1932; reprint of the 1848 edition), 62; Raphael Semmes, *The Campaign of General Scott, in the Valley of Mexico* (Cincinnati: Moore and Anderson, 1852), 364-65.

By removing the Spaniards' descendants, Indians could be lifted up to republican heights.³⁸ This point is significant, because it shows that in the racialism espoused by some American soldiers, Europeans who were also Catholics did not rate as highly as Protestant Europeans when compared to Indians. For these American soldiers, then, Roman Catholicism seems to have been a critical factor in anti-Spanish (i.e., Mexican) feeling.

While some faulted a Spanish heritage of race and religion for the poor state of republicanism and industry in Mexico, others blamed the very same Indians their comrades sympathetically admired. Officers and enlisted alike, volunteer and regular, commonly used terms like "degenerate sons of the Aztecs," "savage," and "inferior," to refer to the Indian inhabitants of Mexico. Such men compared the Indians of Mexico to the tribes located within the boundaries of the United States and implied that they too could be pushed aside or even exterminated to make way for the Anglo-Saxon.³⁹ Only Anglo-Saxons were industrious enough to make use of the resources of Mexico. Col. William B. Campbell of Tennessee was of the opinion that the "... the mass of the population of this country are the unadulterated race and lineal descendants of the Indians conquered by Cortez, and are evidently to this late day but little improved. ..."⁴⁰ Young

³⁸ *American Star*, 31 October 1847.

³⁹ *General Scott and His Staff*. . . (Philadelphia: Grigg, Elliot and Co., 1848), 113; John Hammond Moore, ed., "Private Johnson Fights the Mexicans, 1847-1848," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 67 (1966): 218; Mark L. Gardner and Marc Simmons, eds., *The Mexican War Correspondence of Richard Smith Elliot* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 176; Robertson, *Reminiscences*, 264-65; *New York Herald*, 5 March 1848.

⁴⁰ St. George L. Sioussat, ed., "Mexican War Letters of Colonel William Bowen Campbell of Tennessee, Written to Governor David Campbell, of Virginia, 1846-1847," *Tennessee Historical Magazine* 1 (1915): 165.

George G. Meade acknowledged the legacy of Spanish conquistadors, but thought that the once strong Spaniard had been enervated by mixing with weaker Indians and Africans.⁴¹

Despite some praise for Mexico's Aztec past, Americans in general lamented the dearth of Europeans in the country. Some even claimed that Mexico had declined precisely because the Jesuits, along with much of the Spanish population, had left. Coming from an anti-Catholic climate in the United States where the term "Jesuitism" was synonymous with sinister underhandedness, this mourning of the loss of Jesuits is indeed astonishing. These Americans believed that Indians, left to rule the country and the Church on their own, had failed miserably in both cases. These American men cited poor moral character and paganism under the guise of Catholicism as the best evidence of Mexico's decline. Thus, within this paradigm the hegemony of the Mexican Church and its corruption were due not to Spaniards or even Jesuits, as other soldiers claimed, but to indigenous Indian influence.⁴²

Common, too, were comparisons of the Mexican population in skin color and intelligence to African slaves and free blacks back in the United States. Soldiers writing home to reassure their wives about the ugliness of Mexican women compared them to

⁴¹ George Gordon Meade, *The Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade* (2 vols., New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 1: 120.

⁴² Francis Baylies, *A Narrative of Major General Wool's Campaign in Mexico in the Years 1846, 1847 and 1848* (Albany: Little and Company, 1851), 11; McSherry, *El Puchero*, 139; Robertson, *Reminiscences*, 115-16.

blacks in the United States and sometimes even to orangutans.⁴³ More often, though, Americans likened the degraded state of education and religion among Mexicans to that of American slaves. They viewed peonage as worse than slavery and portrayed the Catholic priesthood as the worst slavemaster of all: "At least nine-tenths of the inhabitants of this delightful clime are more degraded than the African race among us and are in the most abject state of servitude to the priests." Perhaps one Tennessean summed up the feelings of a great many American soldiers when he declared, "I think I should be pretty well pleased with this country if there was white folks here but there is nothing in the world could induce me to stay here among these molatto [*sic*] Mexicans." In other words, if not for Mexicans, Mexico might be a wonderful place.⁴⁴

Not all soldiers held such a low opinion of Mexicans, however. In fact, some found themselves pleasantly surprised that after all of the negative predictions they had heard or read, they found just the opposite upon entering Mexico.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the

⁴³ Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Monterrey is Ours! The Mexican War Letters of Lieutenant Dana, 1845-1847* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1990), 144; Levi White to Sarah White, 3 October 1846, Levi White Letters, Filson Club Historical Society.

⁴⁴ Jordan, "A Letter From Mexico," 280; Robertson, *Reminiscences*, 263-64; William King to Mother, undated, William King Papers, University of Tennessee, Special Collections Library. See also Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981). Horsman argues that by the 1850s, Americans saw themselves as a superior race destined to spread effective government, economic prosperity, and Christianity throughout North America and the world. The U.S.-Mexican War served as a catalyst in this development, because Americans developed negative opinions of Mexicans as inferior, lazy, and dishonest mongrels. Despite his inclusion of the spread of Christianity as part of the United States' destiny, Horsman does not connect Anglo-Saxonism with Mexico's religion or American anti-Catholicism (1-2, 208-12). Thomas R. Hietala and Frederick Merk also cite racism and ethnocentrism as a driving force behind American expansion, but do not comment upon the role of religious bigotry in Americans' denigration of Mexico. Hietala, *Manifest Design: Anxious Aggrandizement in Late Jacksonian America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 154-66; Merk, *Manifest Destiny*, 29-31.

⁴⁵ Richard M. Creagh to Brother, 26 September 1846, Richard M. Creagh Letters, Filson Club Historical Society.

vast majority of American fighting men hoped to bring republicanism, modernity, and especially civil and religious liberty to Mexico. Depending on the person, this meant exterminating Indians, annexing Mexican territory to the United States, occupying Mexico until a true republic could be sustained, or perhaps just destroying the Church and leaving the Mexicans to build a republic by themselves. In all cases, the power, wealth, and influence of the Church would have to be altered radically.

Critical to American republicanism was a belief in civil and religious liberty. With a state religion, Mexico certainly did not qualify in the minds of these American soldiers as having religious liberty. Nevertheless, the call by these men for religious liberty and the spread of republican institutions in Mexico often masked a deeper and more general anti-Catholicism that viewed the Roman Catholic Church as inimical to republicanism by its very nature. Mexico was not a backwards nation merely because of race or bad luck in God's agricultural and mineral lottery. In fact, Mexico was a fertile and mineral rich country. To account for the poverty and apparent backwardness they encountered, many Americans blamed racial inferiority. However, most of the time they intertwined such race-based criticism with denunciations of Roman Catholicism. At a time when nativists were attacking Catholicism in the United States as an anti-republican, conspiratorial threat, many Americans' first experience of Roman Catholicism occurred in Mexico. Along with preconceived notions of Mexico and Catholicism in general, the foreignness of Mexican culture and religion greatly affected their opinions.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ For different views on the topic of American soldiers' attitudes toward the Mexican Catholic Church, see Richard Bruce Winders, *Mr. Polk's Army: The American Military Experience in the Mexican War* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997) and Robert W. Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

Major Henry S. Lane of Indiana emphasized the Mexicans' religious faith as the primary cause for not advantageously using their natural resources:

The people here are ignorant & bigotted [*sic*] Roman Catholics & are more than a [*sic*] One Hundred years behind the improvement & spirit of the age & it requires no gift of prophecy to foretell their doom, they are destined soon to fall before the all grasping & all conquering genius of genuine Americanism.

In his journal, Lane specifically cited the Catholic Spaniards and their "monster which is miscalled religion" as enslaving Mexico politically, socially, and religiously. Only the introduction of Protestantism into Mexico could establish a permanent free government, because only Protestant Christianity favored the kinds of freedoms and liberties that engendered honest, hard work.⁴⁷

Manifest Destiny, then, was not just American expansionism accompanied by republicanism. Rather, it meant the spread of Protestantism as a necessary facet of any real and vibrant republic. In the case of Mexico, successful republicanism meant ending Catholic dominance. John F. Meginness hoped that Anglo-Saxons, as the "second conqueror" of the morally-ignorant Mexicans, could bring "the light of science" to "the state of Priest ridden Mexico." Like Lane, Meginness complained that ignorant and lazy Mexicans made little use of their many natural resources. He believed that the forced introduction of religious toleration into Mexico would allow Protestant schools to be

Winders argues that "It is difficult to tell if these observers truly were outraged by the church as they saw it or if they merely were expressing the anti-Catholic sentiment that already existed in the United States during the 1840s" (183). Johannsen, however, finds a definite link between American anti-Catholicism and most soldiers' negative views of Mexican Catholicism, but he does not sufficiently explore this connection (167). My dissertation, in large part, is an attempt to fill this gap in Johannsen's research.

⁴⁷ Henry S. Lane to General Samuel Stone, 5 November 1846, typescript, Miscellaneous Papers of Henry Smith Lane, Filson Club Historical Society; Barringer, ed., "The Mexican War Journal of Henry S. Lane," 426-27.

established, thereby educating the populace in morals and industry at the same time.

Providence, according to Meginness, had made the United States the instrument whereby Mexico would be freed from the degrading shackles of Catholicism. Fertile Mexico could bloom like a beautiful flower, but only after Americans had driven ignorance and superstition from the land. "Mexicans! Suffer your destiny," Meginness exclaimed.⁴⁸

Lane and Meginness were not alone in their conviction that an overweening Providence guided the American army as it sought to take republicanism to Mexico by some combination of annexation, force, and good example. Many soldiers felt a clear sense of mission with regard to their sojourn in Mexico. Even without the looting of church wealth, the weakening or destruction of Catholic power would be a victory for republicanism everywhere. Americans had the opportunity to bring a "pure gospel" to Mexico. Like a number of evangelical Protestants and nativists in the United States, many of these soldiers viewed their task as one of religious evangelization, resulting from conquest and political change. This transformation would likely occur, regardless of the outcome of the conflict. Many thought that such an opportunity should not be ignored, despite official statements from Washington and its generals that the religion of the Mexicans should remain unmolested. Mexico was a promised land in more ways than one. Either the Canaanites would be driven out to make way for God's favored people or those very same Canaanites would have to open up their country to Protestant Bibles and Protestant preachers. Until free of Catholicism and its controlling priesthood, Mexico

⁴⁸ John F. Meginness Journal, 10 March, 30 April, 2, 15 May 1848, John F. Meginness Papers, University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections.

could never be truly free to function as a republic.⁴⁹ The *Daily American Star* boldly hoped that Mexicans would slowly melt away from the countryside as this evolution took place beneath the spires of American Protestant churches.⁵⁰

Many Americans experienced Catholicism for the first time while in Mexico, but most of them already had some convictions about the Roman Catholic faith. Those from the urban centers of the northeast and from Louisiana, for example, certainly had prior contact with Catholics and priests; most other Americans had not. The chance to encounter Catholicism in some form existed in all theaters of the war in Mexico. The prominent size and sheer number of churches in Mexican towns and cities drew the immediate attention of Americans as they proceeded in their invasion and occupation of Mexico. After the boredom of long marches and camp life, soldiers welcomed visits to churches as a relief that satisfied both curiosity and the need for some recreation. The U.S. Army's use of churches and monasteries as hospitals and quarters also made it easy

⁴⁹ John A. Newman to General John Russwurm, 8 July 1846, John Russwurm Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives; Pace, ed., "Diary and Letters," 268; Baylies, *A Narrative*, 62; Samuel G. French, *Two Wars: An Autobiography of General Samuel G. French* (Nashville: Confederate Veteran, 1901), 45; Robert Anderson, *An Artillery Officer in the Mexican War, 1846-1847* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1911), 175, 181, 270; Henry, *Campaign Sketches*, 49-50, 241-42; Carter, ed., *For Honor, Glory, and Union*, 52-53; Robertson, *Reminiscences*, 29-33, 271-72; Captain of the Volunteers, *The Conquest of Santa Fe and Subjugation of New Mexico by the Military Forces of the United States* (Philadelphia: H. Packer and Co., 1847), 12-13; George T.M. Davis, *Autobiography of the Late Col. Geo. T.M. Davis, Captain and Aid-de-Camp [sic] Scott's Army of Invasion (Mexico), from Posthumous Papers* (New York: Press of Jenkins and McCowan, 1891), 259; Maria Clinton Collins, ed., "Journal of Francis Collins, An Artillery Officer in the Mexican War," *Quarterly Publication of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio* 10 (1915): 88-89; Henry A. Wise, *Los Gringos; Or, An Inside View of Mexico and California, with Wandering in Peru, Chili [sic], and Polynesia* (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1849), 82-83; J.F.H. Claiborne, ed., *Life and Correspondence of John A. Quitman* (2 vols., New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1860), 1: 396; Corrydon Donnavan, *Adventures in Mexico: Experienced during a Captivity of Seven Months in the Interior . . . with a View of the Present War . . .* (Cincinnati: Robinson and Jones, 1847), 109-11; Kenly, *Memoirs*, 300; *Daily American Star*, 23 December 1847; *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 12 May 1847; *New York Herald*, 20 September 1847, 14 February 1848; *North American (Mexico)*, 23 November, 10 December 1847, 10 January 1848.

⁵⁰ *Daily American Star*, 31 October 1847.

for Americans to be exposed to the Mexicans' religion. One other reason American men visited the churches of Mexico was to admire the upper class and well-dressed women present.

Attendance at churches allowed Americans to test their earlier preconceptions and knowledge of Mexico and Catholicism that they had gained from hearsay and also from accounts of writers like Thompson and Mayer. American Catholic soldiers often attended Mass in Mexican churches, but remarked little about such experiences. For non-Catholic soldiers, however, these encounters often confirmed or enhanced already extant religious, political, and racial beliefs. Attendance at Mass, meetings with priests and religious, the experience of various festivals and holy days, the examination of church interiors and architecture, the Jesuit chaplains, the San Patricio defection, as well as Army orders and the overly cautious behavior of certain officers all provided soldiers with opportunities to record their opinions of Roman Catholicism in their letters and journals. In their discussion of Mexican Catholic beliefs and practices, these sources revealed the opinions and level of knowledge that these Americans had about Catholicism in general.⁵¹

Larger churches and cathedrals in cities like Vera Cruz, Monterey, Puebla, and Mexico City particularly made strong impressions upon the American invaders.

⁵¹ Emma Jerome Blackwood, ed., *To Mexico with Scott: Letters of Captain Ephraim Kirby Smith to his Wife* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1917), 170; Albert G. Bracket, *General Lane's Brigade in Central Mexico* (Cincinnati: H.W. Derby and Co., 1854), 122; Carpenter, *Travels and Adventures in Mexico*, 40; Chance, ed., *Mexico Under Fire*, 84; A Prisoner, *Encarnacion Prisoners: Comprising an Account of the March of the Kentucky Cavalry . . . in Mexico* (Louisville: Prentice and Weissinger, 1848), 33; Ferrell, ed., *Monterrey is Ours!*, 104-05; Kenly, *Memoirs*, 376; Livingston-Little, *The Mexican War Diary*, 27-28; McCaffrey, ed., *"Surrounded by Dangers of All Kinds,"* 63; McClintock, "Journal of a Trip," 142; Scribner, *A Campaign in Mexico*, 31, 46-47; Tennessee Cavalry, 2d Regiment Journal, 12 April 1847, University of Tennessee, Special Collections Library; Levi White to Sarah White, 3 October 1846, Levi White Letters, Filson Club Historical Society.

Unprepared for the Old World architecture and colorful interiors, American reactions ranged from awe and admiration, to accusations of poor taste and barbaric gaudiness. Impressionable Edmund Kirby admired the "Moorish" churches of Mexico, and hoped they would inspire "steeple" builders back home.⁵² Thomas Neely Love, a Presbyterian surgeon traveling with the Mississippi infantry, considered Catholic religious practices to be "gross superstition" and a waste of time. He also disagreed with the Polk administration policy of conciliating the Mexican Catholic hierarchy and of buying rather than confiscating supplies from Mexicans. However, even Love found himself greatly impressed with the cathedral at Monterey.⁵³

Love was not alone in this disconnect between his low opinions of Mexicans and their religion on the one hand, and his high estimation on the other hand, of the many churches that dotted the Mexican landscape and dominated urban areas. In their journals and letters, soldiers often alternated criticisms of Catholicism and/or the Mexican Church with apologetic praise for its edifices of worship.⁵⁴ One wife grew worried that her husband might convert to Roman Catholicism, because in his letters home he described

⁵² Edmund Kirby to Wife, 2 May 1847, Edmund Kirby Letter, University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections; Reid, *The Scouting Expeditions*, 22.

⁵³ H. Grady Howell, Jr., ed., *A Southern Lacrimosa: The Mexican War Journal of Dr. Thomas Neely Love, Surgeon, Second Regiment Mississippi Infantry, U.S.A.* (Madison, Miss.: Chicksaw Bayou Press, 1996), 60, 83, 105, 130.

⁵⁴ Henry F. Dobyns, ed., *Hepah California! The Journal of Cave Johnson Couts from Monterey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, to Los Angeles, California during the Years 1848-1849* (Tucson: Arizona Pioneers' Historical Society, 1961), 61; Donnavan, *Adventures in Mexico*, 75; Oswandel, *Notes*, 220, 479; Daniel Runyon to David M. Runyon, 19 November 1847, Runyon Family Papers, Filson Club Historical Society; John Todd Roberts to Mr. Knott, 5 January 1847, John Todd Roberts Papers, Filson Club Historical Society; William Preston Journal, 27 November 1847, typescript, Filson Club Historical Society; Kenly, *Memoirs*, 157, 410-13; Benjamin Franklin Scribner, *Camp Life of a Volunteer* (Philadelphia: Grigg, Elliot and Co., 1847), 56.

his fascination with Catholic practices and the elaborate churches of Mexico. Reassuring her, the devout Episcopalian answered back from Puebla in August 1847: "You seem to express considerable anxiety lest I should become a Romanist. Have no fears on that subject for I assure you I am less one now than I was before I came to this country. I have seen too much wickedness among those who profess this faith to change my church." Still, while he thought Mexicans were idolatrous, he continued to enjoy their religious music and attend processions.⁵⁵

Other Americans found Mexican churches to be atrocious monuments to bad taste. One soldier complained that Mexican churches lacked the simplicity of those in the United States: "... One cannot enter a church in Mexico without disgust, excited by the numerous images and pictures with which the walls are disfigured."⁵⁶ Robert Greenhow found the ornamentation in the churches of otherwise pleasant Jalapa to be "tawdry" and "barbaric."⁵⁷ A Missouri lawyer and legislator turned volunteer mocked the "saintships" of an El Paso church, commenting that "I felt any little girl at home would have been ashamed of such a badly dressed set of dolls."⁵⁸ Richard McSherry, as a surgeon with the U.S. Navy, visited many churches in and around Vera Cruz that were occupied by Americans as hospitals. Although he found the interior of the churches to be imposing,

⁵⁵ Robert Ryal Miller, ed., *Journal and Letters of Ralph W. Kirkham* (College Station: Texas A and M University Press, 1991), 40, 25-26, 30, 32.

⁵⁶ *Sketches of the War in Northern Mexico* (New York: Appleton and Company, 1848), 41-42.

⁵⁷ *Washington Daily Union*, 4 May 1847. See also William Preston Journal, 19 December 1847, typescript, Filson Club Historical Society.

⁵⁸ Frank S. Edwards, *A Campaign in New Mexico with Colonel Doniphan* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1847), 99-100.

“the effect was impaired by a number of coarse paintings and tasteless statuary.” Of the rich ornamentation in the cathedral of Puebla, McSherry wrote: “It is the more remarkable, as in a large proportion of Mexican churches, there has been a lavish expenditure of money upon objects that a man of cultivated taste would declare at once to be neither seemly nor edifying.”⁵⁹

While American soldiers described the churches in all the cities they visited, Puebla elicited the majority of comments. Looking out across the vast, dusty skyline of Puebla, one could see the spires of over seventy churches. Of Puebla, General William J. Worth declared, “I am free to confess that I do not think that there is as much religion, and as little morality, in any town on the continent of America.” Impressed with Puebla’s “magnificent” cathedral and churches, but not its population, Worth exclaimed, “It seems utterly inconceivable that a population of this kind should inhabit such a beautiful and well-built city.”⁶⁰

The imposing churches of Puebla similarly overawed regular and volunteer soldiers, such as Israel Uncapher of Pennsylvania. Like many American volunteers who occupied Puebla following the city’s fall to General William Worth’s forces in May 1847, Uncapher thought that the cathedral surpassed anything that he had ever conceived of or seen. Jacob Oswandel, another Pennsylvania volunteer, likewise found the

⁵⁹ McSherry, *El Puchero*, 50, 56-57.

⁶⁰ Clayton and Chance, eds., *The March to Monterey*, 33, 35; Davis, *Autobiography*, 190; Raphael Semmes, *The Campaign of General Scott*, 152-53; *General Taylor and his Staff: comprising the Memoirs of Generals Taylor, Worth, Wool, and Butler . . .* (New York: Leavitt, Trow and Co., 1848), 106-07; *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 23 December 1846; *Washington Daily Union*, 1 January 1847; *New York Herald*, 15 October 1847; *New York Tribune*, 1 January, 11 November, 1847.

cathedral at Puebla to be "splendid" and "... truly a magnificent building." In describing the huge structure in his *Notes of the Mexican War*, Oswandel used the occasion to express his opinions about Catholicism. Admitting a lack of familiarity with Catholic rites and practices, Oswandel detailed "the manoeuvring of the so-called Christians," in and around the churches of Puebla. "I thought to myself how ignorant and degraded these Mexicans are, and think it no wonder, where the Catholic religion rules, that the country does not flourish." As a crusher of republican liberties that kept Mexicans "in ignorance and slavery," the bigoted church and its "iron yoke" would have to be banished from Mexico before the nation could be a successful republic.⁶¹

The sheer wealth exhibited inside Mexican churches left many Americans thunderstruck. Still for some, it did not live up to Mayer's descriptions or their own expectations. For example, one American newspaper correspondent observed: "The furniture around the altar was very neat; though not as costly as I had been led to suppose, from reading the account of those at Mexico. No diamond and pearl petticoats of 'Our Lady of Guadalupe.'"⁶² Overall, however, amazement and awe were the order of the day. Usually such admiration was mixed with a distaste leveled at Mexico and the Catholic Church for not spending their money on things such as schools, canals, roads, and other internal improvements.⁶³

⁶¹ Israel Uncapher Diary, 8 July 1847, Uncapher Papers, University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections; Oswandel, *Notes*, 205-08, 219-20, 374.

⁶² *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 16 June 1846.

⁶³ Oswandel, *Notes*, 403; *New York Evangelist*, 16 July 1846.

If the wealth, structure, and décor of Mexican churches gave Americans much about which to write, attendance at Mass and the observance of religious celebrations provided them an even greater opportunity to express their opinions regarding Catholicism. For most, such events were unprecedented experiences and elicited a variety of responses.⁶⁴ Combined with the glittering and colorful décor inside many Mexican churches, a Mass in Mexico could be an imposing sight to Americans used to simple and plain religious services. These encounters between Protestant American soldiers and Mexican Catholics engendered much comment about Roman Catholic practice and belief in general, not just Catholicism as practiced in Mexico. Thomas Tennery, an Illinois volunteer, wrote of the first Mass he attended in Mexico: "... about fifteen of us went up to ... the Catholic church ... the ministering garments appeared absurd to us but we could not censure a form because it did not concur with our preconceived opinions about religion." His experience at Mass moved Tennery to opine that it was just such "Priestcraft," in combination with an inferior race, that hampered republicanism in Mexico.⁶⁵

The strangeness of the religious services did not foster negative responses from all Americans, even those whose anti-Catholicism was prevalent in their other writings and letters home. What often impressed Americans the most was the sheer devoutness of Mexicans in the observance of their faith. Even those who found Mexican Catholic

⁶⁴ George C. Furber, *The Twelve Month Volunteer; Or, Journal of a Private in the Tennessee Regiment of Cavalry* ... (Cincinnati: J.A. and U.P. James, 1848), 188; Robinson, *A Journal*, 77; *Jonesborough Whig and Independent Journal*, 12 April 1848; *The Mountaineer*, 12 March 1847.

⁶⁵ Livingston-Little, ed., *The Mexican War Diary of Thomas D. Tennery*, 27-28, 76.

practices to be idolatrous sometimes concurred with this view. Volunteer John Kenly thought that the rites of the Roman Catholic Church were a positive influence on the Indians of Mexico whom he believed needed paintings and music and images to teach them Christianity.⁶⁶

Tennessee volunteer James Renshaw found no difference between Mexican and American Catholicism other than the fact that few Mexican churches had pews. Many soldiers were fascinated by the fact that without pews, all worshippers, rich and poor alike, and at times Mexicans and Americans, knelt side by side on the floor.⁶⁷ "The ceremonies were imposing and solemn; and every one--both Catholic and Protestant--Mexican and American--friend and foe--apparently in unity of spirit, joined in worship," commented George Furber about his experience.⁶⁸ Like Renshaw, Furber assumed that the practices of the Catholic Church in Mexico were exactly like its practices in the United States.⁶⁹ The sight of Mexican and American Catholics worshipping together contributed to this view. However, H. Judge Moore acknowledged that much more pomp existed in the "peculiarly solemn and impressive" Catholic Mass in Mexico than in the United States.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Carpenter, *Travels in Mexico*, 148; Chamberlain, *My Confessions*, 138; Kenly, *Memoirs*, 376-77; John Todd Roberts to Joseph Roberts, 11 November 1846, John Todd Roberts Papers, Filson Club Historical Society; Moore, *Scott's Campaign in Mexico*, 103; Smith, *Reminiscences*, 37; Smith and Judah, eds., *Chronicles of the Gringos*, 410.

⁶⁷ Kenly, *Memoirs*, 376-77; Smith and Judah, *Chronicles of the Gringos*, 410; *Jonesborough Whig and Independent Journal*, 12 April 1848; *National Intelligencer*, 8 January 1847.

⁶⁸ Furber, *The Twelve Month Volunteer*, 332.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 333.

⁷⁰ Moore, *Scott's Campaign in Mexico*, 102.

By far, tolerance or appreciation of religious differences was limited, and most Protestant soldiers in the army of occupation found Mexicans to be an idolatrous, superstitious people. Such men branded Catholic rites as "mummery" and "flummery." What Mexico demonstrated to these men, then, was the end result of allowing Roman Catholicism to gain the ascendancy in one's country. These soldiers' encounters with Catholicism thus lent credence to nativist claims about immigration, confirmed their fears of Catholicism's anti-republican nature, and reinforced anti-Catholic theology that Catholics were not Christians at all, but only superstitious idolaters. Surely, one would not want such a religion to gain power and prestige in the Protestant United States.

Such opinions existed separately from the more aggressive hope of plundering Mexican churches, but they grew out of the same root sentiment. By relegating both Mexicans and Catholicism to a level inferior to Anglo-Saxons and to Protestantism, American prejudice opened the door for a variety of abuses and degradations against Mexicans and their holy places. Writing to a friend in New Orleans, General Taylor acknowledged that derogatory reports of Mexican religious practices appearing in American newspapers could further enflame Americans:

I had observed a short time since from one of the newspapers reached here an acct of the flummery played off in devotion real or pretended as regards the forms & ceremonies appertaining to the Catholic religion at Puebla and other places which I thought were in bad taste & expected they would be animadverted on through the press in stringent terms. While I would respect & have it done as far as it was right & proper to do so, every religious denomination, Catholic as well as Protestant, yet I have a great contempt for hypocrisy & deceit of any kind. . . .⁷¹

⁷¹ Zachary Taylor to Robert C. Wood, 20 July 1847, in William K. Bixby and William H. Samson, eds., *Letters of Zachary Taylor from the Battlefields of the Mexican War* (Rochester: William K. Kirby, 1908; reprint, New York: Kraus Reprint Company, 1970), 117-18.

Polk and officers, such as Generals Taylor and Scott, constantly sought to quell such potential activity throughout the war. However, they could do little about negative descriptions of Catholicism in newspapers or in letters sent home.

Quite often, soldiers invariably penned communications about Masses and religious festivals in the terms expected by Taylor. A Missouri volunteer, describing a Mass he attended, observed: "The whole is a pompous, unmeaning show, & a gross mockery of the pure religion of the meek and humble Jesus whom they pretend to serve." Another soldier mourned that "... the mummerly of the service would have been laughable had it not been so melancholy to reflect that 'twas an attempt at the worship of God." Henry S. Lane agreed that the Mass lacked "the stern simplicity & sublime spirituality of the true religion of the Poor Nazarene. . . ." After his experience, Lane hoped:

If all the money which has been expended on this war had been expended to give the Gospel to the poor and deluded Mexican, oh what a glorious conquest we should make. Not a conquest of barren territory . . . but a conquest of souls, immortal souls, a conquest over ignorance, intolerance, & the mental thralldom of the Mother of Harlots.⁷²

Josiah Gregg concerned himself with the political, not spiritual, regeneration of Mexico. He found in the Mass all the reasons for Mexico's backwardness and faltering republican government. Indeed, it was the religion of the "poor deluded people" and "the time lost in such frequent ceremonies" that hampered republican advancement in Mexico. In Gregg's opinion, "the lowering of the priests" would be a second but equally great

⁷² Connelly, *Doniphan's Expedition*, 69; McCaffrey, "Surrounded by Dangers of All Kinds," 66; Barringer, "The Mexican War Journal of Henry S. Lane," 416-17.

benefit of the war, next to the destruction of the Mexican military. Both were despotic institutions. Francis Baylies concurred with Gregg's sentiments, and prayed for someone "to banish superstition and intolerance from the minds of the people; to plant in their stead wisdom, virtue, and true patriotism." Only in this manner, Baylies believed, could Mexico build and support free, republican institutions. Although critical of the war, General Scott's Inspector General, Ethan Allen Hitchcock, hoped that the war would make the priests of Mexico and their superstitions vulnerable to the common people, once the U.S. Army had destroyed the influence of the Mexican military and clergy.⁷³

Many soldiers simply described and critiqued the Catholic liturgy as part of their Mexican experience. They did so without contemplating "a conquest of souls" as called for by Lane, or analyzing Mexico's faltering republicanism like Gregg, Hitchcock, and Baylies did. Commonly, American soldiers attended a Mass or similar liturgical service, and afterwards wrote about the "mummery" performed by priests.⁷⁴ One complained to his sister: "You have no idea of the flummery that we see here every day, all of which the Mexicans call religion." By framing Mexican Catholic practices as "mummery," or "flummery," American soldiers found another route for the demonization of their enemy beyond that of race. However, no facet of demonization worked better than the use of

⁷³ Fulton, ed., *Diary & Letters of Josiah Gregg*, 2: 276-77, 294-95; Baylies, *A Narrative*, 62; W.A. Croffut, ed., *Fifty Years in Camp and Field: Diary of Major-General Ethan Allen Hitchcock, U.S.A.*, (New York and London: the Knickerbocker Press, 1909), 228, 307-08, 314-15.

⁷⁴ Doubleday, ed., *Journals of Philip Barbour*, 27; Allan Peskin, ed., *Volunteers: The Mexican War Journals of Private Richard Coulter and Sergeant Thomas Barclay, Company E, Second Pennsylvania Infantry* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1991), 275-76; Ferrell, ed., *Monterrey is Ours!*, 104; Smith, *Chile Con Carne*, 74; Joseph E. Chance, ed., *My Life in the Old Army: The Reminiscences of Abner Doubleday from the Collections of the New York Historical Society* (Ft. Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1998), 265.

labels like paganism, idolatry, and superstition. Calling the Catholic liturgy he had attended "foolery," one Southern volunteer became "thoroughly convinced that their worship is all wrong and nothing more than idolatry."⁷⁵

American fighting men in Mexico had to choose consciously to attend a Mass, except in the case of some officers who were required to attend local religious festivities. But even those who avoided Mass still found it impossible not to encounter the national religious faith of Mexico. For example, along with the obvious prominence of churches, monasteries, and religious schools in Mexican urban areas, small white crosses dotted the rural landscape of Mexico. The crosses marked the place of death of murder and accident victims. At times, bored volunteers angered locals by firing at the crosses for target practice.⁷⁶ The number of festivals and funerals, combined with the occupation of major cities in 1847 during Holy Week, ensured that even the noncurious would have some contact with Catholicism. In June 1847 in Puebla, Mexicans, fearing disruption by American soldiers, held many of their ceremonies for the Feast of Corpus Christi indoors. Nevertheless, Americans still attended them. Ralph Kirkham, unhappy that American officers participated in many of the festivities and carried candles in the processions, confided to his wife: "I believe the more I see of the Romish religion in this country, the more I am convinced that it is real idolatry." Kirkham continued on to cite the "perfect ignorance" and various superstitious practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Raphael Semmes, who at times found himself impressed with the "devotional effects upon the

⁷⁵ Winston and Judah, eds., *Chronicles of the Gringos*, 411; William King to Mother, 31 March 1847, William King Papers, University of Tennessee, Special Collections Library.

⁷⁶ Robertson, *Reminiscences*, 120; Judge Zo. S. Cook, "Mexican War Reminiscences," *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 19 (1957): 447; *Catholic Telegraph*, 2 March 1848.

worshipper" produced by Catholic architecture and statuary, similarly reviled the processions of Corpus Christi Day in Puebla as a Spanish tradition that discredited religion everywhere.⁷⁷

Mocking portrayals of festivals, weddings, and funerals also was a common occurrence in soldiers' letters home. As Taylor had predicted in his July 1847 letter to Robert C. Wood, the elaborate and usually derogatory descriptions from American soldiers in Mexico often found their way into American newspapers. In a letter to the *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, one soldier took the opportunity, while describing the August 1847 Feast of the Transfiguration held at Buena Vista, to rail against the "priestcraft" of Mexico. Going out of his way to proclaim that he did "not mean to say anything against the true Catholic religion," he aimed his attack at Mexican Catholicism.⁷⁸

Funerals attracted the most attention, because they were always partially held outdoors and thus were hard to miss. For some Americans, these were the first Catholic burials they had ever seen. Calling a funeral he observed "a strange commingling of the Romish superstitions and the ancient Indian funeral rites," Captain Ephraim Kirby Smith described it in detail to his wife. Smith blamed the superstitions of Mexican Catholicism not on Indian traditions, but on the "Romish" faith itself. Similarly, Raphael Semmes found a Mexican funeral to be an occurrence worth writing about it: "In the fancifully decorated coffin, lay the honored dead. Surrounded by the ghastly emblems which the

⁷⁷ Anderson, *An Artillery Officer*, 197; Miller, ed., *The Mexican War Journal and Letters of Ralph W. Kirkham*, 26-27; Semmes, *The Campaign of General Scott*, 144, 150-53.

⁷⁸ *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 26 August 1846, 7 September 1847; *Journal of Commerce*, 17 July 1847.

Catholic Church uses on such occasions to excite to devotion. . . ." The apparent happiness on the part of the Mexicans at a feast following the funeral of one young girl shocked American sensibilities. After observing a funeral, C.S. Coffey, a Methodist, Mason, and slaveowner from Mississippi, remarked that the Catholics of Mexico were not Christians, because they had such a "greate Eal of affectation about thar woshup." According to Coffey, the people of Mexico were too ignorant for anything but servitude. Like the Catholic Mass, Mexican funeral rites existed too far out of the spectrum of understanding or acceptance for many Americans, especially the feasting and rejoicing that invariably followed burials. Such experiences helped shape and solidify anti-Catholic sentiment toward the Mexicans' coreligionists in the United States, because a lack of prior experience with Catholicism led many American soldiers to believe not only that Catholic practices in the United States and Mexico were uniform, but also that political turmoil and slothful ignorance were the natural outgrowths of the despotic Roman faith.⁷⁹

Another religious activity impossible for American troops to avoid was the ringing of bells in the Catholic churches of Mexico. As elsewhere, convent and monastery bells called nuns and monks to prayer seven times per day, including in the late night and pre-dawn hours. Moreover, Mexican priests used bells to call the populace to Mass, report the time, and accentuate certain parts of the liturgy. A Brooklyn artilleryman who often lamented the number of "Romanists" in Mexico, complained that

⁷⁹ Blackwood, ed., *To Mexico with Scott*, 187; Semmes, *The Campaign of General Scott*, 92; William H. Daniel Military Diary, 20 November 1846, Filson Club Historical Society; Mary Ellen Rowe, ed., "The Mexican War Letters of Chesley Sheldon Coffey," *Journal of Mississippi History* 44 (1982), 244; Peskin, ed., *Volunteers*, 275-76; Donnavan, *Adventures in Mexico*, 39-40; *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 1 June, 8 August 1847.

"Bell-ringing is an occupation . . . To me, a heretic, this steeple poetry is anything but worship; is rather a mummary of monotonous sounds." Ephraim Kirby Smith blamed superstitions for leaving Mexicans "awfully addicted to the ringing bells." Indiana volunteer Isaac Smith mockingly wondered if the bell-ringing served the purpose of reminding Mexicans when to bow or take off their hats while they were immersed in a cock fight or gambling game.⁸⁰

In at least one case, bell ringing elicited a violent response from American soldiers. Albert Bracket, an officer serving under General Lane, acknowledged that he was unfamiliar with Roman Catholicism except for what he knew from Brantz Mayer's works. This ignorance often manifested itself through exactly the type of violence officially disallowed by Generals Taylor and Scott. Bracket permitted the troops under his command to threaten and attack the monks at a monastery in Puebla until the clerics offered the soldiers room and board. He bragged that "the Augustinians treated us well enough after we had choked the head monk." Once quartered in the monastery, Bracket and his company caused more trouble. Weary of the sound of bells ringing, he and some other soldiers attacked the monk in charge of the bells in order to make him stop. Afterwards, they climbed atop the steeple and attached their company flag to the cross as a sign of finality. Seemingly oblivious to his own actions, Bracket later wrote that he "never saw the least disrespect shown by our soldiers to the priests or Catholic ceremonies."⁸¹

⁸⁰ Pourade, ed., *The Sign of the Eagle*, 90, 98; Blackwood, *To Mexico with Scott*, 78; Isaac Smith, *Reminiscences of a Campaign in Mexico* . . . (Indianapolis: Chapman and Spann, 1848), 37.

⁸¹ Bracket, *General Lane's Brigade*, 121-22, 125.

Like roadside crosses, bell-ringing, and the plethora of festivals, the observance of the Sabbath in Mexico also engendered or brought to the surface anti-Catholic sentiment among American soldiers. One of the Protestant reform movements in the United States during the 1820s and 1830s had been Sabbatarianism. This movement embraced a multifaceted effort bent on the proper observance of the Christian Sabbath, which included simplicity, a lack of work, no frolicking or boisterous celebrations of any kind, the quiet worship of God, and avoidance of recognized vices like intemperance and gambling. Sundays in Mexico, with cock-fights, music being played in the streets by the same bands that had earlier performed in churches, and open gambling, shocked the sensibilities of many Protestant Americans and helped them build negative opinions of Mexican culture. Combined with the upbeat and celebratory music at Mexican Masses that many Americans found to be unfit for the Sabbath, Sundays in Mexico confirmed the fears of many soldiers about Catholicism's adverse effects on morality and worshipfulness.⁸²

Anti-Catholicism among American soldiers was not limited to common volunteer and regular soldiers nor to the desire to loot Mexican wealth. Methodist, Episcopalian, Baptist, and Presbyterian chaplains and soldiers, often working as colporteurs for various Bible and Protestant societies, especially despised Mexico's unrepudiated connection between the Catholic Church and the Mexican government. Protestant chaplains jostled for the honor of preaching the first Protestant sermon in Catholic Mexico, and many

⁸² Carpenter, *Travels and Adventures*, 229; Donnavan, *Adventures*, 37, 52; *House Executive Documents*, 30 Cong., 1 Sess., No. 41, "Notes of a Military Reconnaissance," 34 (Ser. 517); Reid, *The Scouting Expeditions*, 35; William H. Daniel Military Diary, no date, pages 27-28, Filson Club Historical Society; William Preston Journal, 25 May 1848, typescript, Filson Club Historical Society; *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer*, 28 May 1846; *Daily American Star*, 21 November 1847; *North American (Mexico)*, 10 January 1848; *The Picket Guard*, 13 May 1847.

claimed to have done so.⁸³ Some preachers joined volunteer regiments to double as chaplain and soldier. Others simply tagged along as preachers and ministers, not fighters. In some cases, a company's chaplain might be a pious but unordained soldier interested in his company's spiritual welfare.⁸⁴ A Texas volunteer did his best to hold non-denominational prayer meetings for his company. One of his fellow soldiers noted that the parson sure enjoyed shooting Mexicans, and "if he was a Methodist, there was not much *method* in his eloquence."⁸⁵ In the case of the First Tennessee Regiment, a Methodist commanding officer held popular prayer meetings in his own tent.⁸⁶ The sermons of Richard M. Poe, a Methodist preacher in Henry S. Lane's Indiana regiment, led some to observe the Sabbath more closely. In fact, Lane planned to join the Methodist Church officially following the war, as a result of Poe's sermons.⁸⁷

Most chaplains took with them numerous tracts, Bibles, and New Testaments which they distributed to soldiers.⁸⁸ Lewis Leonidas Allen, chaplain to a Louisiana volunteer regiment, also served as agent of the American Bible Society and came highly

⁸³ Thomas Bangs Thorpe, *Our Army at Monterey* . . . (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1848), 10; Thomas Bangs Thorpe, *Our Army on the Rio Grande* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1846), 171-72; Lewis Leonidas Allen, *Pencillings of Scenes upon the Rio Grande* (New York: n.p., 1848), 9; *Banner of Peace*, 21 August 1846; *Journal of Commerce*, 17 July 1846; *Public Ledger*, 27 June, 2 July 1846.

⁸⁴ *Boston Recorder*, 18 June 1846; *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 29 August 1847; *Journal of Commerce*, 12 June 1846; *The Western Weekly Review*, 30 April, 13 May 1847.

⁸⁵ Smith, *Chile Con Carne*, 31-32.

⁸⁶ *The Western Weekly Review*, 13 May 1847.

⁸⁷ Barringer, ed., "The Mexican War Journal of Henry S. Lane," 390-92, 397.

⁸⁸ *Boston Recorder*, 11 March 1847.

recommended to Scott by Secretary Marcy.⁸⁹ Allen ardently believed in Anglo-Saxonism and the providential mission of the United States to spread Protestantism and republican government over all of North America, including Mexico. Northeastern newspapers reprinted Allen's correspondence. In one letter, Allen outlined what he saw as the real purpose of the war: "And rest assured as soon as the star-spangled banner shall waive [sic] over the ramparts of Matamoras, there are men ready promptly to unfurl the banner of the cross by its side." Indeed, Allen handed out hundreds of tracts, Bibles, and New Testaments while still encamped in Louisiana, and took many more with him into Mexico, including ones printed in Spanish. In his published memoir, Allen wrote that "the introduction of Protestantism in the valley of the Rio Grande . . . must be of the deepest interest to all the admirers and followers of the Protestant Church." He likened American soldiers to the first Puritans, both groups of which carried their religious literature and beliefs with them into the wilderness. In this case, the "wilderness" was one only in the sense that Catholic Mexico denied its people republican government and the fruits of Protestant Christianity. Allen hoped for the day "when the valley of the Rio Grande will be peopled with those who obey the second commandment in the letter and spirit."⁹⁰ In other words, Catholic idolatry would one day be pushed aside by Protestant

⁸⁹ William L. Marcy to Winfield Scott, 23 September 1847, in *House Executive Documents*, 30 Cong., 1 Sess., No. 60, "Messages of the President of the United States with the Correspondence, Therewith Communicated, Between the Secretary of War and other Officers of the Government, on the Subject of the Mexican War," 1006 (Ser. 520).

⁹⁰ *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 26 May 1846; *Liberator*, 17 July 1846; *New York Tribune*, 6 June 1846; Allen, *Pencilings of Scenes*, 8, 9, 11, 17. In the Protestant numbering of the Ten Commandments, the second commandment prohibits the making of graven images.

Anglo-Saxons who, like their Puritan forefathers, would observe and practice a pure gospel.

The most popular Protestant chaplain was John McCarty, an Episcopal priest from Oswego, New York traveling with Scott's army. The only commissioned army chaplain to enter Mexico during the war, the Rev. McCarty was technically attached to the Second Brigade, First Division.⁹¹ With the American occupation of Mexico City, however, McCarty held weekly services and many soldiers had the opportunity to attend. McCarty's sermons were quite popular among U.S. soldiers, especially those who had not attended any kind of Protestant church service since leaving home.⁹² Correspondents, among them George Wilkins Kendall, and soldiers admired and respected McCarty. One soldier even believed that McCarty should be made "a brevet bishop."⁹³ McCarty delivered his sermons in Mexico City in the National Palace, and local American newspapers provided considerable advertisement for him, usually under titles like "Protestant Service." Attendee Lt. John J. Peck and his fellow officers wondered what the bishop of Mexico would do "when he learns of the doings of the heretics" in his own palace. Yet some soldiers, like Lt. Theodore Laidley, complained about sparse

⁹¹ Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army* (2 vols., Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), 1: 654; *North American* (Mexico), 30 November 1847.

⁹² Robert E. Lee to Family, 25 April 1847, in Cox, ed., *The Written Wars*, 167; Blackwood, ed., *To Mexico with Scott*, 145, 146; Israel Uncapher Diary, 26 September 1847, University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections; Hartman, *A Private's Own Journal*, 26 September 1847; Miller, ed., *The Mexican War Journal and Letters of Ralph W. Kirkham*, 26.

⁹³ Blackwood, ed., *To Mexico with Scott*, 214; *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 15 October 1847; *Mountaineer*, 14 January 1848.

attendance.⁹⁴

The Rev. McCarty delivered his most well-known sermon on October 3, 1847 in the National Palace. Given to celebrate a public thanksgiving for American victories, the sermon was so popular that the *American Star* printed one thousand copies upon the request of many officers.⁹⁵ Approving of the war as just and part of the design of Providence, McCarty preached that God had guided the American army safely from Vera Cruz to Mexico City. He entreated the men to thank God for their safety and victories, and to be temperate, chaste, and good Protestant examples to the Catholic Mexicans. As such, American soldiers could better be the instrument of relieving Catholic bigotry against Protestants. However, McCarty went further:

... let us realize that he has not preserved us and brought us here to 'revel in the Halls of Montezumas,' but to serve him and do our duty; especially by turning our success and our consequent influence over this people into the means of enlightening their religious ignorance and raising them from the degradation to which they are reduced. And this by extending the light and the blessings of our purer faith; so that by our christian [*sic*] influence and example and by the intercourse between us, they may imbibe something of our free spirit and throw off the shackles of military and spiritual despotism. Believing that Mexicans most need for their improvement, a purer exhibition of the Gospel of Christ (which toleration and the light of the scriptures would give them,) may it be ours to secure by all proper means the toleration of Protestants, so clearly their right and which we know from experience in other countries would exert an enlightening and purifying influence on the church of this country.

McCarty proclaimed that Americans had come to Mexico to protect the people, not to eradicate them. One of his primary motives was to open up Mexico to a pure gospel. He

⁹⁴ *American Star*, 23 September, 24 December 1847; *The North American* (Mexico City), 26 November, 3 December 1847; McCaffrey, ed., "Surrounded by Dangers of All Kinds," 149; Pourade, ed., *The Sign of the Eagle*, 118.

⁹⁵ *The American Star*, 26 October 1847.

hoped this could be accomplished as a result of the war and the ensuing influence the United States could wield over the people of Mexico.⁹⁶

Walter Colton, chaplain of the *U.S.S. Congress*, arrived in California in the middle of 1846. Able to examine the past work of Catholic missionaries in California, Colton admired them for their zeal and tireless labor. While Colton lacked the virulent anti-Catholic sentiment of some other Protestant chaplains, he found the manger scenes, Easter pageants, and rituals of Californian Catholics to be unfit for the Sabbath and proper worship. For the most part, Colton worked as an agent of the American Tract Society, distributing tracts and books. Elected *alcalde* of Monterey, California in September 1846, Colton also served as a judge.⁹⁷

Oftentimes, the level of anti-Catholic and Manifest Destiny rhetoric of volunteer chaplains far surpassed that of more prominent men like McCarty and Colton. G.G. Goss, chaplain of the Kentucky volunteers, linked the fight against Mexico to the struggle against Catholicism at home:

You have battled long and hard against Catholicism in Kentucky, but I assure you this war is making Protestants fast, very fast. Even those that came out Catholics, are completely disgusted, and have lost all confidence in the priesthood. Here we see it as it really is, unrestrained by Protestantism, sapping the very foundations of society, and laying waste what ought to have been the most flourishing country in the world.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ John McCarty, *A Thanksgiving Sermon, Preached in the National Palace, City of Mexico, on Sunday, October Third, A.D. 1847, on the Occasion of a Public Thanksgiving for the Victories Achieved by the Army of the United States* . . . (Mexico City: Office of the *American Star*, 1847), 3-5, 9, 12-16.

⁹⁷ Walter Colton, *Three Years in California* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1850), 44, 134, 181-82, 224-25, 244-45, 423, 439; *Journal of Commerce*, 28 November 1846; *National Intelligencer*, 11 December 1848; *New York Observer*, 2 January 1847. In most Mexican towns, the *alcalde* served a similar function to that of mayor and judge, although sometimes he would govern in tandem with a local priest.

⁹⁸ *Christian Observer*, 20 May 1848.

A New York clergyman traveling with the army called Catholicism a curse wrought upon Mexico by Spain. Faulting the "Spanish Catholicism" of the Mexicans as "the leading cause of their debasement," he thought that the Mexicans fought in vain, because the advance of Protestant Americans was unstoppable.⁹⁹ Naval chaplain Fitch Taylor also blamed Roman Catholicism for Mexico's problems and hoped the war would create an opening for Protestantism and end Catholic hegemony in Mexico.¹⁰⁰ William Ralston of the Tennessee Mounted Infantry often preached to his company. Ralston's opinion of Mexicans was that they "appear much more stupid and ignorant than the negroes of our country." Ralston's troops listened attentively to his usually anti-Catholic sermons, although he was not a great speaker.¹⁰¹

Joseph A. Yard's first activity as soldier and chaplain following American victories along the Rio Grande was to preach from Catholic pulpits. Considered a "zealot" by the *National Intelligencer*, Yard boasted "that one of the glorious fruits of our conquests is the substitution of the pure principles of Protestantism for the errors and idolatry of the Catholic religion."¹⁰² Andrew Jackson Potter, known as the "Fighting Parson of the Texan Frontier," similarly praised the war and hoped that the light of

⁹⁹ *New York Tribune*, 22 December 1847.

¹⁰⁰ Taylor, *The Broad Pennant*, 60, 136, 157-58, 206.

¹⁰¹ James C. Cooper to Father, 21 June 1846, Cooper Family Collection, University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections; Albert Gallatin Cooper to Elizabeth, 8 April 1847, *ibid.*; Captain Albert Gallatin Cooper Diary, 21 June 1846, Cooper Family Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville; William Ralston to Brother Mitchell, 1 February 1847, in *Banner of Peace*, 26 March 1847.

¹⁰² *National Intelligencer*, 2 December 1847.

Protestantism would spread over Catholic Mexico.¹⁰³ John McVicker, a regular chaplain stationed at Fort Columbus, New York, was also closely connected with the American Tract Society, the New York Bible Society, the Sunday School Union, and many individual benefactors. These groups contributed Bibles and copies of the *Book of Common Prayer* for McVicker to distribute to Colonel John D. Stevenson's California regiment. Like McCarty's thanksgiving sermon, McVicker's address upon handing out the religious books was popular enough for various societies to publish it. McVicker's Anglo-Saxonism and belief in Manifest Destiny were the primary themes of his sermon. He proclaimed that Anglo-Saxon Americans were "destined to engraft the Institutions of the East on the wild plants of the West—you are our chosen carriers to introduce into less favored lands a higher and purer Christian civilization." McVicker told his troops that their great task was to civilize and Christianize, not just to make war.¹⁰⁴

The *Advocate of Peace* lamented the prevalence of the providential Manifest Destiny and anti-Catholic religious war sentiment among Protestant chaplains like McVicker. The peace movement particularly criticized Richard A. Stewart, a sugar planter and Methodist minister from Louisiana. Captaining his own volunteer company, Stewart preached an Anglo-Saxonist sermon on the eve of the conquest of Matamoras that portrayed Americans as Israel, and "the land of Mexico . . . as the land of the

¹⁰³ H.A. Graves, *Andrew Jackson Potter, the Fighting Parson of the Texan Frontier* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1882), 43.

¹⁰⁴ *Register of all Officers and Agents* (Washington: J. and G.S. Gideon, 1847), 195; John McVicker, *Rev. Dr. McVicker's Address to the California Regiment* (New York: n.p., 1846), 2-11.

Cannanites" waiting to be conquered.¹⁰⁵ Stewart also held camp meetings among the troops and attempted to get soldiers to sign temperance agreements. Anti-war, evangelical publications, including the *Liberator*, singled out Stewart and his Matamoras sermon as representing the natural outgrowth of the idea that the war could serve as a Protestant crusade for the pure gospel against Catholic Mexico.¹⁰⁶

Deeply related to the variety of anti-Catholic sentiment in the army was the desertion of a group of predominantly foreign-born soldiers who then fought for Mexico under the auspices of the San Patricio battalion.¹⁰⁷ When combined with Mexican propaganda encouraging Irish Catholics and other foreigners in the U.S. Army to desert, anti-Catholicism and nativism in the ranks of the army helped drive these foreign-born soldiers to leave. Atrocities, church looting, and the poor treatment of priests and their churches fed easily into Catholic concerns that the Protestant United States was attacking Catholicism as well as Mexico. Such activity, as well as the sight of clerics blessing

¹⁰⁵ Doubleday, ed., *Journals of Philip Barbour*, 76; *Advocate of Peace*, January 1848; *Journal of Commerce*, 4 July 1846; *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*, 28 May 1846.

¹⁰⁶ Doubleday, ed., *Journals of Philip Barbour*, 76; *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer*, 30 July 1846; *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*, 7 August 1846; *Liberator*, 7 August 1846, 14 January 1848.

¹⁰⁷ Historians differ over the ethnic/religious composition of the San Patricio Battalion, as well as the motives for desertion of the immigrant soldiers who joined it. In his dissertation, Dennis Joseph Wynn argues that the soldiers deserted mainly for reasons of army discipline and discrimination, with religion being of less consequence. Wynn, "The San Patricios and the United States-Mexican War of 1846-1848" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Loyola University, 1982), 35, 205-6. Other historians, like John Porter Bloom, point out that the former Americans among the San Patricios did not join the Mexican army because they hated Protestantism and the United States. However, the deserters' foreign-born status and Catholic religion made the transition much easier. Bloom, "With the American Army into Mexico, 1846-1848" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Emory University, 1956), 175. Disagreeing with both of these historians is Peter F. Stevens, who alone makes use of John Riley's own letters in British and Mexican archives. Stevens argues that nativism and anti-Catholicism drove Catholic immigrant soldiers like Riley to desert, and that many of the Irish in particular likened the United States' attack on Mexico with that of England's occupation of Ireland, both being cases of Anglo-Saxonists subjugating inferior Catholic populations. Stevens, *The Rogue's March: John Riley and the St. Patrick's Battalion* (Washington: Brassey's Press, 1999), 76, 93, 295.

Mexican troops before battle, caused some foreign-born, Catholic soldiers to reconsider their newfound allegiance to the United States. Out of 111,063 troops who served during the war, approximately 9,000 men deserted.¹⁰⁸ The vast majority of deserters left the U.S. Army for reasons other than the distaste of fighting their coreligionists. Some simply wandered away drunk or in search of women and became afraid to return to camp. In some instances, Mexicans would impress intoxicated Americans into their military. Volunteers often did not like the harsh discipline they faced in the army. At times nativist officers distributed punishments unequally. One Irish company, for example, was confined to barracks after complaining about not being paid in time for their departure to Mexico. Moreover, for the same crimes oppressive officers would merely demote native-born soldiers while imprisoning, whipping, and dishonorably discharging Irish and German American men. Despite this variety of causes, much of the harsh discipline and inequitable punishments leveled at foreign-born soldiers by native officers mixed virulent anti-Catholicism with nativism.¹⁰⁹

Frederick Zeh, a Protestant immigrant who himself had enlisted in the regular army after facing nativist abuse when trying to join a volunteer regiment, believed that the San Patricios had been "stirred up by religious fanaticism" contained in Mexican broadsides. Zeh quoted one particular piece of Mexican propaganda in his journal: "Join

¹⁰⁸ Robert Ryal Miller, *Shamrock and Sword: The Saint Patrick Battalion in the U.S.-Mexican War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 23. Of the total number of regulars who served in Mexico, 13% deserted, compared to 6% of volunteers.

¹⁰⁹ Justin H. Smith, *The War with Mexico*, (2 vols., New York: Macmillan Co., 1919), 2: 318-19; Foos, "Mexican Wars," 138-43, 257-59; Wynn, "The San Patricios and the United States-Mexican War," 29-33, 35, 45-46, 49-51, 205; Bloom, "With the American Army into Mexico," 175-76; Stevens, *The Rogue's March*, 58, 76, 93, 290-95.

us and fight with us for our rights and for our sacred imperiled religion, against this infidel enemy, etc.” Zeh claimed that American troops were so incensed following the Battle of Churubusco in August 1847 that they at first gave the San Patricios no quarter. Only under the intensive efforts of commanding officers did American soldiers capture alive the approximately forty former American troops who remained.¹¹⁰

Mexican generals and government officials distributed many such broadsides throughout the war. Most offered land and money to American deserters. Mexico offered extra boons to those who would bring soldiers or weapons with them, or serve immediately in the Mexican military. Oftentimes, Mexican propaganda referred explicitly to religion when addressing German and Irish Americans. One broadside in particular caught the attention of the American press, because it appeared soon after the capture of the San Patricios. Addressed from Santa Anna to “Catholic Irishmen,” the broadside appealed to them to “Come over to us; you will be received under the laws of that truly Christian hospitality and good faith which Irish guests are entitled to expect and obtain from a Catholic nation.” Santa Anna then asked, “Is religion no longer the strongest of all human bonds?” Perfectly aware of nativist riots and church burnings in the United States, he then pointedly demanded: “What! Can you fight by the side of those who put fire to your temples in Boston and Philadelphia?” “Are Catholic Irishmen to be the destroyers of Catholic temples, murderers of Catholic priests, and the founders of heretical rites in this pious nation?”¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Orr and Miller, eds., *An Immigrant Soldier*, 55, 73.

¹¹¹ Pedro de Ampudia, “Army of the North,” 1846, broadside, University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections; Antonio López de Santa Anna, “Headquarters,” April 1847, broadside, “The President of the

Native American opinions of Irish-American and other foreign-born troops following the intense firefight with the San Patricios and their subsequent punishment differed. Catholics back home pointed out that many of the San Patricios were not Irish and blamed any complaints about their branding and hanging not on Irish Americans but on Mexican propaganda. The *New York Herald* praised "all good Irish soldiers," including General James Shields and General Robert Patterson. George Wilkins Kendall wrote from Mexico that Irish soldiers had been the most vigorous denunciators of John Riley and his seventy-two man battalion. Indeed, Irish-Americans already facing the usual mockery and ill treatment in the army worried even more following the capture of the San Patricios. The Irish Jasper Greens had already been involved in a firefight and riot over insults with the Kennesaw Rangers in Georgia in late 1846. Some feared that the treachery of Riley's men would only make things worse. Raphael Semmes summed up their sentiment thus: "The brave Irish . . . were the more rejoiced at this event than the native-born Americans even, as they had felt keenly the stigma which this conduct of their countrymen had cast upon them."¹¹²

Although historians disagree about the exact ethnic and religious makeup of Riley's battalion, at the time the vast majority of soldiers believed that the San Patricios

Mexican Republic to the troops engaged in the Army of the United States of America," 15 August 1847, broadside, *ibid.*; Antonio López de Santa Anna, "Mexicans to Catholic Irishmen," 1847, broadside, in *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 7 October 1847; *New York Herald*, 17 October 1847.

¹¹² Semmes, *The Campaign of General Scott*, 316; *Catholic Telegraph*, 22 October 1846; *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 28 October 1846; *National Intelligencer*, 17 September 1847; *New York Herald*, 13 June 1846, 19 September 1847.

were almost entirely Irish-Catholic, and it is easy to see why.¹¹³ The battalion flag was made of green silk. On one side was a Mexican coat of arms and the phrase, "Libertad por la Republica Mexican," beneath which was a motto that read "Erin go bragh." On the other side was an emblazoned figure of St. Patrick and the words "San Patricio." American soldiers generally assumed that the men of the San Patricio Battalion had joined the Mexican military out of religious sentiment.¹¹⁴

Stories of clerical interference and Catholic desertion had circulated since the very beginning of the war. The *New York Herald* remarked about Catholic religious affinity with the enemy at the very beginning of the war in May 1846:

The secret of the desertions from General Taylor we believe is this: A large proportion of the rank and file are Dutch and Irish Catholics. The river opposite Matamoras being only three hundred yards wide, the ringing of the bell for matins, vespers, mass, the elevation of the host, &c., in town, is distinctly heard on the opposite shore. At the signal, these good Christians were in the habit, even if in the midst of the drill, of suspending it for the superior duty of their religious genuflexions [*sic*]. Consequence--some rattaned one fine morning; and the next consequence was desertion.¹¹⁵

Robert Anderson blamed an Irish Catholic priest residing in Mexico for inflaming religious tensions among American troops in order to induce desertions by Catholic soldiers. But others, like an American correspondent in Mexico for the *Journal of Commerce*, blamed the desertion of "Romish soldiers" on the influence of Mexican

¹¹³ See Miller, *Shamrock and Sword*, 33-34, 174. Miller maintains that for propaganda purposes, Mexico emphasized the Irish-Catholic identity of the San Patricios much more than did the soldiers themselves. See also footnote 107.

¹¹⁴ *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 9 September 1847; Chamberlain, *My Confession*, 124; [Giddings], *Sketches*, 276-77; Orr and Miller, eds., *An Immigrant Soldier*, 55; Smith, *Chile Con Carne*, 247.

¹¹⁵ *New York Herald*, 17 May 1846.

priests. Moreover, this correspondent mocked the attempt of the Polk administration to fix the problem: "Their conscientious or superstitious fears about doing violence to that saintly republic, are said to have been awakened by certain *Padres* . . . and hence the necessity that some counteracting *Padres* should be obtained. So it will be Jesuit meet Jesuit until the soldiers shall be kept in their places."¹¹⁶

Adamant anti-Catholic forces in the United States sometimes blamed the desertion of foreigners and Catholics not on Mexican clerics but on American priests. For example, nativists in Philadelphia and elsewhere alleged that Irish-born Father Ignatius Mullen of New Orleans had advised his parishioners not to enlist, in order to avoid fighting against their coreligionists. Nativists commonly viewed the Roman Catholic Church as a monolithic entity, and the fact that Mexican priests encouraged American Catholic soldiers to give up arms led many anti-Catholic Americans to believe that priests in the United States must be doing the same. Fr. Mullen denied the nativists' charges, and the Catholic press prominently published his denials. The accusations quieted down after nearly forty men from Mullen's church volunteered. Rumors even circulated that Mullen himself had joined a volunteer company. Nativists worried, too, about the effect that the Jesuit chaplains would have on American Catholic loyalty in the army. Yet many of these same nativists had alleged early in the war that Catholics were deserting, because they did not like having Protestant chaplains.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Anderson, *An Artillery Officer*, 315; *Banner of Peace*, 19 June 1846; *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer*, 11 February 1847; *Journal of Commerce*, 20 June 1846; *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*, 2 October 1847.

¹¹⁷ *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer*, 11 February 1847; *Catholic Telegraph*, 11 June 1846; *Journal of Commerce*, 19 May 1846; *New York Herald*, 23 May 1846.

Even after the bloody defeat of the San Patricios at Churubusco and the American occupation of Mexico City, Mexicans continued their attempts to entice Americans to desert. Scott reacted by issuing a statement to his troops. Warning of disguised Mexican soldiers, thieves, and "false priests," Scott implored his men not to believe Mexican promises of land and money. He also added a threat: "Let all our soldiers, Protestant and Catholic, remember the fate of the deserters taken at Churubusco." The fate Scott referred to included the hanging of those who had deserted after the declaration of war, and the lashing and branding of those who had left before the start of the conflict. In all, twenty-seven were hanged, despite Mexican cries for leniency. But Riley, against the wishes of American soldiers, was among those who were only whipped and branded.¹¹⁸

Catholic soldiers were more concerned with two common, interrelated complaints about discrimination in the army than with the treatment of Catholic Mexico. The first of these was the unfair disciplinary practices of some nativist officers. Second, Catholic soldiers accused some Protestant officers of forcing them to attend Protestant services where sermons were "mainly directed to insulting, calumniating and abusing the Catholic Church." One officer jailed a young Irish Catholic lieutenant for not attending a Protestant service. In Texas, an angry Catholic soldier claimed that Taylor had commanded all soldiers to attend Presbyterian services in Corpus Christi: "We are forced to march every Sunday to listen to abusive declamations against our faith, under pain of imprisonment, and the loss of three or four months pay, for disobedience of orders."

¹¹⁸ Davis, *Autobiography*, 224; *National Intelligencer*, 23 October 1847; *New York Herald*, 9 January 1848; *North American* (Mexico), 7, 24 December 1847, 7 January 1848.

Taylor denied the accusations and maintained instead that all such services had been optional. Much of the Catholic press accepted Taylor's statement and in turn placed the blame on lesser and more sectarian officers. Still, most Catholics, including the editors of the *Catholic Telegraph* and Bishop John Hughes of New York, believed that instances of abuse and discrimination in the army were not isolated incidents. The *Catholic Telegraph* doubted if Taylor's troops could meticulously respect the Mexicans' religion as ordered, when they could not even do so within their own country. The *Telegraph* then charged that the United States government "always had the will to oppress, but the power was wanting; now they have it in the army."¹¹⁹

From the beginning of the war the Polk administration and American military officials anticipated the difficulties that anti-Catholicism in the army and the Mexican clergy posed to the quick conquest of Mexico. Polk first sought the help of Bishop Hughes to assist in assuring the Catholic bishops and people of Mexico that the war would not destroy their national religion.¹²⁰ Then, Polk appointed two members of the

¹¹⁹ Benjamin Blie, "Catholic Aspects of the Mexican War, 1846-1848," *Social Justice Review* 40 (1948): 367; Foos, "Mexican Wars," 138-43, 257-59; *Catholic Telegraph*, 2, 9, 16, 30 April 1846; *New York Herald*, 2 July 1846; *New York Observer*, 22 August 1846; *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*, 18 April 1846. Primary sources and secondary studies of nativism in the army, including my own, disagree with Isaac McDaniel's conclusions in his dissertation, "The Impact of the Mexican War on Anti-Catholicism in the United States" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1991). McDaniel argues that non-Catholic soldiers treated Catholic soldiers benignly. When nativists did abuse immigrant soldiers or disparage them, McDaniel claims that they did so for ethnic, not religious, reasons. Moreover, he takes this argument further by maintaining that American condescension and hatred of Mexicans was largely racial, not religious, in origin and character. See pp. 49, 62, 93-94. In my research, I have found that most American soldiers who expressed anti-Catholic and/or racist sentiment about Mexico viewed the Mexicans' race and religion as inseparable. Moreover, such nativists also commingled ethnicity and religion when attacking American Catholic soldiers.

¹²⁰ James Buchanan to John R.G. Hassard, 8 November 1864, in Thomas F. Meehan, "Archbishop Hughes and Mexico," *Historical Records and Studies* 19 (1929): 33-35; Milo Milton Quaife, ed., *The Diary of James K. Polk During his Presidency, 1845-1849* (4 vols., Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company, 1910), 1: 408-11; *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 30 May 1846; *Journal of Commerce*, 30 May 1846; *Episcopal*

Society of Jesus to accompany Taylor's army into Mexico. The Jesuits were to serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, Polk hoped that they could in some way demonstrate to Mexicans that the United States did not war upon their religion. On the other hand, however, the same two Jesuits could appease American Catholic soldiers as well, especially those who were foreign-born and might desert in the face of anti-Catholic sentiment in the army. Secretary of War Marcy informed General Taylor that:

It is confidently believed that these gentlemen in their clerical capacity will be useful in removing the false impressions of the Mexicans in relation to the United States, and in inducing them to confide in the assurance you have already given that their religious institutions will be respected, the property of the Church protected, their worship undisturbed, and in fine all their religious rights will be in the amplest manner preserved to them.¹²¹

Despite these clear aims on the part of Polk and Marcy, rumors and scandalous claims circulated through the American press, such as charges that the priests were spies and that their appointment revealed Catholic inroads in the federal government. The facts behind the authorization of the chaplains, however, were actually quite simple. Given his decision to have two Catholic priests accompany General Taylor's army, Polk had contacted Fr. Peter Verhaegen, the provincial head of the Society of Jesus at Georgetown College in Washington. Verhaegen then handpicked Anthony Rey and John McElroy. Although Polk claimed that he desired to ease the fears of the Catholic hierarchy and people of Mexico that the war would not be one of religion and the looting of clerical

Recorder, 13 June 1846; *Jonesborough Whig and Independent Journal*, 2 February 1848; *National Intelligencer*, 24 August 1846, 17 December 1847; *New York Herald*, 29 May 1846, 28 February 1848; *New York Observer*, 18 December 1847; *New York Tribune*, 6 June 1846.

¹²¹ Quaife, ed., *The Diary of Polk*, 1: 408-11; William Marcy to Zachary Taylor, 29 May 1846, in Thomas F. Meehan, "Catholics in the War with Mexico," *Historical Records and Studies* 12 (1918), 62-63; *National Intelligencer*, 27 July 1846; *New York Herald*, 3 July 1846.

wealth, neither priest spoke Spanish. Polk's primary concern was more likely Catholic morale in the army, preventing desertions, and preserving Catholic support for his administration and the Democratic Party.¹²²

Leaving Georgetown on June 2, 1846, the two Jesuits arrived off Brazos Santiago on July 2. For the first time at nearby Fort Polk they visited American soldiers who had been wounded in recent fighting. Fathers Rey and McElroy administered sacraments to Irish and Mexican Catholics at the hospital. As both chaplains traveled on to Matamoras, a number of Mexicans, who normally had to travel all the way to Matamoras to attend Mass or visit with a priest, gathered along the riverbanks to greet them. McElroy found that although the Mexicans appeared quite poor, they "seemed quite cheerful and happy in their rural simplicity."¹²³

Once securely in Mexico, the two priests separated but kept in contact through letters. Despite hopes and accusations to the contrary by anti-Catholics in the United States, both Rey and McElroy struck up working relationships with Mexican priests. In Camargo, for example, Fr. Rey spent a lot of time working with the local pastor. At Saltillo, the Rev. Dr. Sanchez housed Rey at his own home. Rey often presided at Mass, assisted by Sanchez.¹²⁴ The primary duties, however, of both Rey and McElroy quickly

¹²² *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer*, 8 October 1846; *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 4 August 1847; *Boston Recorder*, 23 July 1846; *Christian Observer*, 6 August 1847; *Episcopal Recorder*, 12 October 1846; *Liberator*, 7 August 1846; *National Intelligencer*, 2, 27 July 1846, 27 July 1847; *New York Observer*, 6 July, 22 August 1846; *New York Tribune*, 28 July 1846; *The Western Weekly Review*, 19 February 1847.

¹²³ John McElroy, "Chaplains for the Mexican War—1846," *Woodstock Letters* 16 (1887): 33-37.

¹²⁴ Fr. Rey to Fr. McElroy, 30 November 1846, in "Chaplains for the Mexican War—1846," *Woodstock Letters* 17 (1888): 153; *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 29 August 1846. Rey does not explain in his letter how the two men overcame their language barrier. Perhaps Sanchez spoke English or the two men passably communicated in Latin.

became that of hospital chaplain, although McElroy eventually established classes at Matamoras for English-speaking children connected to the army. Although the origin of these children is unclear from McElroy's diary and letters, most likely they were the sons and daughters of cooks, launderers, and merchants traveling with the army near the Texas border in northeastern Mexico.

Fr. McElroy's initial positive opinions of Mexico did not last long. Finding the cathedral at Matamoras in a state of disrepair, he wrote somewhat exaggeratedly in his journal: "--so much for the effects of the revolution. Since the Spanish yoke was cast off not one church as yet has been erected throughout all Mexico." McElroy found "the state of religion in Mexico . . . to be most deplorable." After seeing the country around Saltillo and Matamoras only (a hernia prevented him from traveling extensively), McElroy concluded that "there is no country in the world more destitute in the labors of the sacred ministry than Mexico; and I would add, in no country would a more abundant harvest be reaped, especially among the Indian race." Unhappy with the revolutionaries' expulsion of his own order as well as much of the Spanish-born priesthood from Mexico, McElroy blamed the problems on corrupt and uncaring Mexican priests. "All the good simple people want is a zealous, disinterested priesthood, in sufficient numbers."¹²⁵

Anthony Rey's experience in Mexico was quite different from that of the much older and often infirm McElroy. Unlike McElroy's experience at Matamoras of the dilapidated church, Rey traveled to Camargo, Monterey, Saltillo, and other towns that had large, well-built, and beautifully decorated churches. Moreover, during the Battle of

¹²⁵ McElroy, "Chaplains for the Mexican War—1846," *Woodstock Letters* 16 (1887): 227-29.

Monterey, Fr. Rey's bravery under fire endeared him to many of Taylor's troops.¹²⁶ One soldier wrote that because of Rey's attendance to the sick and wounded on the battlefield, "He has done much to remove the prejudices of Protestants, and been the means of the conversion of many." By "conversion," the infantryman meant primarily the baptism of the dying. Another soldier from Baltimore likewise praised Fr. Rey for being "unremitting in his attentions to the sick and wounded soldiers."¹²⁷

Rey's main job, like McElroy's, continued to be the administration of sacraments to wounded and dying soldiers. He also presided at Masses attended by both Mexicans and Americans. Rey was unhappy that the army had provided for only two Catholic chaplains, considering the large number of American Catholic troops. He busied himself traveling between Monterey, Camargo, and Saltillo, in order to minister to as many soldiers as possible. However, with most American troops gone from Monterey by late 1846, Rey decided to return to Matamoras to visit McElroy. Accompanied by Ohio volunteer William Burke, Rey set out for Matamoras around January 18, 1847. He never arrived, however, for Mexican bandits waylaid and killed both men just outside of Matamoras.¹²⁸ Echoing the *Matamoras Flag*, a Protestant soldier lamented the death of Fr. Rey and expressed astonishment that he had been killed "by those who worship in the

¹²⁶ Ibid., 37; *Catholic Telegraph*, 1 July 1847; *U.S. Catholic Magazine* (August 1847), 449-51.

¹²⁷ *Catholic Telegraph*, 29 October 1846; *U.S. Catholic Magazine* (February 1847), 112.

¹²⁸ Fr. Rey to Fr. McElroy, 17, 25 September, 30 November, 8 December 1846, 11 January 1847, in "Chaplains for the Mexican War—1846," *Woodstock Letters* 17 (1888): 8-10, 152-55, 159; *Catholic Telegraph*, 10 June 1847; *Washington Daily Union*, 23 June 1847.

same mode the same almighty." Other volunteers also found the killing of Rey by Catholic Mexicans hard to fathom.¹²⁹

News of Fr. Rey's death reached the United States via the concerned letters of McElroy. A number of Catholic and secular publications praised Rey's war record, while anti-Catholic publications used the priest's death to illustrate the depravity of Catholics. Some openly ridiculed the incident. The *National Intelligencer* surmised that Rey had been killed not because he was an American, but because he was a member of the banned Society of Jesus. Ohio volunteer Luther Giddings took the *Intelligencer's* thinking further, claiming that Fr. Rey had in fact gone along with the army in the first place only to secure Jesuit interests in Mexico.¹³⁰

Protestant soldiers held varied views about the Catholic chaplains. Most of these opinions were positive and rarely coincided with the firestorm at home in the Protestant and nativist press. Nevertheless, as Giddings' conclusion demonstrates, the fact that the two priests were Jesuits presented problems. The Society of Jesus bore the brunt of conspiratorial anti-Catholic rhetoric in the United States. After personal contact, one Ohio soldier believed Rey was a "good man" despite the fact that he was a Jesuit.¹³¹ Even the vehemently anti-Catholic Henry S. Lane, after hearing one of Fr. McElroy's sermons in January 1847, complimented the Jesuit and admitted that "There is charm

¹²⁹ Reid, *The Scouting Expeditions*, 226; Allen, *Mexican Treacheries*, 7.

¹³⁰ [Giddings], *Sketches*, 232-33; *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer*, 13 May, 3 June 1847; *National Intelligencer*, 17 April 1847; *The Presbyterian*, 17 April 1847; *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*, 14 August 1847.

¹³¹ Ferrell, ed., *Monterrey is Ours!*, 143.

even in the worst form of Christianity far surpassing the best form of Heathenism."¹³²

The next month, McElroy entertained a number of officers in his tent, including Lane.

The chaplain hoped that such casual dinners would help to remove anti-Catholic prejudice. His plan seemed to work, for Lane afterwards wrote, "If all Catholic priests were like him there would not half so much prejudice again[st] Catholicism."¹³³

Those Protestant soldiers who disapproved of the Catholic chaplains commonly expressed astonishment at seeing "an American minister officiating at the altar of the enemy," surrounded by both Americans and Mexicans.¹³⁴ Samuel Ryan Curtis, colonel of the Third Regiment of Ohio volunteers, recorded this opinion:

A great number of the regiment have gone into the city to attend Catholic church. Fr. McElroy sent out by the President is the only one I hear of who preaches in the English language. There is a kind of tempering whining policy in the position of our government in the matter of sending a Catholic priest into this barbarous Catholic country. Does our government wish to Catholicise these Catholics, or is the government afraid of Catholicism and do they [do] this to flatter the church with our cause?

Curtis believed that Polk had violated the Constitution by appointing any chaplain. But, to appoint a minister of "one of the most despotic and monarchistic" churches was simply egregious.¹³⁵

As military governor of Saltillo, Curtis chafed under the necessity of his attendance at a number of Masses, including some presided over by Fr. McElroy. A

¹³² Barringer, "The Mexican War Journal of Henry S. Lane," 413.

¹³³ Louis Berkeley Kines, "Lincoln in a Cassock: The Life of Father John McElroy, S.J., from 1792 to 1847" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Georgetown University, 1960), 82; Barringer, ed., "The Mexican War Journal of Henry S. Lane," 414-15.

¹³⁴ Henry, *Campaign Sketches*, 222.

¹³⁵ Chance, ed., *Mexico Under Fire*, 30.

Mason, he tried to pray and meditate, but was too distracted by the "novelty" of the service. About one of McElroy's services, he commented: "The performance was every way shocking to my nerves. I was immediately repelled, and left the scene mortified and disgusted." Still, Curtis acknowledged that "with all its dogmas and superstitions the great outline is still there. . . . I shall rejoice at my return to the land of puritanical customs. . . ." As his time in Mexico progressed, Curtis eventually began to mock Catholic practices in his diary, despite developing respect for McElroy.¹³⁶

As for Polk's original purposes in sending the two Jesuits, results were mixed. Fr. Rey believed that their mission was "to help our Catholic soldiers, and to endeavor to procure peace and friendship between the two fighting nations."¹³⁷ But McElroy thought that "the object of the President of the United States in our mission was altogether political."¹³⁸ The hope that the two men could befriend the Catholic hierarchy in Mexico or positively affect the Mexican people's views of the invading Americans, did not come to pass. The presence of the Catholic chaplains also did little to quell anti-Catholic sentiment and racism aimed at Mexicans. Fr. McElroy believed that the political nature of their mission had led to great haste in sending them to Mexico. The result was that both men were poorly prepared for proper missionary and religious work. Moreover, the lack of additional priests prevented the proper spiritual care of U.S. Catholic soldiers.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Ibid., 30, 61, 72, 84-85, 132-33, 180-81.

¹³⁷ Fr. Rey to Fr. McElroy, 3 August 1846, in "Chaplains for the Mexican War—1846" *Woodstock Letters* 17 (1888): 3.

¹³⁸ McElroy, "Chaplains for the Mexican War—1846," *Woodstock Letters* 16 (1887): 227.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

"As for conciliating the natives by traveling among them," McElroy observed, "I believe we have done little; they seem to increase in hostility, day by day, toward all Americans. Our Lord had other views than those of the President in sending us here."¹⁴⁰ Those "other views" were making converts and tending spiritually to both Protestants and Catholics in army hospitals. In the end, Fr. McElroy believed that the two chaplains' largest accomplishment was that their work with the sick and wounded lessened anti-Catholic prejudice by demonstrating Catholic charity and humility:

Our labors in these various departments had a happy effect on sectarian soldiers, and on the country generally . . . it is important for them to have an opportunity of learning somewhat of our religion, from our practice and from our labors. Thus I found that those who were shy in the commencement, became familiar and confident with us, in the end.¹⁴¹

Indeed, Rey and McElroy facilitated, in part, the more realistic of Polk's aims. But the president authorized no other Catholic chaplains during the war and none accompanied Scott's army into the heart of Mexico.

Besides the appointment of Catholic chaplains to Taylor's army, another part of the Polk administration strategy to conciliate Mexican Catholics was to make certain that American soldiers not only refrained from disrespect for Mexican clergy and churches, but also respected them conspicuously. Secretary of War Marcy warned Taylor before the start of hostilities to ensure that "particular care should be taken not to alarm the religious feelings of the Mexicans." This would be done through orders issued to American troops throughout the war. Commanding officers would also make known

¹⁴⁰ Fr. McElroy to Fr. Rey, 12 December 1846, in "Chaplains for the Mexican War—1846" *Woodstock Letters* 17 (1888): 156.

¹⁴¹ McElroy, "Chaplains for the Mexican War—1846" *Woodstock Letters* 16 (1887): 228.

American intentions through proclamations to the Mexican people.¹⁴² Generals Stephen W. Kearny, Edmund P. Gaines, Taylor, Scott, and Worth all issued such proclamations in their respective theaters of war, as did lesser officers. In some fashion, most imitated Taylor's original, which assured Mexicans: "Your religion, your altars and churches, and the property of your churches and citizens, the emblems of your faith and its ministers, shall be protected and remain inviolate." The proclamations often reminded Mexicans that Catholics fought in the U.S. army and worshipped freely in the United States. American newspapers published copies in the United States to convince the war's detractors that American soldiers were not wantonly pillaging Mexican shrines.¹⁴³

Soldiers received mixed signals from their superiors, despite official orders. In many cases, atrocities went unpunished, as did the physical abuse of priests in larger cities and the desecration of a number of churches. Moreover, commanders like General Caleb Cushing, General Gaines, and Commodore Robert F. Stockton preached the often incendiary language of Anglo-Saxonist, republican Manifest Destiny to their troops. Gaines described the war with Mexico as little more than "a foreign hierarchy against

¹⁴² William L. Marcy to Zachary Taylor, 2 March 1846, in *Senate Executive Documents*, 29 Cong., 1 Sess., No. 337, "Message of the President of the United States," 84 (Ser. 476).

¹⁴³ *House Executive Documents*, 30 Cong., 1 Sess., No. 60, "Messages of the President of the United States," 120, 145, 150, 167, 182, 262, 911, 937, 973, 1264, 1265 (Ser. 520); *House Executive Documents*, 29 Cong., 2 Sess., No. 19, "Occupation of Mexican Territory," 19-21, 102-03 (Ser. 499); Fayette Robinson, *An Account of the Organization of the Army of the United States* (2 vols., Philadelphia: E.H. Butler and Co., 1848), 1: 271; *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 11 March 1847; *Daily American Star*, 29 December 1847; *Matamoros Reveille*, 15 July 1846; *National Intelligencer*, 5, 6 October 1846, 9 March, 12 April 1847; *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 11 September 1846, 13 April, 20 May 1847; *New York Herald*, 22 May 1846, 2 November 1847, 8 January, 13 February 1848; *New York Observer*, 30 October 1847; *The Presbyterian*, 30 May 1846; *Washington Daily Union*, 10 January 1848.

American republicanism.”¹⁴⁴ Cushing likewise saw the conflict with Catholic Mexico as part of the design of Providence.¹⁴⁵ Stockton, who would later be an American Party senatorial candidate in the 1850s, viewed the United States as a Christian republic. Believing that divine providence had given him powers greater than a king in California, the commodore did not find the true glory of his conquest in silver mines, green fields, and blue skies. Rather, the glory lay in building schools in California and “in having lighted up the torch of religious liberty, as well as civil liberty . . . it illumines the dark path of the victim of religious intolerance and political despotism.” Stockton thought it was the United States’ divine duty to instill religious freedom and republicanism in Mexico, even if the war were to drag on for fifty years.¹⁴⁶

For their parts, Scott, Worth, and lower ranking officers assigned as military governors of various cities met privately with the hierarchy of the Mexican Church. Scott developed a good working relationship with Archbishop Juan Manual of the archdiocese of Mexico. For example, the prelate complimented the general’s attempts to respect the Church and both men reached easy agreement on the release of Mexican prisoners. After a month of bargaining via written correspondence, Scott allowed a number of prisoners to be released, based upon a pledge backed by Archbishop Manual

¹⁴⁴ John P. Gaines to Robert Jones, 2 September 1845, in *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 13 June 1846.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 5 August 1847.

¹⁴⁶ Robert F. Stockton, *Speech of Robert F. Stockton, on the Past, Present and Future of the American Party* (Camden: J.H. Jones and Co., 1859), 5, 19, 24; Robert F. Stockton to James K. Polk, 26 August 1846, James K. Polk Papers, Library of Congress; *New York Tribune*, 4 January 1848; *Presbyterian*, 8 January 1848.

that these men would not again engage in battle.¹⁴⁷

In Puebla, Mexican newspapers pointed out that despite Worth's meetings with their bishop and his well-dressed attendance at Mass, his soldiers had failed to follow his lead.¹⁴⁸ For the most part, Worth's soldiers agreed with his policy of conciliation, insofar as they hoped the influence of the clergy would attain a quick peace.¹⁴⁹ Worth himself joked of his troops' clerical relations, when in his 1847 Independence Day toast before his troops he proclaimed, "The Clergy of Puebla and the fair Senoritas of Jalapa--We kneel to the one and kiss our hands to the other."¹⁵⁰

American officers also sought to sooth Mexican religious sensibilities through their prominent attendance at Mass. In New Mexico, General Kearny, along with his staff and local Mexican officials, went to church and also marched in processions. Although he thought Mexicans to be superstitious and the Mass an absurd mockery, Colonel Curtis likewise attended Mass in his capacity as military governor.¹⁵¹ Among General Scott's first actions after taking Vera Cruz was to attend Mass with his officers

¹⁴⁷ Juan Manual to Winfield Scott, 5 November, 16, 23 December 1847, Winfield Scott to Juan Manual, 10 November, 21 December 1847, in *House Executive Documents*, 30 Cong., 1 Sess., No. 60, "Messages of the President of the United States," 1054-59 (Ser. 520); *House Executive Documents*, 30 Cong., 1 Sess., No. 41, "Notes of a Military Reconnaissance," 40-41 (Ser. 517).

¹⁴⁸ *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 9 July 1847.

¹⁴⁹ Blackwood, ed., *To Mexico with Scott*, 168; Croffut, ed., *Fifty Years in Camp and Field*, 314-15; *The Mountaineer*, 11 June 1847.

¹⁵⁰ *Jonesborough Whig and Independent Journal*, 21 July 1847.

¹⁵¹ Stella M. Drumm, ed., *Down the Santa Fe Trail and into Mexico: The Diary of Susan Shelby Magoffin, 1846-1847* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), 103; *House Executive Documents*, 30 Cong., 1 Sess., No. 41, "Notes of a Military Reconnaissance," 34 (Ser. 517); *Catholic Telegraph*, 9 September 1847; *National Intelligencer*, 3 November 1846.

in full military dress.¹⁵² Many correspondents and soldiers believed that Scott's actions successfully demonstrated to Mexico that the United States army had not come to rob its churches. However, *El Diario del Gobierno* in Mexico called the Americans imposters and heretics who only pretended to respect Mexican priests and churches. Its editors asked: "Do they believe the exercise of the Christian religion in Mexico is like a carnival ball, in which any wretch, any miscreant, may make his appearance and play his part?"¹⁵³ The clergy of San Luis de Potosi issued an inflammatory proclamation in April 1847 warning, among other things, that the only God worshipped by American soldiers was gold.¹⁵⁴

General Kearny established a law code in New Mexico in September 1846. Although this law code promised protection of church property, the clergy and people clearly did not trust the general. Despite Kearny's efforts, at Santa Fe a large number of men under the leadership of their clergy planned a revolt in December. Americans uncovered the plot and arrested the Mexicans, but an even larger revolt nearly succeeded at Taos one month later.¹⁵⁵ Part of the New Mexican clergy's reaction was due to.

¹⁵² See John S. D. Eisenhower, *Agent of Destiny: The Life and Times of General Winfield Scott* (New York: Free Press, 1997), 245-46, and Timothy D. Johnson, *Winfield Scott: The Quest for Military Glory* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 194. Eisenhower calls Scott's actions "fraught with political significance." He claims that the general knew that his visits to Catholic churches in Mexico could damage his potential Whig candidacy in 1848, in part because the Native Americans were major supporters of Scott's political aims. Nevertheless, Scott wanted to assure Mexicans that the United States would respect the Catholic Church. Johnson argues that "Scott's efforts to placate the clergy throughout Mexico" substantially weakened Santa Anna's efforts to portray the American invasion force as a threat to the Catholic Church.

¹⁵³ *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 6 July 1847.

¹⁵⁴ *Christian Reflector*, 10 May 1847.

¹⁵⁵ "Organic Law of the Territory of New Mexico," in *House Executive Documents*, 30 Cong., 1 Sess., No. 60, "Messages of the President of the United States," 182 (Ser. 520); Smith and Judah, eds., *Chronicles*

Kearny's express intentions to bring "to a downtrodden race the blessings of civil and religious liberty," which was an implied threat to the Catholic clergy and their legal powers. Also, the volunteers Kearny left behind after leaving for California on September 25 did not entirely refrain from attacks on private property. Indeed, American pillaging in New Mexico during the war was generally more egregious than that perpetrated in other Mexican territories occupied by the United States.¹⁵⁶

The reaction in the United States to the American generals' attempts at conciliation was mixed. Newspapers like the *New York Observer*, while praising Scott and his officers for demonstrating religious toleration, still derided his "conformity to idolatrous customs which a good conscience would forbid."¹⁵⁷ Some Protestant periodicals, upon reading Mexican opinions of Scott, found his actions foolhardy and laughable. The *Daily Picayune* humorously noted that Scott spent so much time in Mexican churches that he should be called "Father Scott," and added that his only delay in Puebla was caused by a desire to wait for his consecration as their new bishop. Anti-war Protestants mocked both Scott and his detractors, pointing out that Americans seemed more shocked by the holding of a candle than by all the bombs lobbed into Vera Cruz. Meanwhile, anti-annexation Protestant preachers used Kearny's participation in processions to demonstrate the kind of influence Catholics would hold over the army if

of the Gringos, 127; *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 6 October 1846, 5 March 1847; *Washington Daily Union*, 31 March, 9 April 1847.

¹⁵⁶ Smith and Judah, eds., *Chronicles of the Gringos*, 127.

¹⁵⁷ *New York Observer*, 1 May 1847. See also *Boston Recorder*, 6 May 1847.

the United States annexed Mexico. Nativists blamed such incidents on the inordinate sway held by the army's potentially disloyal Irish soldiers.¹⁵⁸

Catholic newspapers reacted to such criticism with the hope that Scott's officers could learn from his good example. Perhaps the officers could then rein in their poor treatment of Catholic soldiers, and derogatory statements about Catholicism. The *Catholic Telegraph* fought against the firestorm in the Protestant press over Scott's "idolatry" with dripping sarcasm. Calling Scott a "Jesuit in disguise," and chaplains Rey and McElroy his "principal military advisers," the paper predicted that soon Polk would renounce Presbyterianism and take over the archbishopric of Mexico.¹⁵⁹

Some officers so conspicuously respected Catholicism in Mexico that their soldiers, particularly volunteers, reacted angrily. On May 25, 1847, Colonel Thomas Childs marched in an evening procession at Jalapa. As U.S. governor of the city, Childs concerned himself greatly with the relationship between his troops and the Mexican clergy. Consequently, the colonel ordered his mostly Pennsylvania volunteer soldiers to kneel as the Host passed by in the procession. George Ballentine thought that this order was absurd, unconstitutional, and compromised the very national honor of the United States. He also criticized the whole policy of Catholic conciliation. Ballentine was

¹⁵⁸ Samuel Harris, *The Mexican War, A Sermon Delivered on the Annual Thanksgiving, at Conway, Mass., November 26, 1846* (Greenfield: Merriam and Mirick, Printers, 1847), 19; American Citizen, *Party Spirit and Popery, or, the Beast and his Rider* (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1847), 118-20; *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 7 September 1847; *Liberator*, 17 September 1847; *National Era*, 6 May 1847; *New York Evening Express*, 13 July 1847.

¹⁵⁹ *Catholic Telegraph*, 6 May 1847; *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*, 22 May 1847. Polk belonged to no church officially, but often attended a Washington Presbyterian church with his wife.

skeptical that the Mexicans “would be so easily gulled as to believe that the officers cared a farthing for the ceremonies they were engaged in.”¹⁶⁰

In his journal, Sergeant Thomas Barclay called the incident an example of the American policy of conciliation gone too far. Ballentine estimated that two-thirds of the volunteers had refused to kneel, and that only the regulars had done so out of foolish habit. According to Barclay, however, the majority of privates fearing punishment had followed their officers’ orders to take off their hats and kneel. Offended, Barclay complained that his fellow soldiers were not infidels, but Protestants, and that “Protestants consider such ceremonies as idolatrous.” Barclay’s company considered Childs’ command tyrannical. Some claimed they would have revolted had their officers forced the issue. Many swore that even if punished they would not follow such commands again. Ill will among Childs’ men did not die down for some time.¹⁶¹

In the mid-to-late summer of 1847, news of this event reached the United States. Protestant newspapers cited the case to warn of rebellion in the ranks due to the unreasonable policy concerning the Mexicans’ religion. Such papers also thought that the incident showed that the U.S. Army was denigrating itself to the enemy’s priesthood. With its usual acidic wit, the *Catholic Telegraph* (which had previously decried stories of Catholics being forced to attend Protestant services) observed that at least the soldiers had only knelt on one leg: “One leg is undoubtedly idolatrous, but then! is it not a great

¹⁶⁰ Ballentine, *Autobiography*, 212-13.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 213; Peskin, ed., *Volunteers*, 100-01.

consolation to know that the other is orthodox!"¹⁶²

The thought of American Protestants being compelled to participate in Catholic ceremonies unnerved and angered many Americans. But, bowing to priests was an even worse offense in the minds of many, for Americans often blamed the parish priests, monks, and Catholic hierarchy of Mexico for the perceived low state of morality, religion, and industrial productivity in Mexico. Yet, the priesthood certainly invited the curiosity of Protestant soldiers. Coming from a cultural climate in the United States where stories of corrupt, devious, or perverted priests served as popular entertainment, preconceived notions of Catholic priests meshed easily with racial beliefs about Mexicans, opinions about Catholicism in general, and actual experience in Mexico. Seeing the pastors of the Mexican flock present at cock fights and card games certainly shocked American puritanical sensibilities. The fact that priests drank wine or smoked cigars sometimes was enough to draw condemnation. Similarly, the number of priests apparently living in open concubinage, especially in New Mexico, was convincing evidence of a corrupt and immoral priesthood.¹⁶³ "When the priests . . . indulge in the grossest immoralities . . . what can be expected of the people," asked one soldier at

¹⁶² *Banner of Peace*, 23 July 1847, 5 May 1848; *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer*, 22 July 1847; *Catholic Telegraph*, 5 August 1847; *Christian Advocate and Journal*, 4 August 1847; *Christian Watchman*, 10 September 1847; *Presbyterian*, 26 June 1847; *The Western Weekly Review*, 9 July 1847.

¹⁶³ Smith, *Chile Con Carne*, 197-98; John Scott, *Encarnation, or the Prisoners of Mexico* (Louisville: G.H. Monsarrat and Co., 1848), 81; Edward C. Davidson to Brother, 3 February 1848, Edward Constantine Davidson Letters, Filson Club Historical Society; Judge Zo Cook, "Mexican War Reminiscences," *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 19 (1957): 457; Edwards, *A Campaign*, 61-62; *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 13 June 1847; *Jonesborough Whig and Independent Journal*, 24 February 1847; *The Mountaineer*, 7 April 1848.

Monterey?¹⁶⁴ Many Americans who described Mexican clerics in this manner gathered their information mostly from second-hand stories and literary sources such as Thompson and Mayer. Plagiarizing another soldier's account was also common, as in the case of William Carpenter and Frank Edwards.¹⁶⁵ Soldiers often interspersed accounts of poor priestly behavior with sarcastic anti-Catholic stories and rhetoric common to the American anti-Catholic movement.¹⁶⁶

At times during both the invasion and occupation phases of the U.S.-Mexican War, this anti-clericalism boiled over into robbery and violence. Numerous times angry American soldiers choked, beat, and threatened priests. East of Monterey in the town of China, a volunteer pilfered a gold watch while searching a priest's house for guns. No guns were found, and when the priest complained about the stolen watch, some soldiers wanted to offer compensation. However, their officers refused to allow them to pay the priest whom they accused of lying. As one New York volunteer pointed out about trying to enter a closed cathedral in central Mexico: "There is no such thing as refusing us anything—'might gives right.'"¹⁶⁷ In Puebla, volunteer soldiers attacked priests, ripped their robes from their bodies, and then wore them mockingly in front of Mexican churchgoers. In other cities, volunteers disobeyed orders to tip their hats when passing

¹⁶⁴ *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 3 July 1847.

¹⁶⁵ See Edwards, *A Campaign*, 157, and Carpenter, *Travels and Adventures*, 239. Both are the same description of Mexican devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

¹⁶⁶ Edwards, *A Campaign*, 69, 72-74, 99-101, 157.

¹⁶⁷ *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 16 June 1846.

clergymen on the sidewalk and instead forced priests into the street.¹⁶⁸ In New Mexico, soldiers often stole from priests. For example, while buying corn from a monk a group of Missouri volunteers would often overfill their sacks. When confronted, they would simply threaten the priest. Doing the same thing when purchasing sheep, the volunteers accosted a priest and threatened him with a knife when he protested.¹⁶⁹

Anti-clerical sentiment more commonly took the form of ridicule rather than serious intimidation or violence. Oftentimes, this mockery grew more out of already extant beliefs shaped by the anti-Catholicism prevalent in the United States than it did from first hand experience while in Mexico. Following the successful taking of Matamoras in May 1846, surgeon Madison Mills poked fun at a Mexican priest who sought out his brother among the wounded. The priest discovered that his brother had been killed. Mills ridiculed the priest, stating mockingly that the cleric's brother "had been *cannon-ized*."¹⁷⁰ In a similar vein of questionable religious humor, another American soldier joked in late 1847 that the gun-riddled churches of Mexico City were the result of a "hole-y war."¹⁷¹ American soldiers also likened Mexican priests to women, and at other times fabricated stories of nighttime visits to convents by priests.¹⁷²

The most popular such convent story was told by Corydon Donnavan in his

¹⁶⁸ Wynn, "The San Patricios," 55; Carpenter, *Travels and Adventures*, 82.

¹⁶⁹ Brackett, *General Lane's Brigade*, 121-22; Edwards, *A Campaign*, 74; A Prisoner, *Encarnacion Prisoners*, 28, 69, 72-74.

¹⁷⁰ Madison Mills Diary, 13 May 1846, Filson Club Historical Society.

¹⁷¹ *North American* (Mexico City), 29 September 1847.

¹⁷² Carpenter, *Travels and Adventures*, 83; *National Intelligencer*, 20 April 1847.

Adventures in Mexico, published in 1847. Donnavan believed that Anglo-Saxons would overrun Mexico and fully eradicate it as a nation. In doing so, Americans would carry their republican institutions and especially religious liberty with them, bringing Mexico out of "the Rip Van Winkle slumber of ignorance."¹⁷³ Donnavan also shared the commonly-held opinion that Mexico's rural parish priests were more pious than their urban counterparts. Like the "Maria Monk" tale and other popular stories in the United States about mysterious, dungeon-like nunneries, immoral nuns, and secretive priests, Donnavan's account centered around a convent. Thus, even before the return of the American army from Mexico, Donnavan and others like him brought the U.S.-Mexican War into the realm of popular anti-Catholic literature. Donnavan claimed that a nun invited two American officers to her cell late one night. Upon arriving there, they found the body of a dead monk, the victim of a love affair gone wrong. The nun asked the men to carry the body secretly over the convent wall and threatened to shoot them if they disobeyed. Anti-Catholic American newspapers recognized the entertainment value of the story and quickly reprinted it. Soon after the appearance of the book, however, both the *National Intelligencer* and the *U.S. Catholic Magazine* revealed that the story had been fabricated and plagiarized. Donnavan had based his tale on an older story, "The Convent Cell," by T. Colley Grattan. Approximately twenty years earlier, the Grattan story, set in Spain, had proven to be a fabrication as well.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Donnavan, *Adventures in Mexico*, 111-12.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 94-96, 106-07; *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer*, 13 January 1848; *National Intelligencer*, 15 February 1848; *U.S. Catholic Magazine* (March 1848), 157.

Besides ridicule and sensational attempts to use U.S.-Mexican War experiences as fodder for a new round of anti-Catholic-flavored stories, many soldiers simply expressed their opinions about Mexican priests or recounted their personal encounters with them. Some had positive experiences. Although he railed against Mexican morals and priests at times, Richard McSherry found that the Franciscans of Mexico City were admirable and of high character. Lieutenant R.W.M. Johnson, after meeting several Mexican priests, believed that they had been grossly misrepresented in the American press.¹⁷⁵ Kentucky volunteer William Carpenter praised "an old bishop" as liberal and pious who helped him following a robbery. Still, Carpenter believed that the Catholic Church and its priests were almost entirely responsible for the immorality found in Mexico.¹⁷⁶

Carpenter's opinion illustrates much about the views many Protestant American soldiers held of priests. Similar to a racial bigot who impugns an entire race or ethnic group but approves of certain members of that same group, Carpenter's overall opinion of priests was negative and even mocking. But at times, as with "the old bishop," he could find individual clerics whom he liked. The editors of *The American Star* expressed this sentiment as well. While not castigating all Mexican priests, they argued hopefully that the war would "do away with every thing like intolerance and Priestcraft," because the American army would plant the seeds of religious liberty in Mexico. By giving "a people the blessings of a free, constitutional government," republicanism would inevitably

¹⁷⁵ McSherry, *El Puchero*, 139; *New York Herald*, 20 February 1848.

¹⁷⁶ Carpenter, *Travels and Adventures*, 200, 266.

follow.¹⁷⁷

George Ballentine believed that "under the present system of religious intolerance which prevails in Mexico, it cannot be expected that the country will become progressive or prosperous." He hoped the war would show Mexicans that their clergy cared only for shrines, ornaments, "and all their childish mummary," while keeping the people in the greatest possible poverty and ignorance. Thus, Mexico's priests stood to lose the most in a war with the United States, and therefore were to be trusted the least. Many soldiers thought the priests were more zealous fighters than Santa Anna's troops. Similar to fears about American Catholics, especially immigrants, some soldiers believed that Rome conspiratorially ruled Mexico. Thus, these American anti-Catholics ignored nationality entirely and described Mexicans and their priests primarily in religious terms, calling them "Romanists." Without Protestantism, Romanists in the United States would behave in the same way and Americans would become victims of priestcraft and appendages of Rome just like Mexicans.¹⁷⁸

Anti-Catholicism and racist attitudes only served to increase the likelihood that some American soldiers would disobey their orders to show conspicuous respect for Roman Catholicism and its practitioners in Mexico. As the largest buildings in most cities, monasteries and churches were the obvious choice of the American army for quarters, arms depots, and hospitals. Usually Americans soldiers asked for permission,

¹⁷⁷ *American Star*, 4 February 1848.

¹⁷⁸ Ballentine, *Autobiography*, 232-33; Baylies, *A Narrative*, 26; Amasa Gleason Clark, *Reminiscences of a Centenarian* (Bandera: Mrs. Amasa Clark, 1930), 24; Davis, *Autobiography*, 291; Miller, *The Mexican War Journal of Ralph W. Kirkham*, 32, 40; Taylor, *The Broad Pennant*, 110.

but they also used force and implied threats. In all cases, the technically private buildings were occupied without compensation, even while the U.S. Army paid for corn, barley, and animals. In and around Puebla, following the robbing of some churches in the summer of 1847, Americans then used them as stables. Being quartered in churches and monasteries provided many opportunities for looting and poor behavior, as did the well-advertised notion of "Golden Jesuses," glittering churches, and hoarded clerical wealth. The normally more idle hands of an occupation army generally proved to be no more or less at fault in this regard than the initial invasion force. Incidents of vandalism and looting that occurred seem to have been evenly distributed throughout the war years and various theaters of the conflict. Still, there can be no doubt that as they marched inland from Vera Cruz to Mexico City between April and September 1847, Scott's army certainly had more opportunities to visit impressively rich, urban churches than had Taylor's army in and around Monterey and Matamoras.¹⁷⁹

While quartered in a Franciscan monastery in Saltillo during late 1846, Ephraim Kirby Smith noted that "It is filled with evidences of the gross superstition of the people. A fat, old, licentious-looking friar wanders about, sole representative of his departed brethren."¹⁸⁰ Other soldiers similarly expressed their religious and racial opinions while staying in monasteries and churches. Indeed, those who already believed Catholicism to be superstitious, idolatrous, and unrepblican held little respect for Mexican religious

¹⁷⁹ Blackwood, ed., *To Mexico with Scott*, 145; McSherry, *El Puchero*, 23; Fulton, ed., *Diary and Letters of Josiah Gregg*, 2: 59; Hartman, *A Private's Own Journal*, 21; Bailey, "Diary of the Mexican War," 141; Peskin, ed., *Volunteers*, 128; Kenly, *Memoirs*, 335; Wynn, "The San Patricios," 55.

¹⁸⁰ Blackwood, ed., *To Mexico with Scott*, 80.

sensibilities.¹⁸¹ Josiah Gregg admitted the problems arising from the seeming disconnect between American occupation of churches and monasteries and the official desire to appear unthreatening to the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico: "The necessity of this is unfortunate, as nothing tends to incense the people so much as any desecration of their churches."¹⁸²

One example of anti-Catholicism turning into violence occurred at the same monastery in Puebla, where Albert Bracket hoisted his company flag upon a steeple cross. Lieutenant Barber went to "an old priest who appeared to be the prior of the convent" and demanded keys to a cell so he and members of his company could sleep. When the priest did not understand Barber's English, Barber "seized him by the throat and swore he would blow his d----d brains out if he did not immediately give them to us. This insult upon his Catholic dignity wrought a wonderful change. . . ." Barber then drew his Bowie knife, threatening the old monk further. "I could have scalped his shaved head with infinite relish," Barber later eagerly declared.¹⁸³

American soldiers also vandalized churches. After the Battle of Buena Vista as he lay wounded in a church, Herman Upman noted: "Here I am at present lying on the floor beside a side altar, covered with an old carpet, a wooden image of the Virgin Mary as a pillow, and beside me as a writing-desk, a Lamb of God embroidered on gold upon

¹⁸¹ McSherry, *El Puchero*, 50.

¹⁸² Fulton, ed., *Diary and Letters of Josiah Gregg*, 2: 59.

¹⁸³ Bracket, *General Lane's Brigade*, 121.

silk and fastened upon a frame of wood."¹⁸⁴ In September 1847 at Mixcoac near Chapultepec, the company of Frederick Zeh took up quarters in a small church. Although wary of Catholicism like many native Protestant Americans, the German immigrant was appalled at his company's desecration of the church. As the tiny chapel filled up with men, soldiers began to sleep anywhere they could find room. This included the main altar area. Eventually, Zeh's comrades destroyed much of the church's interior:

One of them even fashioned a bunk of sorts in a big glass coffin. Saint Christopher was, in fact, the church's patron saint, and a colossal wax figure of this saint had been resting on a pillow inside the coffin. The blasphemer had tossed out Christopher--who did not protest--and taken the warm bed for himself.

Such behavior angered Zeh, who lamented: "Our men showed no piety on this occasion but instead engaged in unpardonable vandalism, mercilessly devastating the pretty décor of this church."¹⁸⁵ Coming out of the anti-Catholic climate of the United States and constantly barraged with caricatures of Mexicans and their religion as inferior, perhaps soldiers like Upman and the men of Zeh's company felt more free to vandalize and show disrespect toward Catholic clergy, property, practices, and sacred items.¹⁸⁶

Sometimes, vandalism or poor behavior occurred during Mass itself, not just in an occupied church that had been emptied of Mexicans. In Parras, the very army patrol in charge of keeping order committed outrages. Perhaps a good example of bored and unruly occupation troops, they often they arrested any American outside of camp that

¹⁸⁴ Smith and Judah, eds., *Chronicles of the Gringos*, 343.

¹⁸⁵ Orr and Miller, eds., *An Immigrant Soldier*, 75.

¹⁸⁶ Chance, ed., *Mexico Under Fire*, 83-84; *Catholic Telegraph*, 8 June 1848.

they came across, regardless of whether or not the soldier possessed a pass. At one point, the mounted patrol rode one day into the crowded Church of San Jose during Mass. Surrounded by kneeling women and children, the men "with oaths and ribald" arrested several Catholic soldiers who actually had permission to be present.¹⁸⁷ At other churches, American soldiers often would disrupt Mass by smoking cigars, lying down on pews in the few churches that contained them, refusing to take off their hats while indoors, and taking seats belonging to local authorities.¹⁸⁸ In Monterey, Fr. Anthony Rey eventually had to require that an entire garrison of 600 men be marched to the church each Sunday to prevent disruptions by volunteers.¹⁸⁹

In Mexico City, American soldiers, mostly volunteers, caused many problems as well. In response to looting and robbery, General John A. Quitman, as governor of Mexico City, issued an order on October 6, 1847, stating that all "interference and ill treatment on the part of our soldiers" would be punished. In order to reassure the Mexican police as well as the populace, he printed up the order in both Spanish and English and, endorsed by the local mayor, distributed it as a broadside.¹⁹⁰ The order had little effect, as about one week later further depredations occurred. In his journal, Madison Mills described the scene in Mexico City following the entrance of American

¹⁸⁷ Chamberlain, *My Confession*, 75.

¹⁸⁸ *New York Evening Express*, 13 May 1847.

¹⁸⁹ Fr. Rey to Fr. McElroy, 4 January 1847, in "Chaplains for the Mexican War—1846" *Woodstock Letters* 17 (1888): 158.

¹⁹⁰ J.A. Quitman and Lic. Leandro Estrada, "Office of the Civil and Military Governor/Secretaria del Gobernador Civil y Militar," 6 October 1847, broadside, University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections.

troops: soldiers "broke open shops, stores and private residences, and robbed and maltreated the citizens. This is a great shame . . . they are at the moment plundering without restraint." The next day, Mills further lamented that "Such a scene as is presented this morning I never saw in a military camp before. Drunken soldiers with priests [*sic*] robes on staggering about before their officers. Others with women's apparel on, caps and all. This is disgraceful."¹⁹¹ The American rampage of October 12 in Mexico City left residences robbed of gold and silver, and furniture destroyed. As in Puebla, troops robbed priests and churches and they burglarized rectories, along with homes and shops.¹⁹²

The greatest American threat to Mexican church property came in May 1847, when the *Washington Daily Union* proposed the sequestration of Mexico's clerical wealth in order to pay for the war and force a peace. Editor Thomas Ritchie soon recanted, claiming that neither Polk nor his cabinet had approved of the editorial. In the end, the Polk administration did not order the systematic confiscation of Mexican clerical wealth. Indeed, the vast riches of the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico, which lay mostly in real estate and religious articles hidden by bishops afraid of both nations' armies, would stay mostly untouched by American hands. Most thievery would be perpetrated only by individual, pilfering soldiers in churches and monasteries around Mexico. However, these incidents of church robbing and desecration were common enough to garner the attention of Mexican officials. In a letter to Scott in late 1847, Santa

¹⁹¹ Madison Mills Diary, 12, 13 October 1847, Filson Club Historical Society.

¹⁹² Smith, *War with Mexico*, 2: 459.

Anna angrily denounced the looting and despoilment of churches, and entreated the American commander to maintain better control of his troops. The Bishop of Puebla likewise protested the desecration of a church at Tlaxcala, where American troops stole priests' vestments during their search for hidden guns and ammunition.¹⁹³

Mexican officials' concern about the robbery of churches was indeed warranted and not mere propaganda. Early in the war, some raucous volunteers in Taylor's army planned to steal a statue of the Virgin Mary that overlooked a bridge near Monterey. Following the bloody battle, the soldiers made their way to the bridge to take the statue as a trophy of war. Members of an Irish company stopped them after a brief scuffle.¹⁹⁴

More often than pursuing full-size statues, soldiers instead sought out small, easily pilfered items. For example, one of the troops occupying Santa Fe sent home what he believed to be a cross of "pure gold" as a curiosity for his friends. Rumors persisted that American troops had even torn open seat cushions in churches looking for gold. For reasons such as these, Mexicans often did not allow Americans to enter their churches unaccompanied, especially in New Mexico where the sparse population made the apprehension of pilferers and robbers more difficult. In central Mexico, American commanders often placed guards over churches to ensure the safety of their contents.

¹⁹³ *Washington Daily Union*, 11, 18 May 1847; Smith, *War with Mexico*, 2: 459; *Liberator*, 15 October 1847. In the letter, Santa Anna also mentioned rape and the wanton pillage of cities. See also Otis A. Singletary, *The Mexican War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 144-46. Singletary argues that wild, untrained, and poorly officered volunteers committed the vast majority of atrocities and offenses against Mexicans. Taylor's army was the worst by far, but Scott also faced serious problems with his volunteers during the Mexico City campaign.

¹⁹⁴ *Catholic Telegraph*, 27 May 1847.

This was not always successful, as in the case of the shrine in Puebla burglarized by Pennsylvania volunteers.¹⁹⁵

Dilapidated or damaged churches made easy targets for thieves. Following the American bombardment and capture of Vera Cruz in March 1847, Lt. Napoleon Dana entered a bombed out church. Although the bodies of Mexican women and children who had unsuccessfully sought shelter had been removed, little else had been touched. Dana "went in there and looked around, and would you believe it, your sacrilegious husband stole from the very altar." What Dana found among the fragments were a number of "consecrated little bags" of holy items that were popular in Vera Cruz. "I would have liked to have found a little wax image, but there was nothing of the kind there." The young lieutenant hoped that a doctor in the United States could read the items' Latin inscriptions for his wife.¹⁹⁶

Other soldiers treated pilfered holy items as more than just mementos and were even bold enough to place advertisements in American newspapers selling "Mexican curiosities." Catholics angrily denounced the sale of a tabernacle covering in St. Louis, and a priest's stole which had been transformed into suspenders.¹⁹⁷ One Kentucky paper contained an advertisement for "1 right hand of the Saviour, two hundred years old, taken from an old church." Much of the Catholic press reacted to this by lashing out at the Polk

¹⁹⁵ Edwards, *A Campaign*, 99; Peskin, ed., *Volunteers*, 281; *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer*, 19 November 1846; *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 28 August 1847; *Catholic Telegraph*, 8 June 1848.

¹⁹⁶ Ferrell, ed., *Monterrey is Ours!*, 197.

¹⁹⁷ Sr. Blanch Marie McEniry, "American Catholics in the War with Mexico" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1937), 136.

administration organ: "We are much afraid that in too many instances the suggestion of the *Washington Union* has been reduced to practice, and that the churches of Mexico have suffered."¹⁹⁸ Other newspapers also related any stories involving the American looting of Mexico's Catholic churches to the *Daily Union*'s suggestion that the United States sequester Mexican Catholic Church wealth. The *Vermont Free Press* noted: "It is a notorious fact that many of our Volunteers . . . were induced to volunteer under the impression that the *facilities to plunder* the Mexicans and their *churches* would be many." With the administration organ proposing organized plunder, the writer feared that soldiers would feel freer to desecrate churches and rob them.¹⁹⁹ The nativist *Journal of Commerce* happily observed that " . . . as the Church property is to be sequestered, the most satisfactory trophies will be those expensive and gaudy decorations which can be" taken from the Mexican Catholic hierarchy and their churches.²⁰⁰

The editors of the *Boston Recorder* accused the federal government of hiding "the worst features of this war" from the American public. The *Recorder* cited a letter from Major Folliot T. Lally at Jalapa to Lieutenant Colonel Henry Wilson at Vera Cruz that had made its way through General Roger Jones and the Adjutant General's office into the *Daily Union*. According to the *Recorder*, the government censored one part of the letter, because it denounced "the *sacking of cities, and robbing of churches in Mexico.*" The

¹⁹⁸ *U.S. Catholic Magazine* (September 1847), 559.

¹⁹⁹ *Vermont Free Press*, quoted in *National Intelligencer*, 17 June 1847.

²⁰⁰ *Journal of Commerce*, 19 May 1847.

Polk administration believed that Jones had been the leak about the hidden extract, and questioned him severely.²⁰¹

The *New York Herald*, among other papers, pointed out that the English press throughout the war had “daily spewed forth” accusations “that the main object our citizens had in volunteering was to rob the churches of Mexico of their riches and wealth.” Still, in May 1847 the *Herald* was forced to admit that its faith in the honesty of American soldiers was soon to be tested:

The twelve months volunteers are now within a few days march of the city of Mexico, where countless thousands are locked up in the churches and cathedrals—where solid gold and silver vases, candlesticks, and images are scattered in profusion—the very balustrades of these buildings being made of the precious metals.

The *Herald* predicted, however, that unlike the English who had plundered and sacked innumerable people, cities, and nations over the course of their history, Americans would return home as patriotic, honest men with no clerical wealth in their pockets.²⁰²

The very next day, the *New York Herald* again editorialized about the prospects of peace in Mexico and the dangers of plunder by American troops. The editors argued that either the United States needed completely to subjugate and govern Mexico itself or it had to destroy its cities and confiscate the property of the Catholic Church, leaving the Mexicans after the war to establish their own government. Interestingly, the *Herald* disagreed with its own editorial of the previous day and gave preference to the second

²⁰¹ *Boston Recorder*, 11 November 1847.

²⁰² *New York Herald*, 30 May 1847.

option, because it avoided a lengthy military occupation.²⁰³

Other than during the *Washington Daily Union* incident in May 1847, only at the very end of the war did Catholic newspapers begin to complain openly about all of the rumors involving the looting of Mexican churches by American soldiers. In an article on the ratification of the final peace treaty, the *Catholic Telegraph* complained:

The Mexicans have been severely scourged, by the sword and the pen of correspondents. Their religious feelings, even under the eye of general officers, were shamefully outraged. The Nuns . . . were driven from their dwellings, and our clergy were marched through the streets of Mexico . . . Their rooms were broken open, niches in the churches disfigured, and, as we learn from documents lately published . . . the cushions of the cathedrals torn open, in the lust for gold, which filled the minds of some of the American soldiers.²⁰⁴

The *Telegraph* also noted that "some large and sweet-toned bells" had been stolen from their Mexican churches and shipped by steamer from Mexico into the United States.

"The plunder must have been bold and indiscriminate, since even the bells did not escape the hands of the destroyer."²⁰⁵ Having grudgingly supported the war with great reservations about the safety of the Catholic Church and its adherents in Mexico, the *Telegraph* held little back after the war as soldiers came home with horror stories of abuse and plunder. The *Telegraph* was used to fighting occasional rhetorical duels in the press with certain anti-Catholic Kentucky newspapers, like the *Baptist Banner* and *Western Pioneer*. The U.S.-Mexican War and the ensuing discussion on peace

²⁰³ Ibid., 31 May 1847.

²⁰⁴ *Catholic Telegraph*, 8 June 1848.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 29 June 1848.

reinvigorated that fight and provided new accusations for both sides to use against the other.

A great number of American soldiers used the language of the anti-Catholic movement in their journals and letters when describing Mexico and its religion. They caricatured Roman Catholicism as the "Romish," "Popish," and "Papal" faith, and labeled Catholics themselves as "Romanists." Aware of the religious dimensions of the war, these same Americans quite often jokingly referred to themselves as "heretics," a charge that certain Mexican clerics and politicians leveled at them. Describing the activities of Catholic priests and monks as "Priestcraft" was also a prominent, disparaging term often used in American anti-Catholic literature of the 1840s to depict the suspected secret machinations of Jesuits and their cohorts. Soldiers used this when portraying the Catholic Church in "Priest-ridden" Mexico as well.²⁰⁶

In their belief that the United States' Manifest Destiny was to spread republican institutions throughout the continent, American soldiers trusted that providence would guide them in their war effort. American anti-Catholicism clearly faulted Roman Catholicism as a despotic, idolatrous religion that was opposed to republicanism. Whether or not Mexico was to be annexed or somehow regenerated, many American soldiers believed that for a republic to succeed in Mexico, Americans would have to introduce religious and civil liberty and a pure gospel to the country. Consequently, the

²⁰⁶ Joseph W. Revere, *A Tour of Duty in California* (New York: C.S. Francis and Co., 1849), 9; John F. Meginness Journal, 15 March 1848, John F. Meginness Papers, University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections; [Giddings], *Sketches*, 242; Davis, *Autobiography*, 293; Robert Anderson to Lisa, 13 February 1848, Mexican War Collection, University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections; Collins, ed., "Journal of Francis Collins," 88-89; Taylor, *The Broad Pennant*, 110-11; Henry, *Sketches*, 122, 241-42; Miller, ed., *The Mexican War Journal of Ralph W. Kirkham*, 32, 40; A Prisoner, *Encarnacion Prisoners*, 59-60; Ballentine, *Autobiography*, 165, 210.

Catholic Church would have to be greatly weakened, if not destroyed. This sentiment permeated the American army, particularly the volunteers, from the very beginning of the war through their departure in June 1848.

As the army proceeded in its invasion and occupation of Mexico, Anglo-Saxonist Americans caricatured both the Mexicans and their religion as inferior. This denigration fostered a mindset among some that enabled them to commit atrocities, abuse priests, and rob and vandalize churches. Others simply recorded in writing their thoughts about Mexico and Roman Catholicism. Thus, the journals, letters, and memoirs of American soldiers who participated in the U.S.-Mexican War help form an important part of the anti-Catholic literature that began its rise in popularity in the 1830s and peaked in the 1850s. Located in the middle of this era, the conflict between the overwhelmingly Protestant United States and Catholic Mexico helped to hone the concept of American republicanism for these soldiers as an ideology that included Anglo-Saxonism and anti-Catholicism under the greater umbrella of providential Manifest Destiny.

CHAPTER FIVE

1848 and the Opportunities of Peace

In February 1848, not long after Nicholas P. Trist achieved success in his peace negotiations with Mexico, Paris exploded in revolution. Soon after, other liberal revolts broke out in Austria, Prussia, Bohemia, Bavaria, and the Italian peninsula. By spring, many American observers assumed that the popular uprisings had successfully replaced autocratic rule with republican government on much of the European continent. Observing these events from Mexico, one American soldier placed his own country's tremendous military victory within the context of this perceived advent of republicanism:

It was about the beginning of May when the news of the French Revolution reached Mexico, creating a vast deal of excitement and speculation among all classes of the army; indeed, to judge from the triumphant expression of countenance worn by the more enthusiastic of the worshippers of democratic government, they seemed to believe that the millennium of republicanism had arrived at last. . . .

However, unfortunately for the forces of liberalism and republicanism in 1848, the "millennium of republicanism" lasted well short of 1,000 years, for later that year the old governments used military force to regain power. Yet the American victory over Mexico seemed to indicate that, at least where North America was concerned, the prophesied ascendancy of republicanism was quickly being fulfilled as part of the Manifest Destiny of the United States.¹

After General Winfield Scott's army captured Mexico City on September 14, 1847, significant armed conflict ended between the United States and Mexico. President

¹ E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848* (New York: Mentor Books, 1962), 140, 147-62; George Ballentine, *Autobiography of an English Soldier in the United States Army* (New York: Stringer and Townsend, 1853), 283-84.

Polk's peace emissary, Trist, worked to negotiate the cessation of hostilities and the annexation of New Mexico and California. During the first half of 1848 Congress debated the treaty signed at Guadalupe near Mexico's most sacred Roman Catholic shrine. The second half of the year climaxed politically with splits in the major parties and the election of a Whig president, war hero Zachary Taylor. Throughout the fray anti-Catholicism and Anglo-Saxonism, united by the term "Manifest Destiny," played a significant role alongside anti-slavery.

Outside of the political world, 1848 was also a turning point for anti-Catholic voluntary societies. They took advantage of the evangelical opportunities of the Mexican cession even as they looked hopefully toward the destruction of the papacy amid revolutions and warfare in Europe. Historians, poets, playwrights, and novelists also found great opportunities following the end of the war. Between 1848 and the early 1850s, they popularized a view of Mexico and the U.S.-Mexican War that encapsulated much of the anti-Catholicism and racism that had characterized American opinion throughout the war among nativists, anti-Catholic Protestants, and soldiers.

By the time American troops occupied Mexico City, Trist had been in Mexico for over four months. His first serious negotiations began in late August and early September 1847, following an "armistice" between Scott and Antonio López de Santa Anna. During the talks, the diplomat thought that the prospects of peace were "most *auspicious*." If his efforts at negotiation failed, Trist had another option in mind that he found to be "the preferable one." On August 24, he had written to Secretary of State James Buchanan to inform him that without a quick peace, Mexico City would have to be occupied and the Mexican government absorbed. American troops could then

permanently occupy the portions of the country that the United States would have received through negotiation anyway. As for the Mexican Catholic hierarchy's opinion of American occupation, Trist claimed: "Strange and incredible as it may seem . . . this wish is extensively entertained even among the clergy." According to Trist, the clergy desired American rule "after the fashion of that exercised by Spain," because they had discovered during the war that Americans respected "*church property* instead of subjecting it to contributions & forced loans, and threatening it with wholesale confiscation."²

Trist's efforts at peace failed, however, and Scott ended the armistice on September 6.³ American troops then fought their way to a bloody victory at Mexico City between September 8 and 14. In October following these military successes, President Polk officially recalled Trist and revoked his treaty-making powers. Before receiving these orders, however, Trist sent a lengthy communiqué to Buchanan explaining the "present crisis" of political squabbling in Mexico. Many parties disagreed over how best to treat with the Americans, but Trist seemed to think that "the higher clergy" were the most important. He believed that if he could use to American advantage their fear of forced contributions and loans, then the United States could gain territory "rich beyond calculation in numberless sources of commercial prosperity, & abounding in everything

² K. Jack Bauer, *The Mexican War, 1846-1848* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1974), 306-07; Trist to Buchanan, 24 August 1847, in William R. Manning, ed., *The Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States: inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860* (12 vols., Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1932-39), 8: 927-29.

³ One of the most contentious issues during the discussions was Mexico's desire to exclude slavery from any territory that it ceded to the United States. The Mexican diplomats, aware of anti-Catholic fears among the American population, drew this pointed comparison to emphasize the Mexican distaste for slavery: What "if it were proposed to the people of the United States that the *Inquisition* should be therein established" on former American territory? See Trist to Buchanan, 4 September 1847, in Manning, ed., *Diplomatic Correspondence*, 8: 938-39.

that can make a country desirable." Trist claimed that even though "freedom of worship would be the immediate consequence" of American annexation, the Mexican Catholic hierarchy were willing to undergo "this evil" to ensure "the security of their property."⁴

What really astonished Trist was that "the lower clergy" allegedly held the same view as their superiors. His opinion of Mexico's parish priests and monks was far from complimentary. He described them as:

lazy, ignorant and stupid monks, whose views do not extend beyond the round of purely animal enjoyments, of which their lives are made up, and who have in their characters no element whatever for an *esprit de corps*, save the common love and greed after, money and property, mixed up with an idol-worship fanaticism (for with them, religion is sheer idolatry & burning of candles) no less gross and base than their gluttony & lasciviousness.

Yet in this one case, Trist believed that even though the priests had "but little purity to boast of," they, as much as the bishops, were scared "of the downfall of the Church itself." Trist related the clergy's opinion, high and low, to his conviction that the Roman Catholic Church's influence in Mexico depended entirely upon its material wealth.⁵

Trist received Polk's orders to leave Mexico in November, but he ignored them and did not return home. Instead, he continued to negotiate with Mexican authorities, believing that his departure would end the United States' best opportunity to end the war

⁴ Trist to Buchanan, 25 October 1847, in *ibid.*, 8: 958-59, 962.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 8: 959. Trist still entertained the idea of a permanent military occupation of around 30,000 troops as he had back in August, but he now added one caveat: the "one serious evil" that might emerge from such an enterprise would be "the inoculation of our race with the virus of Spanish corruption in office." See *ibid.*, 8: 963. See also Wallace Ohrt, *Defiant Peacemaker: Nicholas Trist in the Mexican War* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1997), 114. Ohrt traces Trist's "strong antipathy for the clerics" not just to his personal experience with the "opulence" of Mexican churches, but also to "the influence of Thomas Jefferson" and the latter's opinion that Roman Catholic priests were natural tyrants.

and fulfill its territorial demands.⁶ Interestingly, in light of his previous advocacy of occupation, he feared too that the war was becoming one solely of conquest and not one aimed at securing a peace. Trist wanted the United States to look on Mexico with “motives of philanthropy,” rather than “motives of ambition.” He explained this reasoning in a letter to Buchanan on December 6, a dispatch in which he also spelled out clearly the extent of his belief in Manifest Destiny and the regenerative powers of American republican institutions upon Mexico. Trist contrasted Mexico with the United States to prove his point: “What is the character of this country, as compared with ours?” His answer was that “Providence” had made Americans “*One Being*,” a stable nation with a republican government. Indeed, the United States’ republican principle of participatory government had placed it above all other nations of the earth. But “Mexico occupies the very lowest point of the same scale.” Trist found Mexico to be “an incoherent collection of fragments of the human family,” a “helpless multitude” ruled over by a government “destitute of all semblance of stability and bent upon robbing its own people.” In short, according to Trist, Mexico behaved in an un-Christian and uncivilized manner.⁷

Meanwhile, in Washington rumors circulated that Bishop John Hughes was going to replace Trist as the United States’ chief peace negotiator with Mexico. There was no

⁶ See Paul H. Bergeron, *The Presidency of James K. Polk* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1987), 100-01. Bergeron demonstrates that Polk’s desire to recall Trist evolved over time, as American victories mounted and Mexico refused to negotiate. Polk was unhappy with the armistice following the battles of Contreras and Churubusco, but decided to wait and see if Trist could negotiate a peace. But in October “the Polk administration had by now despaired of negotiations” and decided to recall Trist. Moreover, according to Bergeron, “Polk had begun to question Trist’s capabilities” by that time.

⁷ Trist to Buchanan, 7 December 1847, in Manning, ed., *Diplomatic Correspondence*, 8: 988-92.

truth to that claim, but the fact that Hughes preached a sermon in the House of Representatives on December 12, 1847 only fueled questions about his real reasons for being in Washington. Hughes thus handed anti-Catholic forces another issue at a most inopportune time. However, except for a small number of newspapers, there was little written about Hughes' trip to Washington that December. For example, the *National Intelligencer* predicted that Hughes would soon be named a peace commissioner "for the purpose of bringing about, if possible, a pacific disposition on the part of the Mexicans." But the *New York Herald* claimed that Hughes wanted such a post, because he and his fellow American bishops supported the annexation of "All Mexico" as "beneficial to their church, both in Mexico and in the United States." In January and February 1848, the *Herald* and other newspapers mixed speculation over a possible diplomatic role with this alleged official Catholic support for All Mexico. The *Herald* disliked Hughes for what it called his "double capacity as politician and clergyman." The paper also was unhappy that Hughes' political capital was rapidly growing, thanks to the fact that Mexico was a Catholic country. As evidence, they pointed not just to his sermon before Congress, but more important to his desire "to go as one of the commissioners to Mexico," calling the very idea another "preposterous exhibition" on the part of the bishop.⁸

The Hughes issue quickly faded, however, after news arrived that on February 2, Trist and his Mexican counterparts had signed a treaty at Guadalupe.⁹ Polk received a

⁸ *National Intelligencer*, 17 December 1847; *New York Herald*, 14 December 1847, 3 January 1848; *Jonesborough Whig and Independent Journal*, 2 February 1848. See also John Hughes, *Christianity, the Only Source of Moral, Social, and Political Regeneration* (New York: Edward Dunigan, 1848). In his sermon, Hughes said nothing of the U.S.-Mexican War and spoke mainly of religious matters.

⁹ The idea of another Hughes mission to Mexico also faded from headlines, because nativists had a newer accusation: the bishop had now set his sights on the title of American ambassador to papal Rome, a

copy of the treaty on February 19. Although he felt that "Mr. Trist has acted very badly" in ignoring his recall and continuing negotiations, the president conceded that if "the Treaty is one that can be accepted, it should not be rejected on account of his bad conduct." Polk's cabinet also condemned Trist's refusal "to return to the U.S. when he was recalled," but they, too, agreed to examine the treaty. They decided to send the treaty to the Senate with the suggestion that only the article regarding Mexico's rights involving land grants in Texas should be rejected. Thus, on February 22, the Polk administration forwarded to the Senate Trist's treaty, negotiated and signed by a diplomat without official plenipotentiary powers.¹⁰

The debate in the Senate lasted much longer than the president preferred. The unhappy fact for Polk was that senators in favor of All Mexico joined forces in opposition to the treaty with those who wanted no cession whatsoever. As if he himself never analyzed actions for their political ramifications, the president complained that election-year concerns overrode all of the surface issues involved in the debate. It became obvious by March 7 that the Senate had made significant changes to the treaty that Mexico might not accept. The largest modification in the treaty, other than wholesale changes made to Article X, was the alteration of Article IX. The latter had two parts. The first part, one paragraph, guaranteed full civil and property rights to Mexicans

potential position which was under debate in Congress concurrently with the treaty deliberations. *New York Herald*, 9 January 1848.

¹⁰ Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 378-84; Milo Milton Quaife, ed., *The Diary of James K. Polk During his Presidency, 1845-1849* (4 vols., Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company, 1910), 3: 313-15, 345, 347, 351. Trist noted in a letter to Buchanan that the town of Guadalupe was the perfect place for the resolution of the war. He called the town "a spot which, agreeably to the creed of this country, is the most sacred on earth, as being the scene of the miraculous appearance of the Virgin, for the purpose of declaring that Mexico was taken under her special protection." Trist to Buchanan, 2 February 1848, in *Senate Executive Documents*, 30 Cong., 1 Sess., No. 52, "The Treaty between the United States and Mexico," 102 (Ser. 509).

living on land that would become part of the United States. It also allowed for the brief continuation of Mexican laws until the establishment of American authority. However, it was followed by two other paragraphs that stated the following:

The same most ample guaranty shall be enjoyed by all ecclesiastics and religious corporations or communities, as well in the discharge of the offices of their ministry as in the enjoyment of their property of every kind, whether individual or corporate. This guaranty shall embrace all temples, houses, and edifices dedicated to the Roman Catholic worship, as well as all property destined to its support, or to that of schools, hospitals, and other foundations for charitable or beneficent purposes. No property of this nature shall be considered as having become the property of the American government, or as subject to be by it disposed of, or diverted to other uses.

Finally, the relations and communication between the Catholics living in the territories aforesaid, and their respective ecclesiastical authorities, shall be open, free, and exempt from all hindrance whatever, even although such authorities should reside within the limits of the Mexican republic, as define by this treaty; and this freedom shall continue, so long as a new demarkation of ecclesiastical districts shall not have been made, conformably with the laws of the Roman Catholic church.

This controversial portion of Article IX contained little that U.S. government officials and American army officers had not promised Mexicans and their church through various proclamations and overtures during the war. But many senators found it distasteful for a number of reasons, not the least of which was the seeming special legal status it awarded to Catholics. They knew that such singular treatment would be unpopular among their constituents.¹¹

Senators debated Article IX for nearly three full days. Indeed, it was the results of this protracted discussion that Polk referred to as "several important modifications."

¹¹ *Senate Executive Documents*, 30 Cong., 1 Sess., No. 52, "The Treaty between the United States and Mexico," 48-49 (Ser. 509); Quaife, ed., *Diary of Polk*, 3: 365-66, 371.

On March 6, Senator James D. Westcott, a Democrat, moved to strike out the second paragraph of the part of Article IX dealing with Mexican bishops and their ecclesiastical powers in the ceded territories. But after much debate, the Senate adjourned without holding a vote on Westcott's motion. The next day that chamber took up Westcott's motion once more and continued to debate Article IX, during which the senator was forced to withdraw his amendment.¹²

Democrat Herschel V. Johnson of Georgia was the next senator to attempt to remedy what senators like Westcott viewed as Mexican clerical interference in what was soon to be American territory. But rather than trying to delete whole paragraphs in the manner of Westcott, he instead sought to insert at the end of the article an elaboration on the limitations of the Mexican church's power:

Provided nothing herein contained shall be so construed as to secure to Roman Catholics their religious corporations or communities or the ecclesiastical authorities of the Roman Catholic church any other rights and privileges than such as are enjoyed by other religious sects, their corporations or communities, or ecclesiastical authorities, in the United States.

Johnson's amendment, however, fell sixteen votes short of approval. Westcott then resubmitted his amendment and this time it came to a vote. With a vote of twenty-nine to eighteen, the Senate approved Westcott's motion and *removed* the following paragraph from Article IX:

Finally, the relations and communication between the Catholics living in the territories aforesaid, and their respective ecclesiastical authorities, shall be open, free, and exempt from all hindrance whatever, even although such authorities should reside within the limits

¹² *Senate Executive Documents*, 30 Cong., 1 Sess., No. 52, "The Treaty between the United States and Mexico," 18-19 (Ser. 509).

of the Mexican republic, as define by this treaty; and this freedom shall continue, so long as a new demarkation of ecclesiastical districts shall not have been made, conformably with the laws of the Roman Catholic church.¹³

At this point, therefore, only one paragraph dealing with Roman Catholicism was left in the article. John Davis, a member of the Whig Party from Massachusetts, quickly moved to delete that paragraph, along with sentences that allowed the temporary continuance of Mexican laws in the cession. While some senators were ambivalent about the language involving Catholics, those same men were adamant that Mexican laws should never in any fashion govern territory claimed by the United States. Thus, when the Senate put Davis' motion to a vote, it garnered even more votes than had Westcott's.¹⁴

The Senate struggled with the religion portions of Article IX for two important reasons. Senators knew that they had to be consistent with the administration's policy of conciliation toward American and Mexican Catholics throughout the war. Yet at the same time members of both political parties were keenly aware of growing anti-Catholic sentiment in the United States. The latter concern was especially true of the Whigs, who already looked forward to the upcoming elections and hoped to take votes away from the Native American Party. But anti-Catholicism aside, almost all senators had substantial and important questions about the constitutionality of the treaty's language. Thanks to Westcott and Davis, Article IX now made no mention of religion at all. In response,

¹³ Ibid., 19-20.

¹⁴ Ibid., 20-21. Apparently satisfied with his own smaller alteration of the treaty, Westcott did not vote in favor of Davis' motion.

Virginian James M. Mason moved to *add* the following sentence to the article, along with a guarantee of full civil rights to Mexicans living in the cession:

The Mexicans in the territories aforesaid shall be secured in the free exercise of their religion without any restriction; and those who may desire to remove to the Mexican republic shall be permitted to sell or export their effects at any time whatever without being subject in either case to the payment of any duties.

Senators voted overwhelmingly forty-two to four in favor and, presumably, the debate over Article IX was over.¹⁵

Alas, however, Mason's changes did not end the dispute, for on March 8 the Senate refused to ratify the altered Article IX. Senator John Bell of Tennessee seized this opportunity and moved to strike out the entire article from the treaty. He failed by sixteen votes, but quickly realized that while many senators would refuse to remove large portions of the article, those same senators might have little difficulty in deleting individual phrases and sentences. Using this new tactic, Bell and fellow Whig senator John J. Crittenden of Kentucky found success. In three consecutive votes, the Senate deleted Article IX piece by piece. Once these votes were finished, Crittenden proposed new wording which was to stand as the final version of Article IX. After a blustery and extended debate the Senate ratified the now much-shorter version of Article IX, which in its entirety, read:

The Mexicans who, in the territories aforesaid, shall not preserve the character of citizens of the Mexican Republic, conformably with what is stipulated in the preceding article, shall be incorporated into the Union of the United States and be admitted, at the proper time (to be judged by the Congress of the United States) to the enjoyment of all the rights of citizens of the United States according to the principles of the Constitution;

¹⁵ Ibid., 21.

and in the mean time shall be maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty and property, and *secured in the free exercise of their religion without restriction.*

Thus, the Senate had whittled Article IX from three paragraphs to one and had transformed the two that had dealt with Roman Catholicism into an ambiguous clause within a sentence. All mention of Roman Catholicism, corporate Catholic property, and the Mexican hierarchy had been stricken out.¹⁶

On March 9, Polk confided in his diary: "Several important modifications have been made to it, and I fear they are of such a character as to jeopard [*sic*] its ratification by Mexico." He blamed the Whigs for making the potentially treaty-killing changes on purpose, because they were afraid of the political consequences of actually voting down the treaty. But with Article IX finally approved, the Senate ratified the altered treaty the next day, on March 10. Many senators voted in favor of the treaty not necessarily because they were happy with it, but because they were tired of war and saw no better option. Polk, still worried that Mexico might reject the treaty and begin the war anew, nevertheless dispatched Ambrose Sevier and an entourage of commissioners to Mexico to exchange ratifications and get the Mexicans to accept the altered treaty.¹⁷

In the opinion of Vice President George M. Dallas, Article IX had been designed in the first place by anxious Mexican clerics who had bought into the notion that the war

¹⁶ Ibid., 25-33. Italics added by the author for emphasis. See also Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 46, 54, 126, for the standard interpretation of the debate over the ninth article of the treaty. Griswold del Castillo portrays the article as dealing with citizenship and property rights only and does not remark upon its religious implications.

¹⁷ Quaife, ed., *Diary of Polk*, 3: 376-79; John H. Schroeder, *Mr. Polk's War: American Opposition and Dissent, 1846-1848* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), 158-59; Otis A. Singletary, *The Mexican War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 161.

was "a crusade against the Catholicism of Mexico" aimed at church plunder and the dispersal of priestly power. From Dallas' standpoint such accusations were "absolutely false," but he was also aware that Mexicans believed it. Therefore, he could say sympathetically that the Mexican Catholic hierarchy had inserted that section of the treaty out of "affectionate solicitude," not "bigoted cunning." He did not stop to question what lay behind the Mexicans' fears nor did he acknowledge the many calls for just such a "crusade" by a number of American newspapers, ministers, soldiers, and politicians. Instead, Dallas thought that Mexicans simply could not "comprehend or appreciate the theory and action of our system as regards to the freedom of divine worship." Yet he hoped that Mexico would approve the changes made to the treaty and trust in the promise of religious liberty contained in the article's final wording.¹⁸

When Secretary Buchanan gave instructions to peace commissioner Ambrose H. Sevier as the senator headed to Mexico along with Attorney General Nathan Clifford, he mentioned only three articles from the treaty that he believed required sensitive and careful diplomacy. These were Articles IX, X, and XII. Of Article X, Buchanan instructed Sevier to inform Mexico that the United States would never honor Mexican power over land grants in Texas. On Article XII, however, Buchanan notified Sevier that the United States would probably be willing to renegotiate the Senate's amendments pertaining to the payment of \$15 million to Mexico. Buchanan urged Sevier to portray the changes to Article IX as "comparatively unimportant," because anything in the original article "which relates to the Catholic Church" had already been stated in previous

¹⁸ George M. Dallas to William White Chew, 10 October 1848, in *Mr. Dallas's Letter on the Mexican Treaty; re-printed from the Public Ledger of June 15, 1849* (Philadelphia: United States Book and Job Printing Establishment, 1849), 10-13.

treaties dealing with Louisiana and Florida. Therefore, according to Buchanan, it was Polk's opinion that "the amendment could not finally jeopard [*sic*] the fate of the present Treaty."¹⁹

Before news of the treaty had arrived in Washington in late February 1848, Congress from December 1847 through March 1848 had discussed how best to reach peace with Mexico. Some members reflected the growing sentiment seen in certain leading newspapers that all of Mexico ought to be annexed. Many claimed that Mexico's apparent intransigence left no other solution. Frequently, proponents of this All Mexico position argued that total annexation not only was the best means of promptly ending the war, but also it was the providential fulfillment of America's Manifest Destiny to overspread the continent with its people and their republican institutions. In this manner, Anglo-Saxons could migrate with their institutions at the same time they worked to uplift the inferior races of Mexico. Even though the treaty effectively ended the All Mexico discussions, the speeches contained in the debate gave a clear picture of where legislators stood on Manifest Destiny.²⁰

¹⁹ Buchanan to Sevier, 28 March 1848, in Manning, ed., *Diplomatic Correspondence*, 229-32. Clifford resigned as Attorney General in order to accept Polk's appointment of him as commissioner to Mexico.

²⁰ See John D. P. Fuller, *The Movement for the Acquisition of All Mexico, 1846-1848* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1936; reprint, New York: De Capo Press, 1969) for what is still the best full-length treatment of the All Mexico debate and its relationship to the belief in American Manifest Destiny. Fuller blames the failure of the push for All Mexico in part on slaveholder fears that Mexico might enter the Union as a free territory. Indeed, Fuller finds that most supporters of All Mexico lived in New York and the West, not in Southern states. In the end, it was the arrival Trist's treaty that took the wind out of the sails of the All Mexico movement, because it offered to Americans an honorable peace along with sufficient territorial gains. See pp. 137, 155-63. In David M. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation: Texas, Oregon, and the Mexican War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973), 551-67, the author also offers a good but much shorter analysis of how the treaty helped to kill the All Mexico movement. Neither historian, however, discusses the utilization by both sides in the debate of implicit and explicit anti-Catholic rhetoric.

Wrapped up in this support for Manifest Destiny and accusations of Mexican inferiority was the drive to spread religious freedom to Mexico. Most Americans understood that when one spoke of extending freedom of religion to Mexico, one invariably meant spreading Protestant Christianity and ending the official and unofficial dominance of Roman Catholicism. For instance, Sidney Breese agreed with most of his fellow senators that Mexicans were inferior. Yet this Democrat also believed that Mexicans were capable of "high improvement." All that Mexicans needed was American republican rule to secure "all their rights, civil and religious." With the proper "infusion of our own population," Providence would guide Mexico to the point where it would become a fitting complement to the Union. With this argument, Breese hoped to undercut those who opposed Mexican annexation because of Mexico's religion and racial makeup.²¹

Democrats Lewis Cass and Daniel S. Dickinson also appealed to Providence in their support of annexation. Dickinson called North America "one great geographical system" in which "new races are presented for us to civilize, educate, and absorb." It was by providential design, claimed the New Yorker, that Mexicans were being forced "to give way to a stronger race." Occupation of Mexico had been arrived at through "a special interposition of Providential favor" that would in turn allow Americans to extend civil and religious liberty and morally elevate a population that was currently incapable of self-government. Similarly, in Cass' opinion Mexicans had shown themselves to be "ignorant, feeble, and, if not retrograding, stationary." As the leading prospect for the

²¹ *Congressional Globe*, 30 Cong., 1 Sess., Appendix, 349.

Democratic presidential nomination, Cass stopped short of endorsing All Mexico, so as not to drive any supporters away prematurely, and spoke instead of annexation in general. Americans had much to bring to such a population, according to Cass, and for that reason the senator argued that receiving a cession of territory from vanquished Mexico was one of the "legitimate consequences" of the war. At his philanthropic best, Cass proclaimed that Americans could "meliorate their condition, civil, religious, social, and political." As with Breese's comments, the small but significant anti-Catholic sentiment present in Cass' statements was implicit and cast as a well-meaning effort to improve the religious lot of Mexico.²²

The Anglo-Saxonism and anti-Catholicism among the supporters of All Mexico was also seen among those who opposed the wholesale absorption of Mexico into the Union. In some ways, such sentiment was even more prominent among these opponents. Unlike the advocates of massive annexation who had to name the elaborate methods by which the Mexican population would be regenerated or otherwise positively affected by American rule, foes of All Mexico did not. They had only to draw the ugliest and most discouraging picture possible of Mexico to demonstrate the dangers of seizing the country.

One such senator was John Bell. An opponent of All Mexico but a supporter of limited annexation, Bell used considerable religious rhetoric in insisting that American

²² Ibid., 87, 427. Perhaps one of the most interesting reasons offered in support of All Mexico was that of Senator Thomas J. Rusk of Texas. Rusk detailed the plan of Fr. Eugenio MacNamara to establish an Irish-Catholic colony in California in 1846. He claimed that the colony would really have been a British bastion of monarchy in North America. However, he failed to note that the Mexican government had turned down MacNamara's request out of fears that the Irish settlers, though Catholic, would at some point choose to unite with their closer Anglo-Saxon brethren in the United States. Ibid., 362-65.

Anglo-Saxons were merely asserting "the natural superiority of their race." His main worry about annexation was that the higher clergy and military officials of Mexico were "white," which meant they would be too troublesome to subdue. As for the "vast Indian population," whom he labeled as an ignorant, superstitious, "degraded, dependent, melancholy race," the senator held only contempt. But he theorized that the Mexicans' greatest inadequacy as a people was not their congenital racial defects. Rather, it was their "mummery" of a religion:

The overweening influence of the hierarchy, of the higher clergy, in matters of Government concern, and the despotism which prevails in the religion of Mexico, are at once the evidence, and may be the cause, of this intellectual inferiority. I say nothing of the Romish Church, as to its orthodoxy or otherwise. It may be the truest and purest of sects . . . but it is remarkable that, from the days of Luther to this day, wherever Protestantism has prevailed, there you find planted deepest and strongest the seeds and the growth of civil liberty; and I affirm that where there is no freedom of religious inquiry, no religious toleration, there has been no such resurrection of mind as qualifies the inhabitants for the enjoyment of a free and equal Government.

Bell argued that the wealth of the Roman Catholic clergy surely would have to be confiscated, if the country was ever to be regenerated and its debt paid in full. Taunting the Democrats and stirring up memories of the political furor over the *Washington Daily Union's* call for the confiscation of church property, Bell quipped: "How will you excuse yourselves to the new Pope of Rome and Bishop Hughes?"²³

Senator Joseph R. Underwood compared the annexationists who wanted "to overturn the civil and religious institutions of all other nations on this continent" to

²³ John Bell, "Speech of John Bell of Tennessee, on the Mexican War," in *Speeches on the War with Mexico, 1846-8* (n.p., ca. 1848), 18-19, 24, 28. For many of his statistics on Mexico, Bell used the works of William H. Prescott.

European crusaders whom, he noted, Providence had seen fit to remove from the Holy Land following their initial victories. "It is not in the nature of man to be taught true religion, or the true principles of civil liberty and republican government, at the point of the bayonet," asserted Underwood. To emphasize this statement, the senator boasted of his own Protestant faith and the United States' churches, seminaries, and "thirty-one thousand seven hundred and sixty-four preachers of the Gospel." As much as any man, Underwood claimed that he wanted to see Christianity spread throughout the world alongside republican government. But he wanted such evangelization only "through bright and peaceful example." Despite this lofty rhetoric, Underwood's opposition to All Mexico was almost entirely political. The Kentuckian feared that the "voter of Oaxaca" would know little and care even less about presidential candidates and the politics of the northeast, a region that was clearly the bastion of his own Whig party. Like many other Whigs, Underwood saw in massive annexation the specter of not only a Union with too heterogeneous of a population, but also a whole new Democratic constituency.²⁴

William Upham of Vermont also spoke in grandiose terms about the dangers of a "career of conquest" to the health of the American republic. But along with other senators from New England, like Roger S. Baldwin and Albert C. Greene, Upham's primary argument was not that the United States would decline into an empire, as did the Roman Republic following its expansion. Rather, Upham and these men aimed their sights directly at the Mexicans, "a population utterly unfitted to the exercise of power in Government," in the words of Baldwin. Describing Mexicans in much the same way that

²⁴ *Congressional Globe*, 30 Cong., 1 Sess., *Appendix*, 308.

nativists caricatured German and Irish immigrants, Upham declared about annexation: "... it will bring ... an ignorant, degraded population, wholly unprepared for the enjoyment of our free and liberal institutions." Senator Greene agreed, arguing that the Constitution was "framed for an *Anglo-Saxon* race," not the varied peoples of Mexico. The unstated truth behind the racial and republican rhetoric, of course, was that the New England senators feared the further decline of northeastern Whig power as a consequence of westward expansion and the enfranchisement of a presumably non-Whig constituency.²⁵

Not to be outdone in his opposition to All Mexico by New England Whigs, John C. Calhoun boldly announced on the floor of the Senate: "Ours is the government of the white man." Along with his belief that America would be engaging in a "fatal error," if it placed "the colored race on an equality with the white," Calhoun argued that the annexation of All Mexico was "subversive of our free popular institutions." He based his premise on the suspicion that such a massive increase of territory would enhance the patronage powers of the president to such an extent that a despotism would be the inevitable consequence. Besides, Calhoun maintained, the very ideal of spreading "civil and religious liberty over all the globe" was "a sad delusion." According to the fiery elder statesman and constant thorn in the side of the Polk administration, only superior and intelligent races could maintain a republic in the first place and Mexicans were not such a people. Where there was "intelligence and wealth" in Mexico, it was "concentrated in the priesthood, who are naturally disinclined to that form of government." Calhoun was speaking specifically of the Mexican hierarchy, but by

²⁵ Ibid., 344, 421, 453.

appealing to the belief in a natural disinclination among Catholic clergy to republicanism, he in part used an old anti-Catholic allegation that needed little embellishment or explanation.²⁶

Although the crucial action regarding the extent of the Mexican cession belonged to the Senate, representatives nonetheless spoke their mind about annexation. Their party and sectional proclivities generally mirrored the Senate's. Vermont's George P. Marsh, for example, offered what support he could to Senator Upham against charges that Whigs were neo-Federalist traitors because of their opposition to the war and All Mexico. In defending Upham, Marsh nevertheless berated Mexico for the "great wrongs" it had perpetrated against American citizens. Moreover, Mexico was "cursed with the worst possible forms of misrule—the tyranny of the soldier and the tyranny of the priest." This situation made Mexicans "unfitted for self-government and unprepared to appreciate, sustain, or enjoy, free institutions." What Marsh favored was not regeneration, since he did not believe such a thing was possible. Rather, he supported a just punishment, not what he called the misguided "spirit of revenge" that he saw in many of his colleagues.²⁷

Rhetoric like that of Marsh's that referred to "the tyranny of the priest" was common among representatives from all sections of the country in their opposition to All Mexico. One Mississippian opposed complete annexation, for the reason that Mexicans

²⁶ Ibid., 50-52.

²⁷ George P. Marsh, *Speech of Mr. G.P. Marsh of Vermont, on the Mexican War, Delivered in the House of Representatives of the U.S., February 10, 1848* (Washington, D.C.: J. and G.S. Gideon, 1848), 5; *Congressional Globe*, 30 Cong., 1 Sess., Appendix, 339. House member Edward C. Cabell of Florida also complained about the accusations of "treason" leveled at the Whigs, noting that Democrats voiced such allegations even when Whigs condemned "the proposition shadowed forth in the Government of this city, to rob the Catholic Churches in Mexico." See Edward C. Cabell, "Speech of Mr. Cabell, of Florida, on the Mexican War," in *Speeches on the War with Mexico*, 4.

would be too hard to subdue. In fact, not "the Spanish sword" but only "the subtlety of Spanish Jesuits" had enabled Spain to rule disorderly Mexico for as long as it had. Connecticut congressman Truman Smith denigrated Mexicans as a "mixed race" that was "under the control of the clergy in an extraordinary degree." Consequently, claimed Smith, American troops had noted of Mexico that "the standard of morals is exceedingly low" and "the country is little better than a Sodom." Illinoisan Orlando B. Ficklin also accused Mexico of a commingled racial and religious inferiority. Calling Mexico "a strange compound of color, language, habits, and religion," he argued that the "ignorant, degraded, and superstitious" people of Mexico had allowed the "priest in his robes" to establish "a despotism over the souls and bodies" of Mexicans. Indeed, it was that control, when combined with superstition and general ignorance, that had allowed the clergy and military to dupe Mexicans into a war with the United States in the first place. Therefore, according to Ficklin, to oppose annexation was actually very patriotic, for who wanted such a people to be included in the Union?²⁸

Native American Party leader and representative, Lewis C. Levin, supported All Mexico. But he opposed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, because it would offer citizenship to Mexicans living in the ceded territories. Other congressmen belittled Levin for using Trist's treaty to support his contention that Polk planned to spread Roman Catholicism throughout the United States in order to expand the Democratic base. As usual, Levin also used his *Philadelphia Daily Sun* to express his views on All Mexico and the treaty. The *Daily Sun* supported All Mexico, even while it voiced fears that the total

²⁸ *Congressional Globe*, 30 Cong., 1 Sess., Appendix, 355, 386, 392, 488.

annexation of the defeated country would increase the power and size of the Catholic Church in the United States. This advocacy of All Mexico rested on its unwavering confidence in the inevitable Protestant Anglo-Saxon advance that would eventually make both North and South America "the garden of the world." In January 1848 the *Sun* announced hopefully that "while Trists are negotiating, ideas and habits are forming" among Mexicans as a consequence of their contact with "the moral power of our institutions." Annexation was inevitable, according to the *Daily Sun*, and Mexico "will become an Anglo-Saxon state" replete with "mechanics, steam engines, ministers, schoolmasters." Even without "the breakup of her nationality," Mexico unavoidably would absorb the "superior principles" of the United States for years to come. To the *Daily Sun*, "an Anglo-Saxon state" meant the following: "glorious enlightenment—an open Bible—universal toleration—common schools—benevolent institutions," and "Christian principles."²⁹

Contrary to nativist hopes, the Anglo-Saxon influence on the un-annexed parts of Mexico was short-lived, as was the desired American impact on Mexican religious culture. It was influence of a very different kind that concerned the Polk administration. Even after the recall of General Winfield Scott in January 1848, the American army remained in Mexico through most of June. They left only after the formal acceptance of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo by both governments in May. In the meantime, the behavior of some soldiers weakened the Polk administration's claims during the treaty negotiations that the United States had no nefarious designs toward the Mexican Catholic

²⁹ Ibid., 442-44; *Philadelphia Daily Sun*, 10, 17, 28 January, 12, 16, 19, 28 February, 1 March 1848. The *Catholic Telegraph* mockingly connected Levin's "vindictive disposition" to "dyspepsia, and cramp in the stomach." *Catholic Telegraph*, 23 March 1848.

Church or its property. For example, Thomas Barclay and Richard Coulter, of the Pennsylvanian Westmoreland Guards, entered a church in Mexico City on Ash Wednesday in 1848 looking for some amusement and some level of relief from the boredom of occupation. They found both as Barclay struck up an argument in Latin with a priest about everything from Martin Luther and John Calvin to Anabaptists. This incident was mere fun for Barclay, but the Pennsylvanian harbored strong opinions on the nature of Catholicism. Admittedly ignorant of Catholic practices and an ardent Anglo-Saxonist, the young sergeant related the political anarchy and relative backwardness of Mexico to Roman Catholicism, and in fact viewed Mexicans as part of a larger "Catholic race." Priests were locusts who, along with the military, had wasted Mexican wealth on elaborate churches to the detriment of art, science, and honest labor. Barclay found the Franciscans and Dominicans of Mexico City to be too numerous, too influential, and "a fat greasy jolly looking set of fellows. . . ." Clearly, in the mind of soldiers like Barclay if Americans were to improve Mexico as part of their Manifest Destiny, it would have to be to the detriment of the unrepugnant Catholic Church.³⁰

In one instance Barclay's Company E caused quite a bit of damage to a Pueblan monastery's lands. Surrounded by a large fruit orchard, the San Angel Monastery had open courts, fountains of fresh water, and numerous fruit trees. On January 28, 1848, a careless soldier accidentally set fire to the orchard. Rather than help put out the fire, those present from the Second Pennsylvania Infantry gathered about to watch the trees burn. Sergeant Barclay noted in his journal entry for the day: "It was very funny to see

³⁰ Allan Peskin, ed., *Volunteers: The Mexican War Journals of Private Richard Coulter and Sergeant Thomas Barclay, Company E, Second Pennsylvania Infantry* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1991), 124, 181, 195-96, 271.

the Padres jumping about in their long gowns and attempting to put out the fire.” The fire also entertained Barclay’s comrade, Private Coulter: “The monastery bells rang the alarm and in five minutes there were more greasers collected on the spot than I thought the village contained . . . the alarm scared out several new Padres whom I had never before seen, they having kept close to their cells since the occupation of their buildings by the heretics.” Coulter went on to describe how the poorly protected sandaled monks “were severely scorched” while fighting the fire. Despite this, no one from Company E helped.³¹ Two months later, members of the same company burglarized a nearby shrine, stealing various ecclesiastical items and wine.³² This type of behavior by the occupation army facilitated continued Mexican distrust of American motives toward their Church.

Even though American soldiers in Mexico in early 1848 focused mainly on their own predicament, they also kept abreast of the growing European political turbulence. Remarking upon the seemingly countless rebellions in France, Italy, and the German states, one soldier could not hide his awe: “Europe is ablaze.” Moreover, concurrent with this “blaze” of revolutionary violence, a debate also raged in Congress and among Protestant evangelicals over the establishment of diplomatic relations with Rome. The Polk administration argued that the presence of a U.S. minister in Rome would encourage Pius IX to expand his vaunted liberal policies. Congress agreed, and on March 30 confirmed Jacob L. Martin as the *chargé d'affaires* to Rome. Nativist congressman Lewis C. Levin led the fight against the mission, delivering an infamous speech on March 2, in

³¹ Thomas Bailey, “Diary of the Mexican War,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 14 (1918): 141; George W. Hartmann, *A Private’s Own Journal: Giving an Account of the Battles in Mexico, under Gen’l Scott* . . . (Greencastle, Penn.: E. Robinson, 1849), 21; Peskin, ed., *Volunteers*, 249.

³² Peskin, ed., *Volunteers*, 281.

which he complained: "sympathy for the Pope has grown almost into a fashion."

Asserting that "no Pope can be a reformer," Levin warned:

Pass this bill, and you insult the majesty of the people by the desecration of their Constitution. . . . When we talk of the genius of republican government . . . said to be so mortally wounded by the Mexican War, let us remember the wrong done to the spirit of freedom by this scheme of an ambassador to the Pope.

Levin's newspaper, the *Philadelphia Daily Sun*, similarly attacked the diplomatic mission as one of the "gigantic schemes of the Church of Rome to establish an empire in the United States."³³

In their newspapers, evangelical Protestants joined the denunciatory chorus of nativist voices, with the *Christian Watchman* complaining that the "Irishman" and "papist" General James Shields was sure to be the one to "disgrace this country by kissing the Pope's slipper." The *Watchman* also feared that the presence of a papal representative in the United States would enhance clerical control of the Catholic vote, because "if there was a Legate or other high functionary of the Roman Hierarchy here

³³ John F. Meginness Journal, 26 April 1848, John F. Meginness Papers, University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections; Lewis C. Levin, *Speech of Mr. L. C. Levin, of Penn., on the Proposed Mission to Rome, Delivered in the House of Representatives of the United States, March 2, 1848* (Washington: n.p., 1848), 2-4; *Philadelphia Daily Sun*, 10 March 1848. The praise of Pius IX, which Levin referred to as "a fashion," had begun in November 1847, when a number of prominent politicians gathered in New York to support publicly the "noble attitude of Pius IX." This group of men included the mayors of New York and Brooklyn, Horace Greeley, and Theodore Sedgwick. George M. Dallas, Martin Van Buren, James Buchanan, Thomas Hart Benton, and a number of senators did not attend, but sent along public letters of encouragement. Supporters of Pius IX's liberal policies held a similar meeting in Philadelphia two months later. At that time, the *Philadelphia Daily Sun* called the public demonstrations a charade meant only "to court the Catholic vote." Just about the time the furor over these rallies died down in the religious and nativist press, the revolutions in Europe and the proposed opening of diplomatic relations with Rome once again exacerbated anti-Catholic feeling. *Proceedings of the Public Demonstration of Sympathy with Pope Pius IX, and with Italy, in the City of New York, on Monday, November 29, A.D. 1847* (New York: William Van Norden, 1847), 3-5, 13-23, 28-32; *Proceedings of a Public Meeting of the Citizens and Country of Philadelphia, Held January 6, 1848, to Express their Cordial Approval of the Liberal Policy of Pope Pius IX* (Philadelphia: Joseph Severns and Co., 1848), 3-24, passim; *Philadelphia Daily Sun*, 4 January 1848.

among us, all [Catholics] must obey his will." The *Christian Reflector* openly supported Levin's stand and claimed that the opening of diplomatic relations with Rome was the latest part of the Jesuitical plan to make "Popery" dominant in the United States, where the pope already had "millions of subjects."³⁴

The *New York Herald* responded to this criticism of the Roman mission by praising Pius IX as "the most liberal and enlightened pontiff that has occupied the chair of St. Peter for the last thousand years." Of Levin's ramblings about Jesuit and papal conspiracies, the *Herald* declared: "... they are fit for amusing children, not for men of the present age of intelligence." The newspaper argued, as did others, that "A minister from the United States republic to the Vatican" would broaden "the liberal progress of the age." The *U.S. Magazine and Democratic Review* concurred with the *Herald*, but for a slightly different reason. The *Magazine* agreed that Pius IX would enhance liberalism in a Europe that obviously seemed to be on the cusp of a republican golden age in 1848. However, in doing so the *Magazine* argued that the pope's "spirit of reform" would so enlighten Catholics that their despotic and outdated church would "sink beneath a new era of religious and political enlightenment." In other words, through his own actions Pius was sewing the seeds of not only his own doom, but also that of the Roman Catholic Church. Finally, the *Magazine* noted excitedly, the Puritans' "transatlantic prayer, has pervaded Italy and the Roman Church" and "the marks of barbarism and despotism are fast fading from the face of the earth."³⁵

³⁴ *Journal of the Executive Proceedings of the Senate of the United States, 1845-1848* (Washington: Printed by Order of the Senate, 1845-48; reprint, New York: Johnson Reprint Company Limited, 1969), 358-60, 374; *Christian Watchman*, 17, 31 March 1848; *Christian Reflector*, 23 March, 6, 26 April 1848.

³⁵ *New York Herald*, 5, 9 March 1848; *U.S. Magazine and Democratic Review* (April 1848), 301-05, 308.

As American soldiers returned from Mexico en masse, their stories and recollections combined with news from Europe and with the debate over sending an American diplomat to Rome. The result of this combination significantly affected the way many anti-Catholic evangelical Protestants reacted to the fallout of the war. Indeed, the year 1848 witnessed immense changes for many Protestant evangelicals and anti-Catholic voluntary societies in the United States, and not just because of the end of the conflict with Mexico. The war's effects were seen clearly in a split among abolitionist and anti-slavery forces that in turn would be mirrored by an alteration of the two-party system. But even as the United States had opened up a vast new tract of land for evangelization and the advance of republicanism, Pope Pius IX and the very papacy itself seemed to be on the verge of annihilation in Europe at the hands of the Austrian army. Importantly, the Mexican cession contained Roman Catholics and non-Christians. This confluence of seeming republican victories in 1848 not only in Europe, but also in North America, greatly influenced the psyche of many anti-Catholic writers. For example, whereas before the war many such writers had only alluded to Mexico in their discussions about Catholicism, now, with a populace much more educated about America's southern neighbor and with an ex-soldiery who had experienced the country and Catholicism first-hand, writers, missionaries, and lecturers concerned themselves with Mexico.

In 1848 the *Liberator* maintained its mostly consistent criticism of the war as a slave power conspiracy and therefore opposed any annexation of territory that might be used for slavery. William Lloyd Garrison attacked the anti-slavery *National Era* and the Liberty Party's *Albany Patriot* in early 1848, when they came out in favor of All Mexico.

Both anti-slavery papers had done so largely because their anti-Catholicism overcame their sensitivity to the slavery issue. For example, the *Patriot* claimed that it did not want to leave Mexicans subject only to "priestcraft" upon the exit of the American military. In February 1848, the *National Era* responded to the *Liberator's* criticism by pointing out that it supported only voluntary annexation in the hopes that it could demonstrate the workable reality of racial equality by renewing Mexicans both religiously and politically.³⁶

Many voluntary societies, like the abolitionists, also changed their direction in 1848, as they embraced the evangelical opportunities handed to them by the U.S.-Mexican War and the revolutions in Europe. Prior to that year the American Protestant Society's (APS) mission had been the conversion of Roman Catholic immigrants and unchurched native Americans to Protestant Christianity. In 1849 the APS merged with Lyman Beecher's Christian Alliance and the Foreign Evangelical Society to form one large, single voluntary society aimed at proselytizing Roman Catholics not just in North America but around the world.³⁷ The prominence of the Pope's troubles in Italy and with Austria played some part in this, as did the fallout of the U.S.-Mexican War. The war's role in this evolution began in February 1848, as letters appeared in *The American Protestant* calling upon Americans to put money and resources into converting, not killing, Mexicans. In July the APS printed a Presbyterian sermon in *The American Protestant* that called for the mass evangelization of Mexico. By November the APS itself officially supported efforts to spread a pure gospel and Protestant Bibles to Mexico.

³⁶ *Liberator*, 28 January, 7 April 1848; *National Era*, 3 February 1848.

³⁷ This new group was known as the American and Foreign Christian Union. See Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 264-65.

Its partial change in direction arose from the belief that the war had somehow effectively demonstrated "the American spirit of liberty" to Mexicans, "and now they are ready, in some measure, to contend for their inalienable rights. We need converted Spaniards or Portuguese . . . to penetrate into Mexico, and distribute the Bible." Yet at the same time the APS proclaimed the U.S.-Mexican War's benefits to Mexico, it also revealingly acknowledged the enormous dangers to American colporteurs there, due to ill will arising out of the late war.³⁸

One voluntary society that grew active in Texas in 1848 was the American Sunday School Union. As per its title, this organization advocated the importance of Sunday instruction for adults and children alike. The Sunday School Union originally had come out in somewhat tepid favor of the war. At the society's June 1846 anniversary meeting in Philadelphia, one speaker promised that it "would carry the truth all through the country, to Texas, and to California, and if heaven crown our arms with success, as far as Mexico." Not all spectators in the crowd, however, approved of the speech, but by 1848 the American Sunday School Union's worker in Texas (James Burke, also the Texas American Bible Society agent) received large donations after promising that his proximity to Mexico would lead to easy evangelization of that country. So while the Sunday School Union officially never advocated war with Mexico, it wasted no time in pursuing the evangelical possibilities created by the success of American arms.³⁹

³⁸ *The American Protestant* (February 1848), 277 (July 1848), 62 (August 1848), 89 (November 1848), 178-79 (December 1848), 222.

³⁹ *Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer*, 5 July 1848; *Boston Recorder*, 11 June 1846, 20 October 1848.

The American Bible Society (ABS) greeted the year 1848 with much excitement, proclaiming in New York at its annual anniversary: "The door is opening in Mexico for the distribution of the Bible there." In February 1848, the ABS appointed the Rev. W. H. Norris as its agent in Mexico. A Methodist Episcopal minister and a former missionary to South America, Norris was to ascertain "what can be done by the Society for the circulation of the Spanish Bible in that country." But without an occupying army to protect him, the clergyman was soon recalled by the ABS in late 1848. Even so, Norris proudly boasted that while in Mexico he had distributed Bibles in such a way "that they will not be subject to the order of wicked priests, but will be preserved and read." Indeed, the only leftover Bibles in his possession were those printed in English and meant for American troops. The Rev. Norris wanted the books to be transported to the frontier regiments in order to inspire the officers there. He felt sure that the newly-pious officers would then obtain and pass out Spanish Bibles. By 1849, however, the ABS grew increasingly interested in the evangelization of Asia and the Pacific Ocean's uncountable inhabited islands. Thus, it turned its attention from Mexico and toward California and its valuable ports.⁴⁰

The American Home Missionary Society (AHMS) in 1848 prodded its members to "convey the pure gospel" through any means available to "the new and yet unexplored regions of Oregon, New Mexico, or California." Unlike the APS and ABS, the AHMS was interested only in the ceded territories and not in Mexico itself. Ever fearful of the growth of Romanism and barbarism in the West, the AHMS reacted with astonishment

⁴⁰ *Annual Report of the American Bible Society* (New York: American Bible Society, 1849), 68-69, 98-100, 103; *Boston Recorder*, 25 February 1848; *New York Evangelist*, 18 May 1848; *Presbyterian*, 12 February, 20 May 1848.

but firm resolve to the now tremendously larger region that constituted the American West. The question, according to the AHMS, was not if the West would be proselytized, but by whom: "whether they shall be intelligent or ignorant, whether they shall depend on preaching for success, or on processions and genuflections." Acknowledging an already extant Catholic population in the Mexican cession that was also foreign in terms of language and culture, the Rev. Albert Barnes preached in New York and Philadelphia in early 1849 on behalf of the society and urged Protestant Americans to act before it was too late. That same year, the AHMS also offered its qualified support for Manifest Destiny. Although it had never backed annexation through conquest, the AHMS proclaimed that God had preserved California for Protestant Anglo-Saxons so that they, and not papists, could convert the rowdy miners drawn to the region's rich gold deposits.⁴¹

Besides the larger and more influential societies, like the AHMS, smaller evangelical organizations benefited from the war. The Ladies' Society for the Promotion of Education at the West, a creation of Edward N. Kirk and Edward Beecher, concentrated exclusively on education among westerners to stave off ignorance and Romanism. With few young Protestant women willing to move west to serve as teachers, Beecher and the Ladies' Society feared that settlers would have no choice but to attend Catholic schools for their education. In 1848 the Ladies' Society successfully sought Spanish-speaking American women to teach in Texas and New Mexico. At one such teacher's school in Texas, forty-five out of sixty students were Catholic Mexicans.

⁴¹ Albert Barnes, *Sermon in Behalf of the American Home Missionary Society: Preached in the Cities of New York and Philadelphia* (New York: William Osborn, 1849), 4-5, 36-37, 40-44; Billington, *The Protestant Crusade*, 279-80.

However, the Ladies' Society never made pro-war declarations of any kind. It merely expanded its operations into areas that the United States had gained through military conquest, thus making it one of the Protestant success stories of Mexican evangelization following the war.⁴²

As seen in the actions of the APS, ABS, AHMS, Ladies' Society, and the American Sunday School Union, events clearly indicated by early 1848 that the debate over annexation and religion had become more than theoretical. Moreover, as with many politicians during the Senate's debate over Article IX of the treaty, many evangelical periodicals like the Baptist *Christian Watchman* and even the Universalist *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate* feared that the Polk administration might allow Roman Catholicism to remain the official religion of both Mexico as well as the newly acquired territories of New Mexico and California. The *Evangelical Magazine* and the *Boston Recorder* warned that Mexico was in such poor shape, because it was papist in the first place. In fact, the *Recorder* thought that God had hidden California from the rest of the world for so long in order that the Protestant Anglo-Saxons of the United States could settle it. The *Presbyterian* continued to run articles that portrayed Mexican priests in a negative light in order to demonstrate the need for religious liberty in Mexico and all ceded territories. The *Banner of Peace* and the *Christian Examiner* placed the U.S.-Mexican War in the context of the various revolutions in Europe and argued that God was moving with a miraculous and mighty hand to restore religious and civil liberty

⁴² *Second Annual Report of the Ladies' Society for the Promotion of Education at the West* (Boston: n.p., 1848), 41; *Third Annual Report of the Ladies' Society for the Promotion of Education at the West* (Boston: n.p., 1849), 40.

around the world.⁴³

Protestant preachers with an anti-Catholic bent also lent their support to a rapid advance into the Mexican cession, regardless of their initial opinion of the war, their stance on All Mexico, or their views on annexation by conquest. For example, on December 21, 1848 at his church in New Orleans, the Rev. W. A. Scott delivered a sermon entitled, "The Hope of Republics." The Presbyterian minister spelled out to his congregation all of the advances of modernity that Protestantism inevitably brought with itself. Scott was such a zealous supporter of republicanism that he declared "the day of Representative Republicanism" was second only to "the day of the Incarnation" itself. For this reason, he had no qualms approving of "our recent extension" as "the natural result of institutions and of our growth." He added:

All we have to do with California and New Mexico, is to imitate the wise policy of the Romans, and win the love of their inhabitants by opening roads, and protecting their interests, and giving them the Bible, and the school-house, and the printing-press. Magnetic telegraphs, and the institutions of the pure gospel of the Saviour of mankind, will seem to modern Mexicans scarcely less the gifts of the gods, than the cannons and horses did to their Indian ancestors.

Scott hoped that the changes American Protestants might bring to the Mexican cession would only be the beginning. By establishing "true liberty," Americans would break "the chains of ignorance, covetousness, superstition, error, and bigotry," signaling "the last

⁴³ *Christian Watchman*, 17 March 1848; *Christian Reflector and Christian Watchman*, 14 December 1848; *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*, 18 August 1848; *Boston Recorder*, 28 April, 22 December 1848; *Presbyterian*, 22 January 1848; *Banner of Peace*, 8, 10 March, 21 April 1848; *Christian Examiner* (January 1848), 124-25, 141. The *Boston Recorder* also argued against annexation on the grounds that Mexicans were such racially inferior barbarians that they might be unable intellectually even to comprehend Protestantism and republicanism. *Boston Recorder*, 7 January 1848.

and eternal funeral of civil and religious despotism.”⁴⁴

Beginning in 1848, historians sought to interpret the meaning and long-term results of the war just as evangelicals had done. They flooded Americans for the next several years with a deluge of Mexican and war histories. In most cases, these books expressed an unequivocal belief in Manifest Destiny, with all of its Anglo-Saxonist and anti-Catholic accoutrements, that was every bit as strong as the sermons and speeches of preachers and politicians. For example, Emma Willard argued that God had “made the American armies the means of chastising the Spanish Mexicans.” Such a painful rebuke had been made necessary by Roman Catholic bigotry, which had prevented Mexico from reaching its full potential as a nation. It also had prevented Mexico from experiencing the blessings of Protestant institutions like tract, Bible, and missionary societies. But another historian, John Frost, actually complimented the civilizing influences of Roman Catholicism on Mexico, albeit in a strange manner. Frost claimed that “its influence over the white people is far less than has been represented, while the Indians . . . are relapsing into idolatry.” In any case, Frost exulted in the American success at arms, because the Mexicans for a variety of reasons had not taken advantage of their own natural resources.⁴⁵

Drawing a more ambiguous connection between the two nations’ religions and the results of the war, George Wilkins Kendall observed that “the moral and physical

⁴⁴ W. A. Scott, “Home of Republics; or the Elements of Permanence in Modern Civilizations,” in *The American National Preacher* 23 (March 1849), 68, 75-76.

⁴⁵ Emma Willard, *Last Leaves of American History: Comprising Histories of the Mexican War and California* (New York: George P. Putnam, 1849), 21-24, 92, 110-11; John Frost, *Pictorial History of Mexico and the Mexican War* (Philadelphia: Thomas, Cowperthwait, and Co., 1848), 20-26, 105-42,

superiority of the Americans more than compensated in every struggle" for the geographical and numerical advantages of the Mexicans.⁴⁶ Brevet Major Roswell S. Ripley agreed, and related American victory to the "various moral deficiencies on the part of the enemy, among which were the Mexicans' "bigotry" and "superstition." Nonetheless, Major Ripley hoped that "the regeneration of Mexico" and the eradication of superstition from the country would follow in the wake of war. One anonymous author of a pro-war history of the conflict disapproved of this idea of sending missionaries to regenerate Mexico, because he believed that Mexicans would be intolerant toward Protestants. Thus, according to this writer, the best method with which to improve Mexico would always remain "the strong hand of war."⁴⁷

Brantz Mayer joined in the frenzy of historical publishing following the war, with a book in 1848 followed by a two-volume publication in 1851. His *History of the War between the United States and Mexico* and his *Mexico: Aztec, Spanish, and Republican* built upon the success of his earlier works on Mexico and also upon his past as Secretary of the Legation to Mexico. Mayer agreed with the nay-sayers who spoke against Mexico's ability to improve itself and achieve republican status. Expecting Mexico to be republican was far too much to ask of a "mongrel race of Spaniards and Indians," according to Mayer. In any event, Mayer argued, even without the Mexicans' racial

⁴⁶ George Wilkins Kendall, *The War between the United States and Mexico* (New York: D. Appleton and Company; Philadelphia: George S. Appleton, 1851), 49.

⁴⁷ Roswell S. Ripley, *The War with Mexico* (2 vols., New York: Burt Franklin, 1849), 1:27, 2: 644-46; *The Republic of the United States of America: Its Duties to Itself, and Its Responsible Relations to Other Countries. Embracing also a Review of the Late War . . .* (New York: D. Appleton and Co.; Philadelphia: George S. Appleton, 1848), 152-54, 159-65.

defects, their country's constitutional protection of Roman Catholicism would hinder the success of republican institutions. The immorality of Mexico's Roman Catholic clergy

was satisfactorily proved by the state in which the Catholic church of the United States found the parishes of Texas at the period of annexation; and, it is likely, that many more flagrant instances of laxity will be unveiled in New Mexico and California, to whose distant regions our enlightened and pure Catholic clergymen are already directing their attention with honest and pious zeal.

Mayer, in this compliment to American Catholics, assured his readers that he was not impugning all Catholics, but only "the Catholic church in Mexico." Unlike in his pre-war writings, Mayer was now being more cautious in his criticisms of Catholicism.⁴⁸

Novels set in the U.S.-Mexican War period also earned an audience beginning in late 1847.⁴⁹ Indeed, the readers of romance and adventure novels were not usually the same people who enjoyed poring over volumes of Mayer's turgid historical works. Publishing houses in New York and Boston competed for readers with numerous novels subtitled, "A Tale of the Mexican War." Most of these books were replete with tempestuous señoritas, gallant dons, amazing American heroines, and brave Yankee soldiers. For sorely needed realism, authors interwove into their fictitious accounts

⁴⁸ Brantz Mayer, *History of the War between Mexico and the United States* (New York and London: Wiley and Putnam, 1848), 5-8; Mayer, *Mexico: Aztec, Spanish, and Republican* (2 vols., Hartford: S. Drake and Company, 1851), 1: 130-62, 308-10. Even as late as the 1930s, in what is still considered by many to be the best comprehensive history of the U.S.-Mexican War, historian Justin Smith perpetuated the views of the historians of the 1840s and 1850s. Citing the works of Stapp, Kendall, and Thompson to support his claims, Smith described Mexicans as "always tricky, obstinate, indolent, peevish, and careless" and "almost crazed by superstitious fears." Indians, in Smith's opinion, were "ragged, stupid" and "little more human in appearance than the donkeys they drive." Most Mexicans were under "the more effective domination of the priests" as "the keeper of confessional secrets and family skeletons." Of the clergy, Smith found "nearly all" to be immoral and ignorant. Justin H. Smith, *The War with Mexico* (2 vols., New York: Macmillan Co., 1919), 1: 4-8, 18-23, 26, 410.

⁴⁹ For a dissertation on the relationship between racial stereotypes and U.S.-Mexican War novels, see Matthew Simon "Levi" Lemberger, "Using the American Novels of the Mexican American War to Determine Racial Myths and Stereotypes of the 1840s" (D.A. Dissertation, University of Miami, 1993).

historical incidents, reports of actual battles, and real personages. In an entertaining way, they presented the stereotypical view of Mexico that had been transmitted by American soldiers and travelers.

Oftentimes, authors wrote about Mexican religious practices in order to convey the foreignness of Mexican culture to the average American reader. In many such instances, there was little anti-Catholicism. For example, in the novels of Newton M. Curtis, the writer often sets the mood through detailed descriptions of Catholic rites. His Mexican characters rarely finish speaking without pausing to swear "by the Holy Cross" or by "the Holy Mass." To enhance their stories about Mexico, many novelists and poets went beyond these relatively benevolent caricatures and instead drew upon standard anti-Catholic themes already familiar to American readers. These themes included the usual crafty and underhanded Jesuits, fat and wicked Mexican priests, Irish American deserters, and even dungeon-like convents, such as those made famous in novels like Maria Monk's *Awful Disclosures*. In one of the novels of Joseph E. Badger, a Mexican priest and an Irish deserter even describe the act of desertion as "throwing off your uniform, and turning Catholic."⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Newton M. Curtis, *The Prairie Guide: or, The Rose of the Rio Grande. A Tale of the Mexican War* (New York: Williams Brothers, 1847), 18-20, 28, 43-44; Curtis, *The Hunted Chief: or, The Female Ranchero. A Tale of the Mexican War* (New York: Williams Brothers, 1847), 49; Thomas W. Whitley, *The Jesuit: A National Melo-drama in Three Acts. Founded on Incidents Growing Out of the War between the United States and Mexico* (New York: n.p., 1850), 1-26, passim; Harry Halyard, pseud., [Joseph E. Badger], *The Heroine of Tampico: or, Wildfire the Wanderer. A Tale of the Mexican War* (Boston: F. Gleason, 1847), 28, 47-48, 50-57, 78-80, 87-89; Halyard, [Badger], *The Mexican Spy: or, The Bride of Buena Vista. A Tale of the Mexican War* (Boston: F. Gleason, 1848), 64-65, 71-73; Harry Halyard, [Badger], *The Chieftan of Churubusco, or, The Spectre of the Cathedral. A Romance of the Mexican War* (Boston: F. Gleason, 1848), 15-19, 31-32, 41, 45-49, 62, 79, 100. The "Legion of Irish Deserters," led by the "demoniac" Riley, also appeared in other novels. See Ned Buntline, pseud., [Edward Zane Carol Judson], *Magdalena, The Beautiful Mexican Maid. A Story of Buena Vista* (New York: Williams Bros., 1846 [misdated; context analysis shows the publication date to be no earlier than late 1847]), 90-92.

Poets also relied on anti-Catholic themes when writing about the war with Mexico. In *La Gran Quivera; or, Rome Unmasked*, James Webb Rogers captured much of his anti-Catholic belief in this particular stanza:

Here oft assembled, in fandango glee
The youth of Monterey to dance and sing,
While vari-colored lamps from every tree,
On beds of flowers their dreamy lustre fling.
Here, too, her *virgin priests* their hours wing,
Lascivious as goats, albeit less grave
In their demeanor, till the matins ring,
Then fly to hear confessions, and enslave
Still more the burthened soul which they pretend to
save!

According to Rogers, Mexico was the perfect example of the “pious fraud” of Roman Catholic charitable institutions, as well as of Catholic immorality and superstitious ritual. Poet William F. Small likewise criticized Mexican Catholic rites:

Religion, too, o'erloaded with the forms
That crafty priests for profit, put upon her,
Displays no more those pure and holy charms
Which once a simple world's glad worship won
her. . . .

He accusatorily described Mexican priests as those

Who, while they rob, afflict and vex the nation,
Insist upon its grateful admiration.

Small presented Mexicans in places as serpents, the obvious implication being that like the serpent in *Genesis*, they had tainted what should have been a paradise. Conversely, he portrayed Americans as “God’s own chosen people,” embarked on an almost holy “quest of liberty” to reestablish a paradise in North America.⁵¹

⁵¹ Sheppard M. Ashe, pseud., [James Webb Rogers], *La Gran Quivera; or, Rome Unmasked. A Poem* (2 books in one, New York: C. Shepard and Co., 1852), 1: v, 3-4, 54, 58, 83, 88, 103, 110, 114-16, 119-21,

Shaped in part by histories, fiction, first-hand accounts, newspapers, and sermons, popular opinion of the war with Mexico significantly affected voters during the presidential election campaign of 1848. In May, Lewis Cass obtained the Democratic nomination. Because he had opposed the Wilmot Proviso and supported a form of popular sovereignty with regard to the extension of slavery into the new territories, tensions in the party reached a boiling point. Meanwhile, in June after much protest from Henry Clay and William Seward, the Whig Party nominated Zachary Taylor as its presidential candidate. A Southern slaveowner, Taylor's candidacy was not entirely palatable to those Whigs in the North who opposed the expansion of slavery into New Mexico and California. The result of discontent in both parties was the creation of the Free Soil Party, although the primary cause was the more serious rift in the Democratic Party. Even though it was dominated by Martin Van Buren and his New York allies, the new party included anti-slavery Democrats and Whigs, as well as Liberty Party folk. In August this tenuous coalition nominated Van Buren for president. The Free Soilers, unlike the two major parties, opposed any extension of slavery. Trusting neither Cass nor Taylor when it came to protecting slavery, John C. Calhoun tried but failed to create a party that would have united Southern Democrats and Whigs.⁵²

With little instigation on his own part, Taylor had already been the Native American Party candidate for president for over one year. He had initially turned down

125, 128, 130, 136-38, 140-42, 162-63, 167, 170-75; 2: 6, 10-12, 15, 38-39, 82, 122, 125; William F. Small, *Guadalupe: a Tale of Love and War . . . By One Who Served in the Campaign of 1846-7. in the Late War with Mexico* (Philadelphia: James B. Smith and Co., 1860), 11, 27, 37, 62, 134.

⁵² David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1860* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 83-86; Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *The Jacksonian Era, 1828-1848* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 248-59.

the nomination while still in Mexico, claiming that "I do not feel myself at liberty to express my frank opinion." But thanks to Taylor's ambiguous statements that could be construed as supportive of the nativist cause, Native Americans placed their hopes in the war hero and nominated him anyway. The Native Americans thus joined in an alliance with the Whigs in the election of 1848. Both Democrats and Free Soilers pointed to Taylor's nativist supporters as proof that the general was an anti-Catholic nativist himself. To counter this, Thurlow Weed tried to woo New York Catholics by claiming that former U.S.-Mexican War chaplain Fr. John McElroy supported Taylor as a "great and good man." In the end, however, few immigrant Catholics would have voted for a Whig candidate in the first place, and disputes over accusations of anti-Catholicism in the campaign were greatly obscured by the slavery issue. The real importance of the Native American Party endorsement of Taylor was that it marked the beginning of its devotees' quick absorption back into the Whig Party. Yet nativism proved to be a very influential strand within Whiggery and the first major party to arise out of the Whigs' disintegration in the 1850s would be the nativist American Party, popularly known as the "Know Nothings."⁵³

Zachary Taylor defeated Lewis Cass in the election, and for the second and last time the Whig Party achieved electoral success with a war hero. Although Van Buren's

⁵³ Zachary Taylor to Peter S. Smith, 6 July 1847, in *National Intelligencer*, 11 August 1847; Zachary Taylor to William J. A. Birkey, 13 July 1847, in *ibid.*, 17 September 1847; *General Taylor's Moral, Intellectual, and Professional Character, as Drawn by the Hon. John J. Crittenden, [et al.] . . . to which the Attention of the Public is Invited* (Washington, D.C.: J. and G.S. Gideon, ca. 1848), 5; Joseph G. Rayback, *Free Soil: The Election of 1848* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 266-67, 293. See also Isaac McDaniel, "The Impact of the Mexican War on Anti-Catholicism in the United States" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1991). Historians like McDaniel mistakenly equate this decline of the Native American Party with a general decrease in nativism. But the nativists' absorption into the Whig Party and their subsequent rise out of Whiggery's ashes a few short years later as the strong American Party belie such arguments.

popular vote totals more than made up the difference between the number of votes garnered by the Whig and Democratic candidates, the Free Soiler won no states at all. Taylor's moderate claim to be "a Whig, but not an ultra Whig" worked. The real trick was gaining the trust of Northern Whigs. Taylor was helped in this by Connecticut congressman Truman Smith, who assured his constituents that Taylor was "truly republican in his habits and manners." Also, Southern, border state supporters like John J. Crittenden appealed to Whigs in the North by explaining that while Taylor was a Southerner, "He is an American!" No doubt Taylor's status as a respected army officer and hero helped most of all.⁵⁴

The election of a Whig following a war that had been successfully conducted by a Democratic administration was an intriguing capstone to the war years. Rent with discord over the destiny of New Mexico and California, the Democracy had splintered enough to hand victory in the presidential race to the opposition. The end of the U.S.-Mexican War thus proved momentous for the American political system. But the war also had a considerable impact on the anti-Catholic movement in the United States, because it proved fertile ground for examples of Anglo-Saxon, Protestant superiority and Mexican, Catholic inferiority. This aspect of the nation's anti-Catholic sentiment was seen in everything from the Treaty debates in Congress, to literature written about the war. Meanwhile, evangelical Protestants, anti-Catholic and moderate alike, again looked toward the West, the same region that in their minds had held such tremendous apocalyptic and proselytical importance since the middle 1830s. With an eventual eye

⁵⁴ Zachary Taylor to J.S. Allison, 22 April 1848, in *The True Whig Sentiment: General Taylor's Two Allison Letters* (Boston: Eastburn's Press, ca. 1848), 1; *General Taylor's . . . Character*, 1-2.

toward reaching Asia and the Pacific islands through Californian ports, they streamed into the Mexican cession to convert Catholics, Indians, and the settlers of the frontier.

EPILOGUE

In the years immediately following the U.S.-Mexican War, California and New Mexico invited attention from all levels of American society. In May 1849, for example, adventuresome entrepreneur William L. Booth tried to convince Richard A. Maupin to buy Los Angeles real estate as soon as possible. He assured his friend that the property "will become important." By November, Booth had devised a more elaborate scheme:

There is another object I have in view also in getting you down there and that is to look at the Mission of 'San Luis Rey.' I think we might get hold of it; if this could be done it would be *quite a handsome fortune*. . . . I would not mention any thing about it as there are so many ready to grab any thing of this kind that you are not safe in speaking on the subject.

Such plans never came to pass, because the United States government soon restored the California missions to the Roman Catholic Church. But Booth's proposal illustrated the atmosphere of unfettered opportunity that surrounded American opinion of its newfound territorial wealth.¹

Other than men like Booth and the prospectors who journeyed in droves to California after the well-advertised discovery of gold in 1849, evangelical Protestants were perhaps the greatest opportunists in the West. That region had always played a special role in the anti-Catholic movement, but for a number of reasons that interest increased following the war. Those who had placed the defeat of Mexico within the context of republican advancement and Protestant ascendancy worldwide had been sorely disappointed with the failure of the 1848 European revolutions. Yet when liberals

¹ William L. Booth to Richard A. Maupin, 2 May, 13 November 1849, Richard A. Maupin Papers, Filson Club Historical Society, Louisville.

established a republic in Rome in 1849 and forced Pope Pius IX to flee the city, evangelicals feared the he might come to North America and establish his long-predicted stronghold somewhere in the vast expanse of land west of the Mississippi River. Soon after French forces crushed the brief Roman Republic and restored the Pope to Rome, some American Protestants sounded the alarm that a revived Catholic Church, buoyed by European despots, might renew its nefarious designs upon the American republic. Thus, with or without a pope in Rome, conspiracy theorists still placed the West at the center of Catholic designs. A potential papal army composed of millions of German-Catholic immigrants who had fled post-revolutionary Europe for the United States reinforced these suspicions.²

Even as many evangelicals called upon "every intelligent American" to support the cause of republicanism against "Popery" in Europe, other preachers concerned themselves with issues closer to home. This latter group tied the growth of American territory directly to the extension of republicanism and Protestantism. They argued that regardless of affairs in Europe, the United States still had a daunting mission of proselytism to accomplish on its own continent. One advocate of this endeavor was the Rev. Nicholas Murray. During the war, he had emerged as a leading anti-Catholic orator and author. Writing under the pseudonym "Kirwan," Murray had penned letters to Bishop Hughes; these had appeared in most Protestant newspapers and elsewhere between 1846 and 1847 and were published in book form in the middle of 1847. By the end of that year, over 100,000 copies had been sold, especially once the news leaked out

² *California and Her Gold Regions* (Philadelphia: G.B. Zieber, 1849), 15-16; Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York: Macmillan, 1938; reprint, Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964), 240-56, 262, 328-30.

that "Kirwan" was actually Murray. In 1851, he assembled many of his thoughts on the defeat of Mexico and the other activities of the late 1840s into one lecture and book, *The Decline of Popery*. Murray argued that all states "from which the Protestant element has been excluded" were one and the same: masses of immorality and ignorance. He measured "the advancing influence of Protestantism" on what he called a "moral map of the world." As a critical part of that "advance," he cited

the bringing under our influence in a few months the papal states of Texas, New Mexico, and California—the building of cities and churches by the waves of the Pacific, and where, until recently, nothing in the way of religion dare be lisp'd save popish mummeries.

Concluding that "the entire current of civilization is with" Protestantism and "against popery," Murray called for the inevitable victory that the events of the war had unquestionably engendered. If Europe was beyond repair for the time being, then Americans still had the immense task of evangelizing the West and, thanks to the addition of California to the Union, the whole Pacific rim.³

With talk such as this, certain evangelicals thereby lent their tacit approval to the continued desire for more territory in the name of Manifest Destiny. At the same time, they continued to denigrate beleaguered Mexico as an unrepugnant, Catholic entity. For

³ Theodore Dwight, *The Roman Republic of 1849* (New York: R. Van Dien, ca. 1851), 224-29, 240; "Kirwan" [Nicholas Murray], *Letters to the Rt. Reverend John Hughes, Roman Catholic Archbishop of New York* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1847); Nicholas Murray, *Bishop Hughes Confuted. Reply to the Right Reverend John Hughes* (New York: n.p., 1848); Nicholas Murray, *The Decline of Popery and Its Causes: An Address . . .* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1851), 19-23, 28-30, 32; Billington, *The Protestant Crusade*, 254. In 1852, Murray continued to use Mexico as an example of the dangers of Catholicism, warning in public letters to Chief Justice Roger B. Taney: "When the priest gains the ascendant [*sic*] here, the last rays of the sun of our glory are dying away on the summit of the Rocky Mountains." According to Murray, Americans would become "as lazy, as poor, as stupid, and as vicious as our neighbors of Mexico" if they adopted Catholicism, because only the differences in religion (not race) separated Mexicans from the people of the United States. See "Kirwan" [Nicholas Murray], *Romanism at Home. Letters to the Hon. Roger B. Taney* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1852), 239-41.

example, a professor of church history at Auburn Seminary in New York blamed not racial inferiority but "a bad religious system and a corrupt hierarchy" for the failure of republicanism in Mexico. The prominent Presbyterian minister Samuel Burchard similarly touted not "the Anglo-Saxon blood [that] flows in our veins" for America's greatness, but "the religion of this country." "Our country is *Protestant*," Burchard boasted, and for that reason alone the United States was destined to be a successful republic and eventually overcome the papacy itself.⁴

This expansionist impulse within evangelicalism would continue to intensify until much later in the nineteenth century, when it came to constitute an important part of the White Man's Burden and American imperialism. Yet by the middle 1850s, anti-Catholicism was most apparent not among evangelicals exclusively, but in the American Party or "Know Nothing" movement. Nativism's ability to sway the American electorate had appeared finished following the 1848 elections, but events in 1854 helped to create the strongest anti-Catholic political party yet seen in American politics. The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 and the issues it engendered led to a rupture within the Whig Party and discord in the northern Democracy. Unwilling to support either the anti-slavery stance of the new Republicans or the pro-slavery platform of the Democratic Party, many men shifted their allegiance to the Know Nothings. The only strong commonality that

⁴ Samuel M. Hopkins, *Protestantism in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century* (Auburn, N.Y.: J.C. Ivison and Co., 1849), 29; Samuel D. Burchard, "The Past and the Present," in *The American National Preacher* 23 (December 1849), 296-97.

held this otherwise disparate group together was vehement anti-Catholic sentiment among its members.⁵

So successful was the new party in state and local elections in 1854 and 1855 that many predicted that voters would elect a Know-Nothing to the presidency in 1856. But just as they had done during the events leading up to the Compromise of 1850, opponents of slavery and/or its extension began to dominate the country's attention. Moreover, the American Party made the mistake of de-emphasizing nativism during the 1856 campaign. Consequently, the party's power and influence on a national scale quickly declined. Rather than a Know Nothing president, the nation experienced four years of Democrat James Buchanan. Nativism as a political force all but disappeared by 1860, as Americans grew increasingly concerned with questions surrounding the institution of slavery.⁶ Americans had proven during the 1830s and 1840s that an issue like anti-Catholicism could engender hatred and inspire them to attack a small number of fellow citizens (and for some, a neighboring country). But in the 1860s, sustained by the more urgent concerns of union and slavery, Americans would again demonstrate their capacity for fratricide and do so with a vengeance.

⁵ David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 246-54; Billington, *The Protestant Crusade*, 386-92.

⁶ Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, 254-66; Billington, *The Protestant Crusade*, 426-30.

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