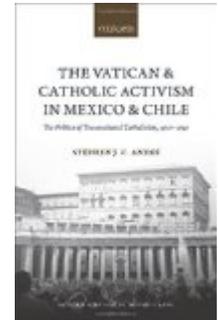


Stephen J. C. Andes. *The Vatican and Catholic Activism in Mexico and Chile: The Politics of Transnational Catholicism, 1920-1940.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. 272 pp. \$99.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-968848-7.



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Romanization, the restructuring and reorganization of the Catholic Church that made Rome the center for political, theological, and administrative matters, occupied all efforts and energies of the Catholic Church in the nineteenth century. During the first half of that century, the Catholic Church in Latin America was fragmented and controlled by the governments of the emergent nation-states. *The Vatican and Catholic Activism in Mexico and Chile* by Stephen J. C. Andes is an original and significant contribution to our historical knowledge of transnational political Catholicism. The book examines carefully how the Vatican interacted with the states of Mexico and Chile and, simultaneously, with the local churches of these societies. Andes's analysis centers predominantly on the 1920s and 1930s, key decades that coincide with a resurgence of political Catholicism in Chile and Mexico. Andes argues that Vatican authorities were highly influenced by the 1929 Lateran Accords with Benito Mussolini, in which they accepted not to support a particular political party, especially confessional Catholic parties.

Also, Vatican officials at that time distrusted democracies and viewed them as unreliable and unpredictable. Ideologically, the Catholic Church was opposed to democracy given that this political regime privileges freedom of conscience and religion. Vatican leaders realized that it would be a more prudent approach to sign concordats to solve issues concerning the place and role of the church in modern nation-states. This approach dominated the relationships between Rome and the nation-states of Latin America. For the Vatican, Catholic political parties were expendable; the main purpose was to guarantee fundamental prerogatives and rights of the church, especially in the realm of religious education. Of course, this approach caused tensions between Rome and the ebullient Catholic organizations that emerged during the turbulent times of the first decades of the twentieth century.

The new nation-states of Latin America inherited the *Patronato*—the institutional prerogatives that gave the Spanish Crown the right to appoint bishops in Latin America—and the power to de-

fine national and local church hierarchies. Immediately after Latin American nations gained independence from Spain, the proper place of Catholicism in the new republics became a source of disagreement and conflict. Mexico and Chile resolved the relationships of church and state in diametrically opposed manners, and, consequently, their political developments profoundly diverged throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Andes acknowledges these differences.

The promulgation of the 1857 Liberal constitution in Mexico, which separated church and state, triggered a decade-long conflict between Catholic conservatives and liberals. The conflict only worsened with the French invasion of Mexico in 1861. Catholic conservatives supported and became allies with the French occupiers. The defeat of French forces by Benito Juárez in 1867 was the final blow to political Catholicism in Mexico. In contrast, Chile's Catholic conservatives became dominant after the promulgation in 1833 of a political constitution that guaranteed Catholicism as the sole religion of the state. This constitution, with important amendments in 1865, remained in force until 1925. In other words, Mexican liberals and republicans were more successful than their Chilean counterparts; however, it was a Pyrrhic victory. After 1865, Chile was able to maintain relatively stable political institutions, whereas Mexico's Republican victories were usurped by the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. Against these divergent political developments of Chile and Mexico, Andes's analysis attempts to shed light on the ways political Catholicism in Mexico and Chile was capable of engaging with civil society, creating many Catholic associations for youth and women and, simultaneously, negotiating recognition and legitimacy with an assertive Vatican, whose principal purpose was to consolidate and concentrate politico-religious power vis-à-vis the nation-states.

Andes's book describes meticulously the plethora of Catholic political and civil organizations in Mexico and Chile. Catholicism in both so-

cieties became a relevant political actor; however, in Mexico, due to the legal restriction imposed on the religious practices of Catholics, the search for political recognition and legitimacy led to a violent reaction against an anticlerical Mexican state. Rebellion and open war, the Cristero War, challenged the Vatican approach of diplomatic accommodation and compromise. The Vatican was forced to strike a difficult balance of rejecting the violence by the Catholic *Cristeros* and the anticlerical legislation enforced by the government of Plutarco Elías Calles. Andes aptly demonstrates that Rome was, at the end, able to maintain its diplomatic position, negotiating directly with the Mexican government and sidelining the most radical groups within the Catholic rebellion. Unfortunately for Mexican political Catholicism, the consequences were not favorable; Catholic political organizations had serious difficulties in finding their proper place in Mexican society. They oscillated between Fascist right-wing postures and apolitical apathy, until the founding of the Partido de Acción Nacional in 1939.

Andes points out that Chile's political development created the conditions for a different trajectory for political Catholicism. Since the 1860s, the Chilean Conservative Party was capable of monopolizing the voice and representations of Catholics in the realm of politics. This monopoly was challenged by the young Catholic generation of the 1930s. The young Chilean generation wanted to create its own political organization, detached from the church and the Conservative Party. This situation created a new challenge for Rome. Again, the Vatican had to face a political conflict, but this situation offered an extraordinary opportunity to finally separate Catholic social organizations from political parties. The context was different, but the outcome the same. In Andes's words: "The Vatican wanted a Church free from political parties, and Christian Democrats desired a party free from the Church hierarchy" (p. 217).

Andes's scholarship is impeccable; however, there is an important omission in his account of political Catholicism in Mexico and Chile during the nineteenth century: the institution of *Patronato* and its ideological and political effects on the development of political Catholicism. As noted above, the emerging states in Latin America refused to give up the right of *Patronato*.^[1] This refusal provoked a complicated relationship between the state and the church. The state exerted control over the church and, in return, the church acquired "religious monopoly" over society.^[2] However, as noted, this situation was unacceptable for a significant part of Mexican and Chilean elites. Moreover, there was a change of generation that marked the end of Gallicanism,^[3] which had defended the rights of the state over the church, to Ultramontane convictions, which sought to separate the church from the state.^[4]

This transformation was the expression of a Catholic Church that found itself in a process of increasing "Romanization" against the powers of the nation-states, but also the emergence of a theological position that asserted that the union of church and state had been harmful and antithetical to the essence of the Catholic religious faith. In addition, after the 1840s, the generation that had supplied the main actors for fighting for independence from Spain, and the creators of the basic political institutions of the state had passed away and, with it, the Gallican or Regalist assumptions. The union of church and state was contested and challenged. This religious transformation did not take place only in Latin America. It started in France and expanded worldwide. Unexpectedly, over time, Ultramontanes like Félicité de Lamennais would become ardent Republicans. Such was the course of development in Chile during the 1860s. In the case of Mexico, political Catholicism was truncated after its military defeat in 1867.

The politico-religious cleavage between Gallians and Ultramontanes is essential to understanding the rise of Chile's Conservative Party. An-

des asserts: "Because the conservative state continued to protect and sustain the Church, Catholic monarchism in Chile never became a viable movement. Chilean liberals pushed for control of the presidency in 1850, but lost to Manuel Montt, the government's selected candidate. Despite this electoral defeat and the subsequent bloody liberal revolt and its violent suppression, President Montt proceeded to enact many of the policies desired by the Liberals, disentailing large states and outlawing the ecclesiastical tithe. However, the increasingly authoritarian practices of Montt and his vice-president, Antonio Varas, led to a Liberal-Conservative alliance, formed to challenge the newly founded government-supported Nationalist Party. The Catholic Church was under attack from the Nationalists, as Montt refused to allow the Jesuit order to reorganize in Chile and encouraged greater government control over the education system. Finding the Liberal-Conservative relationship not robust enough on religious issues, dissatisfied Conservatives were left to found their own separate party, which became known as the Partido Conservador" (p. 31).

This account of the birth of Chile's Conservative Party is inaccurate. In 1856, the Catholic Church was at the center of an apparently futile dispute: the sacristan affair. It was a domestic incident in which a junior sacristan, having been dismissed by his ecclesiastical superiors, asked the Chilean Supreme Court for a revision of the dismissal. The Chilean Supreme Court accepted the case, legal under the laws of *Patronato*, and obliged the church to rehire him. However, the archbishop of Santiago, the Ultramontane Rafael Valentín Valdivieso, refused to comply. The Supreme Court threatened the archbishop with punishment of banishment; however, the head of the Chilean church held his defiance. This conflict opened a political conflict in which some Liberals, among them the archbishop's nephew, Federico Errázuriz, saw the opportunity to challenge the power of the Conservatives. However, the conflict also affected the Conservative Party. The incident

exposed the profound divisions within Catholicism between Gallicans and Ultramontanes.[5]

Using arguments based on religious convictions, the Ultramontanes reacted against the Gallican president Manuel Montt. Moreover, among Ultramontanes there was a small, but intellectually and politically powerful, group of Liberal Catholics who thought it would be necessary to support the separation of church and state. This group was pivotal in creating a democratic Catholic movement that used the language of republicanism, liberalism, and natural rights, and advocated the separation and limitations of political power. The Chilean Conservatives thought of themselves as guardians against oppression and political arbitrariness. They denounced the flagrant intervention of the government in political elections and championed the liberties and rights of Chilean citizens against a state that was perceived as corrupt and sometimes tyrannical. The Conservative Party did not become an organized political organization until the late 1870s.

Indeed, before the "sacristan affair," none of the political parties in Chile had stable institutions; they were instead mere social gatherings that answered to circumstantial and specific social and political problems. During the 1860s, the Conservatives were organized and capable of articulating a political vision and ideals, and, more important, affect political events of Chile. It is true that it was only in 1878, during the first National Convention of the Conservative Party, that those individuals and groups, united by their Catholic belief and a commitment to social order and authority, were able to formally and legally found the party; however, it was not a splintered faction of dissatisfied religious Catholics.

The political agenda that had been set by Liberal Catholics, like Abdón Cifuentes and Manuel José Irarrázabal during the 1860s, did not cease to exert influence over the direction of the Conservative Party in the coming decades. At the opening of the National Convention of 1878, the princi-

pal orator, Cifuentes, gave a sense of the Conservatives' self-perception and political mission: "After the events of Independence, which was our first work, came the second task, not less gigantic than the first, because it was like a second creation: the organization of a new people.... And there was a third task: we had to enter into a new form of life according to the new conditions and advancements of society: the life of liberty, whose sweet fruits could be tasted by a people who had proved to be prudent and civic. The Conservative Party duly understood it, and if before it [the party] worked to strengthen the authority to free the country from anarchy, once that objective was achieved, it began to work to consolidate the republican institutions, adjusting those institutions to the new advancements of society, giving back to the citizens the full [capacity] of action and restricting the faculties of power, daughters of another epoch and circumstances." [6]

The efforts of the Vatican to remove political legitimacy from particular Catholic parties in Mexico and Chile were certainly influenced by the experiences of the Lateran Accords and the Italian *Risorgimento*, but doubtless there was also a long-term development that radically changed the structural organization of Catholicism. The twentieth century witnessed the triumph of Ultramontanism over Gallicanism, and the consolidation of Rome as the center of the Catholic world.

The Vatican and Catholic Activism in Mexico and Chile is a detailed and original historical account of the role of Catholicism in shaping political identities in two Latin American societies that shared similar religious traditions but evolved into different political projects. This work refutes a common opinion and perception that Catholicism is a monolith religion and that Latin America is a uniform political landscape of authoritarian regimes.

Notes

[1]. On the *Patronato* in Chile, see Simon Collier, "Religious Freedom, Clericalism, and Anti-

clericalism in Chile: 1820-1920," in *Freedom and Religion in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Richard Helmstadter (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 304.

[2]. The church not only accepted this monopoly over religious life but also defended it as its right. In this respect, the *Revista católica*, the official newspaper of the church in Chile, declared: "Where consciences obey the Catholic faith, Catholicism and Catholicism alone should be admitted; because we Catholics believe that all other religions are false.... This is the case in Chile. Catholicism, which has ruled for more than three centuries in these fortunate regions, Catholicism which is embodied in the very spirit of the Spanish American race, is the only religion in which we Chileans believe. To invite in others would deeply wound our national sentiment.... We know well that many Europeans residing in Chile are advocating freedom of worship, but why should we sacrifice the wishes of a whole nation to theirs?" *Revista católica*, July 1850, 348, cited in Collier "Religious Freedom," 311.

[3]. Gallicanism was "the collective name for the body of doctrine which asserted the more or less complete freedom of the Roman Catholic Church, especially in France, from the ecclesiastical authority of the Papacy.... Gallican principles were preached throughout the 18th century by the opponents of the bull 'Unigenitus,' and once more officially codified and proclaimed for the use of other national Churches at the synod of Pistoia in 1786." F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 656-657.

[4]. "Ultramontane" refers to the theological and politico-religious efforts to re-found the church beyond the Alps, in other words, restore the political and spiritual power of Rome, that is, of the pope. It was not an exclusively European movement; it was also a fundamental politico-religious current in Spanish America that determined the basic features of the rising nation-states. On

the role of Ultramontanism in Latin America, see Mario Góngora, *Studies in the Colonial History of Spanish America*, trans. Richard Southern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

[5]. Collier, "Religious Freedom," 306-307.

[6]. Abdón Cifuentes, *Colección de Discursos* (Santiago, Chile: Imprenta "El Independiente," 1882), 447-448.

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