

# *Displaced “Pan-Americans” and the Transformation of the Catholic Church in Philadelphia, 1789–1850*

THE REVEREND JOHN HUGHES TOLD A GREAT STORY about the construction of the Roman Catholic church of St. John the Evangelist in Philadelphia. Hughes, the project’s major fundraiser, St. John’s first pastor, and later archbishop of New York, related that his announcement in 1830 of the plan to build a grand new cornerstone of Catholic life garnered only a lukewarm response from his congregation. Days went by before he received his first donation, from a humble servant, who delivered to the priest a few precious cents from her meager wages. From that moment on, Hughes “never had a doubt of the success” of the building project.<sup>1</sup> This lovely anecdote, redolent of New Testament teachings, burnishes one of the principal and lasting images of the Catholic Church in the United States, but it obscures crucial aspects of St. John’s construction and the Catholic Church’s broader institutional development. From the 1780s to the mid-nineteenth century, a small group of “Pan-Americans,” men and women with extensive ties to Latin America and the Caribbean, played a determinative role in the church’s transformation in Philadelphia and, as a result, the nation as a whole. Some, their lives thrown into disarray by internecine warfare and economic upheaval, came to Philadelphia for short periods of time, while others made a permanent home in the city. Here, they met residents with an existing network of economic, political, and cultural ties to the region. This group became embroiled in an intense confrontation over the future of American Catholicism. Some hoped to inject the radically democratic

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<sup>1</sup> Martin I. J. Griffin, “History of the Church of Saint John the Evangelist, Philadelphia,” *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 20 (1909): 353–54.

spirit of the age into the church, joining other believers in Philadelphia and elsewhere who challenged the episcopacy for control of parish appointments and finances, and openly questioned the relationship between national communities of believers and the supranational institution of the church. Others, regardless of their secular politics, embraced an ultramontane view of Catholicism, supporting papal supremacy over national and local Catholic authorities and identities. The latter group provided crucial financial and moral support to the clerics who “Romanized” the church in the United States as the institution vastly expanded during the first half of the nineteenth century.

As a cosmopolitan commercial and political center, Philadelphia became a magnet for those displaced by the Age of Revolution, “one great hotel, or place of shelter, for strangers hastily collected together from a raging tempest.”<sup>2</sup> In the 1790s, significant numbers fleeing the revolutionary upheaval in France and its colonial possessions turned Philadelphia into a “Noah’s Ark” for refugees across the political spectrum, according to one of the exiles.<sup>3</sup> An important subset of those displaced, of varied class and racial origin, arrived from the Caribbean, especially Saint-Domingue, France’s fabulously productive and brutal sugar-producing gem. Many fled the island beginning in 1792, stunned by the dramatic and violent turn of events that ultimately resulted in Haitian independence.<sup>4</sup> By August 1793 a relief committee formed in Philadelphia to address the needs of several hundred distressed white immigrants. Approximately five hundred French West Indian slaves arrived about this time as well.<sup>5</sup> A smaller contingent of refugees found their way to Philadelphia in 1798 following the British evacuation of Port-au-Prince.<sup>6</sup> During the 1790s this community engaged in active, public debate over the costs and benefits of revolution. Exiles published two newspapers, the *Courier Politique* and the *American Star / L’Etoile Americaine*. They talked politics at Moreau de Saint-Méry’s bookstore on

<sup>2</sup> John F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia, and Pennsylvania, in the Olden Times* (1830; repr., Philadelphia, 1905), 1:181, quoted in Susan Branson, *These Fiery Frenchified Dames: Women and Political Culture in Early National Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 2001), 58.

<sup>3</sup> Frances Sergeant Childs, *French Refugee Life in the United States, 1790–1800: An American Chapter of the French Revolution* (Baltimore, 1940), 103.

<sup>4</sup> Childs, *French Refugee Life*, 15, 23.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 89; Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia’s Black Community, 1720–1840* (Cambridge, MA, 1988), 141. As Nash notes (p. 142), according to the law, these slaves were to be manumitted over time.

<sup>6</sup> Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 175.

Front Street, which became a center for refugee life. They also organized public manifestations to laud or protest significant events in the course of the revolution.<sup>7</sup> Though many of the displaced left by the end of the eighteenth century, some formed business and family alliances both within and outside the broader community of French descent and remained in Philadelphia.

Arrivals from Spain and Spanish America occurred in a less concentrated time period. Philadelphia attracted a diverse population with connections throughout the Spanish Empire. As the nineteenth century dawned, imperial bureaucrats, such as Josef de Jáudenes and Carlos Martínez de Irujo, distributed valuable trading concessions with Cuba and integrated themselves into prominent Philadelphia families, creating “shared financial, religious, and family ties.”<sup>8</sup> Others, disaffected Spanish Empire cosmopolitans like Francisco de Miranda, passed through Philadelphia as harbingers of upheaval to come. Miranda, who spent decades struggling to free South America from Spanish rule, first came to Philadelphia in 1783. At the time a liberal Spanish military officer one step ahead of an arrest order, “Miranda loved Philadelphia,” thinking it “the most republican of cities.”<sup>9</sup> In late November 1805, while organizing an ill-fated expedition of liberation, Miranda again returned to Philadelphia, where he met with a group of Santo Domingo merchants, among others.<sup>10</sup> Nine months later, not yet inflamed by revolutionary passion, Simón Bolívar also passed through the city on his way home to Venezuela from Europe. Little is known about Bolívar’s experiences during this trip, though he did enroll his nephew Anacleto Clemente in a local school, and he later noted to a U.S. official that he observed for the first time in his life “rational liberty” during this visit.<sup>11</sup> Other members of the “Liberator’s” family, such as his nephew Fernando, and Fernando’s son Francis, also studied in Philadelphia.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Childs, *French Refugee Life*, 122–59.

<sup>8</sup> Linda Salvucci, “Merchants and Diplomats: Philadelphia’s Early Trade with Cuba,” *Pennsylvania Legacies* 3 (Nov. 2003): 7–8.

<sup>9</sup> Karen Racine, *Francisco de Miranda: A Transatlantic Life in the Age of Revolution* (Wilmington, DE, 2003), 37.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>11</sup> David Bushnell, *Simón Bolívar: Liberation and Disappointment* (New York, 2004), 15–16.

<sup>12</sup> Both Fernando and Francis Bolívar attended Germantown Academy, where Fernando became friends with Sidney George Fisher. Sidney George Fisher, *A Philadelphia Perspective. The Diary of Sidney George Fisher Covering the Years 1834–1871*, ed. Nicholas B. Wainwright (Philadelphia, 1967), 285–86.

Francisco de Miranda's second visit to Philadelphia was due in no small measure to the presence there of a republican exile from New Granada named Manuel Torres. Torres arrived in Philadelphia in 1796. Like Miranda, he had become enmeshed in an anti-imperial conspiracy that forced him to flee his home. Like Miranda, he loved Philadelphia. Unlike Miranda, he remained in the city until his death in 1822 and became the linchpin in Philadelphia for Spanish American revolutionary activity. Over the course of twenty-five years, Torres propagandized tirelessly on behalf of the republican cause. His home became a required stop for almost all Spanish American revolutionary leaders seeking political and business contacts in the United States.<sup>13</sup>

As the Napoleonic Wars precipitated a crisis of Spanish imperial authority, igniting long-simmering colonial resentment into armed confrontations that lasted for decades in some cases, many more displaced persons arrived from throughout the empire. Some of the region's most important political figures passed through Philadelphia at one time or another, as did larger numbers of less prominent men and women. Some arrived in search of ideological allies and financial support, others for a place to reflect and write and publish. A few, like Manuel Torres, remained in the city for years or decades. The *Aurora* and other subscription publications made news and propaganda pertaining to the independence struggles and the subsequent conflicts readily available. Philadelphia publishers, especially Mathew Carey, also played a vital role in assuring that the writings of republicans like Servando Teresa de Mier and Vicente Rocafuerte saw the light of day.<sup>14</sup>

Those with roots in the Spanish and French empires had a significant impact on the city's Catholic community. For example, more than 20 percent of the marriages recorded in the parish register of Holy Trinity Church for the years 1793 to 1798 involved a migrant from the French West Indies.<sup>15</sup> French- and Spanish-speaking cosmopolitans rented the most prestigious pews in a number of the city's Catholic churches. As

<sup>13</sup> Charles H. Bowman Jr., "Manuel Torres, A Spanish American Patriot in Philadelphia, 1796-1822," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 94 (1970): 26-53.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28; Charles H. Bowman Jr., "Manuel Torres in Philadelphia and the Recognition of Colombian Independence, 1821-22," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 80 (1969): 19; Antonio Lara, "Masones católicos, editores de Filadelfia y el conflicto por la independencia de México" (paper presented at the Latin American Studies Association Meeting, Washington, DC, Sept. 2001).

<sup>15</sup> "Marriage Registers of Holy Trinity Church of Philadelphia, PA, A.D. 1791-1799," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 24 (1913): 140-61.

with followers of other religious traditions, holding a pew and attending services at a Catholic church meant more than expressing religious conviction; it facilitated political, social, and economic transactions. Many contracted marriages with partners from different geographic origins, cementing some of the city's more powerful business alliances. Several members of the Spanish Empire's diplomatic legation, who occupied pews at the front of St. Mary's Church, married into local families with extensive commercial ties in the Caribbean.<sup>16</sup> Ambitious Catholics, like John Leamy and "Baron" John Keating, held pews in several churches. Leamy, an Irishman who had lived for several years in Spain, became the "most prominent and favored 'Philadelphian' to trade with ports in Spanish America."<sup>17</sup> Keating, also born in Ireland, left with his family for France in 1766 and served as an officer in the French Caribbean before making his way to Philadelphia in the exodus following the disastrous Saint-Domingue campaign of 1792.<sup>18</sup>

This Latin rivulet joined the larger stream of Catholic migrants. In 1785 approximately 25,000 Catholics lived in the United States. By 1815 the number had risen to 150,000, though only one hundred priests ministered to them. By 1840, well before the exodus from Ireland peaked, the U.S. Catholic population had already passed 650,000, and from there, its rise accelerated, reaching over 3 million by 1860. Building the structures to minister to this expanding population challenged the ingenuity and finances of the faithful and clergy. At the end of the eighteenth century, the entire Catholic Church in the United States came under the jurisdiction of one prelate resident in Baltimore. The church created several new dioceses in the early years of the nineteenth century, including the diocese of Philadelphia in 1808. It organized twenty dioceses between 1820 and 1837 alone.<sup>19</sup>

Philadelphia had one of the republic's most dynamic Catholic populations.<sup>20</sup> By the end of the 1750s, the city's population of adult Catholics most likely did not reach 1,500. Seven decades later, the new bishop for

<sup>16</sup> Salvucci, "Merchants and Diplomats," 8.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> J. Percy Keating, "John Keating and his Forbears," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 29 (1918): 301–10.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*; Roger Aubert et al., *The Church in the Age of Liberalism*, trans. Peter Becker (New York, 1981), 85, 171–72; James Hennessy, *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (New York, 1981), 55, 82; Ann Taves, *The Household of Faith: Roman Catholic Devotions in Mid-Nineteenth Century America* (Notre Dame, IN, 1986), 7.

<sup>20</sup> Hennessy, *American Catholics*, 82.

the diocese of Philadelphia, which encompassed all of Pennsylvania and Delaware, as well as New Jersey from Trenton to Cape May, estimated the number of Catholics at about 25,000. The diocese included at the time twenty-two churches and thirty-five priests. By 1851, even though a new diocese based in Pittsburgh absorbed some of these churches, ninety-two still remained within the reduced geographic boundaries of the Philadelphia diocese as the Catholic population reached 170,000. Over the same interval, the church established a seminary to train parish priests and planted the seeds of numerous Catholic schools, including what would become Saint Joseph's and Villanova universities. In the city of Philadelphia, with the construction of nineteen new churches, the number of parishes jumped from four to twenty.<sup>21</sup>

As the population of the faithful rose along with the infrastructure to address its spiritual needs, a fundamental conflict over the nature of the church in the United States, simmering since colonial times, heated to a boil. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, "two schools of thought were manifest in the American Catholic community. One desired to fashion an indigenous Church, an American Catholicism, the other wanted to transplant to the new nation a continental European vision of Roman Catholicism."<sup>22</sup>

Supporters of the "European vision" rallied around a revitalized Holy See, recovering from a long decline in its power. By the eighteenth century the papacy had relatively little real authority beyond the Papal States. Even Catholic rulers in places where a majority of the population was Catholic had grown accustomed to taking action independently of the pope, including in most ecclesiastical matters, such as regulation of religious orders and appointments to the clerical hierarchy. Successive popes' uninspired early reactions to the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, and independence in Spanish America convinced many both within and outside the church that the institution needed rethinking. Indeed, this era presented a momentous challenge, as Catholic leaders around the globe addressed the emergence of new political ideologies and structures.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 50; Hugh J. Nolan, *The Most Reverend Francis Patrick Kenrick, Third Bishop of Philadelphia, 1830–1851* (Philadelphia, 1948), 177; Hugh J. Nolan, "Francis Patrick Kenrick, First Coadjutor-bishop," in *The History of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia*, ed. James F. Connelly (Philadelphia, 1976), 119–20, 208.

<sup>22</sup> Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Notre Dame, IN, 1992), 124.

With that challenge came opportunity. In post-Napoleonic Europe, political leaders searching to restore the status quo ante saw a strengthened church as one pillar of a conservative order. In the newly independent Latin American states, many in the elite considered Catholicism one of the few binding elements of societies riven by class and ethnic tensions. In the United States, a growing Catholic population needed pastors and guidance. Church leaders responded with a multifaceted strategy. A concerted effort to rebuild Roman authority dovetailed with vigorous debates that ultimately yielded theological positions on the modern condition. New religious congregations formed. New devotions, especially to the Virgin Mary, emerged. The penitent received indulgences. Canonizations increased. Theologians trained in Rome clarified and disseminated church teachings and created or reinvigorated institutions to define and enforce orthodoxy. This decades-long transformation culminated with the deliberations of the First Vatican Council in 1869–1870.<sup>23</sup>

At the heart of the struggle to define American Catholicism within this global context resided trusteeism, a common organizational structure for churches in the United States during the eighteenth century that gave control of resources and clerical appointments to an elected board generally consisting of both clergy and laymen. Supporters of trusteeism argued that the system fused Catholic and American ideas and methods of governance. Opponents responded that the church transcended political boundaries and that these decisions should reside with the clerical hierarchy, usually the local bishop, invested by Rome with the proper authority. Escalating confrontations to resolve this dispute broke out in a number of cities in the United States starting in the late eighteenth century and enveloped two Philadelphia churches, St. Mary's and Holy Trinity.<sup>24</sup> The

<sup>23</sup> J. Derek Holmes, *The Triumph of the Holy See: A Short History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1978), 5–13, 138–40; Aubert et al., *Church in the Age of Liberalism*, 3–11, 46–52; Dale B. Light, *Rome and the New Republic: Conflict and Community in Philadelphia Catholicism between the Revolution and the Civil War* (Notre Dame, IN, 1996), 253–56. The nature of relations between the papacy and the emerging states of Latin America attracted much greater attention among earlier generations of historians. See, for example, Almon R. Wright, "Argentina and the Papacy, 1810–1827," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 18 (1938): 15–42; J. Lloyd Meacham, "The Papacy and Spanish American Independence," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 9 (1929): 154–75; William J. Coleman, "The First Apostolic Delegation in Rio de Janeiro and Its Influence in Spanish America: A Study in Papal Policy, 1830–1840" (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 1950).

<sup>24</sup> Patrick Carey, "The Laity's Understanding of the Trustee System, 1785–1855," *Catholic Historical Review* 64 (1978): 357–76; Patrick Carey, "Arguments for Lay Participation in Philadelphia Catholicism, 1820–1829," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of*

most active participants in this very public debate included numerous Catholics with ties to Latin America and the Caribbean.

St. Mary's Church, completed in 1763, gained a reputation as one of the most affluent and respectable congregations of any faith in the United States.<sup>25</sup> The church's charter called for a board of trustees consisting of no more than three clerics and eight laypersons to be elected annually by the pewholders.<sup>26</sup> As the congregation grew over time, ethnic, class, and financial pressures complicated relations between the congregants and their priests, and between the priests and the clerical hierarchy. In the 1780s German-speaking congregants began a campaign to hire a priest to minister to them in their own language. Unable to resolve the issue to their satisfaction at St. Mary's, this group raised the funds to build a new church. Aided by Germans of all faiths, Holy Trinity Church opened its doors in the momentous year of 1789. Its financiers built into the church bylaws an institutional structure designed to maintain the trustees' control over clerical appointments and church finances. Over the next several years, as the data on marriages noted above attest, refugees from the French Revolution significantly changed the character of Holy Trinity. Many English speakers joined the congregation as well. A multivariate struggle over the church ensued, as French-, German-, and English-speaking factions struggled to dominate the board of trustees, while first the vicar general and later the city's bishops attempted to wrest control of the church from the board. Disputes over control of Holy Trinity continued for decades and wound up in the commonwealth courts several times.<sup>27</sup>

Similar conflicts erupted at St. Mary's Church and peaked in the 1820s. Like the Holy Trinity controversy, the struggle over control of St. Mary's encompassed class and ethnic tensions, supporters of hierarchy versus independent-minded trustees, and personality clashes among priests and laymen. In 1820, emerging from one nasty dustup over ecclesiastical appointments, St. Mary's parishioners placed their confidence in a newly appointed assistant pastor named William Hogan, who they felt could achieve a reconciliation among the parish factions. Hogan, dynamic

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*Philadelphia* 92 (1981): 43–58.

<sup>25</sup> Light, *Rome and the New Republic*, 52.

<sup>26</sup> Arthur J. Ennis, "The New Diocese of Philadelphia," in *History of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia*, 71.

<sup>27</sup> Light, *Rome and the New Republic*, 6–52.

and sophisticated, known as an excellent speaker, almost immediately ran afoul of the new bishop, Henry Conwell, a staunch traditionalist who arrived directly from Ireland in 1820. Conwell soon determined that he had to remove Hogan from the parish and subordinate the dissenting trustees to his authority. Complicating matters, William Harold, the priest at the center of the St. Mary's controversy prior to Hogan's arrival, still aspired to run not only St. Mary's but also the entire diocese. These goals were incompatible with the positions of both Hogan and Conwell. The ensuing confrontation, like that at Holy Trinity, spilled over into the public realm. The protagonists filed suits in the courts, the press covered events in detail, supporters on all sides published pamphlets defending their actions, and rowdy demonstrations punctuated the moments when key deadlines or decisions approached. Over the course of time, the St. Mary's protagonists produced the clearest articulation anywhere in the United States of the political, social, and theological bases for both sides of the trustee debate.<sup>28</sup>

By the time the St. Mary's controversy reached its peak, persons affected by the Spanish Empire's upheavals added substantially to this debate. Supporters of trusteeism, both U.S. citizens and others, articulated a vision of hemispheric republicanism that could transform state and church throughout the Americas. John Leamy, the enterprising merchant with extensive Caribbean contacts, chaired a committee charged with communicating the dissenting trustees' positions to the bishop.<sup>29</sup> Richard W. Meade, born into a prosperous Philadelphia merchant family with interests in the Caribbean, also became a major protagonist. Meade had extended the family business into Santo Domingo and Cádiz, Spain. Meade then moved to Spain, where he lived for over fifteen years, and supplied goods to the resistance during the Napoleonic invasion. Pressing his claims for unpaid debts against the restored Bourbon monarchy, Meade spent two years in jail by the order of King Ferdinand VII. After his release he returned to Philadelphia, where he joined St. Mary's parish and quickly became one of the leading "schismatics" in the trustee

<sup>28</sup> Carey, "Arguments for Lay Participation," 43.

<sup>29</sup> Martin I. J. Griffin, "Life of Bishop Conwell of Philadelphia," chap. 2, *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 24 (1913): 240. Some of the key correspondence is reprinted in Thompson Wescott, "A Memoir of the Very Rev. Michael Hurley, D.D., O.S.A., Sometime Pastor of St. Augustine's Church, Philadelphia, Prior of St. Augustine's and Vicar-General of the Province of Our Lady of Good Counsel (Now St. Thomas of Villanova)," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 1 (1884): 165–212.

controversy.<sup>30</sup>

Meade's familiarity with the transformation and disintegration of the Spanish Empire informed his arguments in support of trusteeism. He posited that the pope should grant the right of clerical appointment to trustees in the same tradition by which such patronage had been granted to European sovereigns, since in a republic the people were sovereign. Liberals in many Latin American republics would make an analogous argument in requesting the transfer of the royal patronage to newly formed national governments, which the papacy conceded in numerous cases.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to his own active participation in the controversy, Meade's many acquaintances among republican rabble-rousers in the Spanish Empire drew two dissident priests from the Iberian world into the St. Mary's melee: John Rico and José Servando Teresa de Mier, known around Philadelphia as Servandus Mier. Born in Spain, John Rico supported the liberal insurrection against Joseph Bonaparte, but like Meade, he ran afoul of the restored Bourbon monarchy and wound up in prison. Meade helped Rico to escape to the United States, where he worked first as a cigar maker in Philadelphia and later as an agriculturalist in Alabama. Visiting Philadelphia in 1821, Rico turned down an offer of employment at St. Mary's from the trustees, but he did produce a public defense of their positions.<sup>32</sup>

Friar Mier, no stranger to controversy, played a larger role in the debate over the nature of "American" Catholicism than Rico. Born in Monterrey, in what would be independent Mexico, trained as a theologian, Mier became well known for his challenges to religious orthodoxy and monarchy. Over the course of his life, Mier developed a theology and a historical vision that inverted the traditional tropes of European civilization versus New World barbarism. To subvert one of the main pillars legitimizing Spanish colonialism, he posited Mexico's indigenous Christian tradition, embracing the argument that St. Thomas had evangelized Mexico's population over fifteen hundred years before the Spanish conquest. Other

<sup>30</sup> Basic biographical data on Meade are found in *Dictionary of American Biography*, s.v. "Meade, Richard Worsam."

<sup>31</sup> Carey, "Arguments for Lay Participation," 50–51; Wright, "Argentina and the Papacy"; Meacham, "The Papacy and Spanish American Independence"; Coleman, "First Apostolic Delegation in Rio de Janeiro."

<sup>32</sup> Light, *Rome and the New Republic*, 125; Martin I. J. Griffin, "Life of Bishop Conwell," chap. 7, *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 25 (1914): 147–48.

claims, particularly those challenging the basis of bishops' authority in church affairs, contributed to his difficulties with the ecclesiastical hierarchy. He spent time in prison for his theological deviance, where his jailers wondered if he had suffered a stroke, his assertions seemed so outrageous to them.<sup>33</sup>

From the time of Napoleon's invasion of the Iberian Peninsula in 1808, Mier's arguments and actions in favor of Mexican independence and republicanism gained him further enmity and condemnation. He spent much of the subsequent two decades in exile or jail. Indeed, during one of his incarcerations, Mier managed to escape Spanish imperial authorities and flee to Philadelphia, where he spent part of the year in 1821. Through his connections to both Richard Meade and Manuel Torres, another St. Mary's pewholder with whom Mier resided while in town, he found himself at the center of the St. Mary's controversy.<sup>34</sup> Mier's champions alternately identified him as a bishop or a papal nuncio.<sup>35</sup> While in Philadelphia, Mier published numerous pamphlets on both the St. Mary's dispute and his aspirations for independent Mexico.<sup>36</sup>

Mier's status as a "Doctor of Sacred Theology" adorned the title of pamphlets featuring his answers to questions regarding the canonical soundness of trusteeism. In these, he drew analogies between the dissenting trustees at St. Mary's and the patriots fighting for independence in Mexico, where "if we had not been able to distinguish the *church* from the *bishops*, and religion from its *abuses*, we should have apostatized from Catholicism as England did." In a clever twist of hemispheric solidarity, the peripatetic provocateur added that he had not intended to become involved in this controversy, "in consequence of my being a foreigner," but he felt less constrained since "I have reason to believe that my antagonists

<sup>33</sup> D. A. Brading, *The First America: The Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots, and the Liberal State, 1492–1867* (New York, 1991), 583–84, 590.

<sup>34</sup> Bowman, "Manuel Torres in Philadelphia," 20–21.

<sup>35</sup> Light, *Rome and the New Republic*, 126; Martin I. J. Griffin, "Life of Bishop Conwell," chap. 8, *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 25 (1914): 167.

<sup>36</sup> On the St. Mary's controversy, see *The Opinion of the Rt. Rev. Servandus A. Mier, Doctor of Sacred Theology in the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico, and Chaplain of the Army of the Right, first Army of the Peninsula, on Certain Queries Proposed to Him by the Rev. William Hogan, Pastor of St. Mary's Church* (Philadelphia, 1821) and *A Word Relative to an Anonymous Pamphlet Printed in Philadelphia, Entitled "Remarks on the Opinion of the Rt. Rev. Servandus A. Mier, Doctor of Sacred Theology, &c. On Certain Queries Proposed to Him by the Rev. Wm. Hogan"* (Philadelphia, 1821). On his hopes for Mexico, see *Memoria-político-instructiva, enviado desde Filadelfia en agosto de 1821, á los gefes independientes del Anáhuac, llamado por los Españoles Nueva-España* (Philadelphia, 1821).

are much more so than I am, for at all events I am an American."<sup>37</sup> The main targets of this jibe included Bishop Conwell, the Irishman, as well as other European-born clergy.

For his part, Conwell dismissed Mier as nothing more than an "infidel Mexican priest . . . lately escaped from the prison of the inquisition."<sup>38</sup> William Harold, an Irishman like Conwell, called both Mier and John Rico "a disgrace to the priesthood."<sup>39</sup> An anonymous pamphleteer characterized Mier as the epitome of a reprobate cleric who had questioned the veracity of the Virgin of Guadalupe saga and who celebrated the Mass with pulque (fermented cactus juice) rather than wine.<sup>40</sup> In response, Mier published clarifications of his stand on the Virgin Mary and pulque as a sacramental beverage. Regarding the accusation that he had been a prisoner of the inquisition, Mier replied slyly, "It is true I was a prisoner of the inquisition . . . but I would think citizens in the United States and every civilized country would consider this honourable."<sup>41</sup>

Clearly, invective and character assassination showed neither side at its best. More sophisticated arguments united the ultramontanists in the idea of a church that transcended the bounds of nation and offered a universal refuge that counteracted the vicissitudes of temporal affairs. In a private letter written on a trip away from Philadelphia, the child of a Saint-Domingue refugee, a supporter and confidante of the hierarchy, expressed these feelings of universalism at a personal level:

Oh! what a difference between the faith of the Catholics and the others who go from one to the other just as they would go from one shop to another to seek what they think the best preaching. It was pleasing to us, even lonely as it was, to go and read over our Mass before the Blessed Sacrament, that was there and was dear to us. . . . Every day makes me more and more thankful for the blessing of being a Catholic.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Mier, *A Word Relative to an Anonymous Pamphlet*, 3–4. Italics are in the original.

<sup>38</sup> Griffin, "Life of Bishop Conwell," chap. 8, 167.

<sup>39</sup> *A Postscript to the Rev. Mr. Harold's Address to the Roman Catholics of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1823), 20.

<sup>40</sup> *Remarks on the Opinion of the Right Rev. Servandus A. Mier, Doctor of Sacred Theology &c. on Certain Queries, Proposed to him by the Rev. Wm. Hogan* (Philadelphia, 1821), 8. A century later Edwin A. Ryan, "Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction in the Spanish Colonies," *Catholic Historical Review* 5 (1919): 14, still used these examples to single out Mier as an individual who "so amply illustrates the difficulties of the church at that period."

<sup>41</sup> Mier, *A Word Relative to an Anonymous Pamphlet*, 5–6.

<sup>42</sup> Aline Rodrigue to Evelina Rodrigue, July 20, 1835, in "San Domingo Refugees in

In public discourse at the height of the trustee controversy, anger most often overwhelmed piety. Supporters of the hierarchy argued that the dissenting trustees had lost their understanding of the essence of Catholicism when they began to deny “principles which antiquity and the universal practice of the church have rendered sacred and venerable.” The outspoken support for the dissenting trustees on the part of numerous clergy and laity from other denominations only served to convince the ultramontanists that their opponents in reality formed a fifth column for nativists and Protestants, since the trustees’ “anti-catholic designs are no longer cloaked or disguised but openly declared. The derision of church government . . . ought to alarm and arouse every true Catholic, who wishes to preserve his religion from innovation and leave it to his children as he has received it, pure and unadulterated.”<sup>43</sup>

Like the dissenting trustees, both lay and clerical ultramontanists parsed canon law to support their position. Marc Frenaye (sometimes referred to as Mark), a refugee who became one of the most important supporters of the hierarchy through the middle of the century, dove into the debate with confidence. Born to a planter family in Saint-Domingue in 1783, Frenaye’s parents decided to take their children to France to continue their educations in 1788. The outbreak of the revolution “exposed parents and children to hardships, trials, imprisonment and the dangers of the ‘privileged’ classes of those times.”<sup>44</sup> In 1802, Frenaye decided to return to Saint-Domingue and wound up spending the next four years struggling to survive the Caribbean’s bloodshed and disease. He made his way to Philadelphia in 1806, where he joined a merchant house and became enmeshed in the escalating conflicts over the church’s future. Frenaye is most likely the author of an 1821 pamphlet addressed to the St. Mary’s congregation that rejected the idea that any special considerations, such as a sensitivity to local judicial procedures, should apply to the resolution of the St. Mary’s conflict simply because it arose in the United States. Instead, he argued that specific rules of procedure emerged from

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Philadelphia, Compiled from the Original D’Orlic-Rodrigue Papers by Jane Campbell,” cont., *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 29 (1918): 150.

<sup>43</sup> “A Catholic of the Olden Time,” *Strictures on Strictures of William Hogan; upon the Rev. Wm. Harold’s Pamphlet* (Philadelphia, 1822), 1. Defenses of the dissenting trustees from non-Catholics include “An Episcopalian,” *A Summary of the Persecutions of the Rev. William Hogan, from Bishop Conwell, and Others, with an Appeal to the Consciences, Judgment, and Feelings of Every Candid Person in His Favor* (Philadelphia, 1822).

<sup>44</sup> “Marc Antony Frenaye—A Sketch,” *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 38 (1927): 133.

the continuing status of the United States as mission territory for the church. Under those circumstances, according to Frenaye, a bishop did not have to state the reasons for suspending clergy; clergy had no right to face their accusers; and no right of appeal existed. In his eyes, asserting such a thing as an "American" Catholicism in their challenge to the bishop's authority, Father Hogan's supporters among the trustees were following their champion down a path towards Protestantism and would soon find themselves "as far from catholicity, as he [Hogan] is from piety."<sup>45</sup>

Despite the overheated rhetoric, most of the protagonists desperately sought resolution without permanent schism. Numerous efforts to reconcile the warring factions failed, though it is crucial to note that they continued. The departure of many of the clerical combatants over the course of the 1820s helped to turn down the heat. Neither Rico nor Mier remained in Philadelphia for the long term. With the return of liberal constitutionalism in Spain, Rico set sail for his native land in 1821. When Mexico finally consummated its independence from Spain the same year, Mier returned there and subsequently served terms both in prison and in the legislature. Hogan, the firebrand at the center of the scandal, ultimately left the church entirely, married several times, and turned his impressive rhetorical skills to virulent anti-Catholic diatribes with titles like *Popery! As It Was and As It Is* (1856). For complex reasons, William Harold emerged after Hogan's departure as the favorite of St. Mary's dissenting trustees. Under pressure from Rome, however, he too departed Philadelphia permanently, in 1829. Finally, in 1830, a new administrator, Francis Patrick Kenrick, assumed control of the diocese, leaving the aging Henry Conwell a mere figurehead with little authority.<sup>46</sup>

The basic issues that had driven the last uneasy decades still smoldered, however, since they transcended the obvious personality conflicts among the clerical protagonists. As diocesan administrator, Francis Patrick Kenrick assumed the task of extinguishing these embers. On New Year's Day of 1831 Kenrick announced from the pulpit of St. Mary's that he himself would serve as pastor. When the trustees continued their protests, he suspended all services at the church. More steadfast and more

<sup>45</sup> M. F., *An Explanation of Some Canon Laws Concerning Excommunication and Suspension, Respectfully Dedicated to the Congregation of St. Mary's Church, Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1821), quoted in Light, *Rome and the New Republic*, 102-3.

<sup>46</sup> Brading, *First America*, 598-601. Joseph L. J. Kirlin, *Catholicity in Philadelphia from the Earliest Missionaries Down to the Present Time* (Philadelphia, 1909), 242-43; Light, *Rome and the New Republic*, 210-59; Ennis, "New Diocese of Philadelphia," 103-4.

popular than his predecessor, Kenrick ultimately traded the resumption of services for a concession on the part of the trustees that the control of pastoral appointments would reside with the bishop. Eventually, Kenrick even managed to bring title to all church property in the diocese under his name.<sup>47</sup>

Following the lead of the Baltimore Provincial Council of 1829, which asserted Roman hierarchical authority over the American church, Bishop Kenrick presided over Philadelphia's first diocesan synod in 1832. From this meeting emerged decrees that proscribed new church construction without the bishop's written approval and that withdrew canonical faculties from priests who aided or abetted "lay interference in the spiritual concerns of the Church."<sup>48</sup> In addition to his aggressive engagement with trusteeism, Kenrick focused substantial energy on developing infrastructure and standardizing ritual practices, creating a framework within which supporters of a hierarchical Roman Catholicism would overwhelm the advocates of a distinct American church. Among other initiatives, Kenrick banned English language hymns in the diocese, standardized the liturgy, codified acceptable conduct for priests and parishioners, and introduced new devotions. During his tenure (1830–1851), much of the building program described above occurred: the construction of seventy-two churches, with triple the number of priests to minister to the faithful. Hospitals, a seminary, schools, and a diocesan bank rounded out the stunning transformation.<sup>49</sup>

Kenrick rejected the idea that Catholicism had to adapt to its American context. Instead he consistently argued the compatibility between a rigid, traditionalist church and a healthy republican politics beyond the sanctuary doors. One of Kenrick's major publications reviews the historical and theological bases of papal authority and the place of hierarchy within Catholicism to provide a foundation for the assertion that,

If I have not utterly misunderstood the philosophy of the history of the Popes, their authority, so far from dangerous to civil liberty, or republican institutions, is the bulwark of society in all its legitimate forms, and the best moral security for individual and public rights.

<sup>47</sup> Nolan, "Francis Patrick Kenrick," 123–25, 132.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 113–208; Light, *Rome and the New Republic*, 239–40, 269–72.

To drive home his point, Kenrick dedicated the book to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Roger B. Taney, “as a small tribute to his eminent station, profound knowledge, incorruptible integrity, pure patriotism, and devoted attachment to the Catholic faith.”<sup>50</sup>

St. John the Evangelist Church embodied the vision of a “Roman” Catholic church. Designed to be the most opulent church in the city and constructed with freewill offerings, it required no trustees. Bishop Kenrick chose Rev. John Hughes, the pastor of St. Joseph’s Church, to oversee the project and to take over as first pastor of the new church. Hughes well understood the task that lay before him. He wrote to the bishop of Cincinnati that the new church “will cause them who gave nothing toward its erection to murmur at its costliness, and those who did contribute to be proud of their own doing. As a religious edifice it will be the pride of the city.”<sup>51</sup> Plans for the church allegedly hung in the papal apartments, a powerful symbol of increasing Roman authority over the church in the United States. To accomplish such an ambitious and expensive undertaking Hughes and Kenrick required a coterie of wealthy, dedicated supporters. They found some of their most enthusiastic allies among a group of individuals whose lives were thrown into disarray by the revolution in Saint-Domingue.<sup>52</sup>

“Baron” John Keating must be counted among the most influential men in the development of the Catholic Church in Philadelphia. Like many of the protagonists described here, Keating’s life story challenges essentialist notions of national identity. While literature on the history of Philadelphia often emphasizes his Irish roots, he left Ireland as a young man and migrated with his family to France, where he became a military officer deployed to the French Caribbean.<sup>53</sup> Sucked into the vortex of revolutionary upheaval in Saint-Domingue, Keating joined the exodus of colonials from Cap François in 1792, settling first in Wilmington and later in Philadelphia.

His personal and professional life was certainly marked at least as

<sup>50</sup> Francis Patrick Kenrick, *The Primacy of the Apostolic See Vindicated* (Philadelphia, 1845), v, ii.

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in Kirlin, *Catholicity in Philadelphia*, 276; Wescott, “A Memoir of the Very Rev. Michael Hurley,” 189.

<sup>52</sup> Information on the early plans for St. John’s are found in *A Century and a Quarter, 1830–1955: St. John the Evangelist Church* (Philadelphia, [1955?]), 19, 22; Nolan, “Francis Patrick Kenrick,” 122; Griffin, “History of the Church of Saint John the Evangelist,” 350–405.

<sup>53</sup> Basic biographical information on the Keating family is found in Keating, “John Keating and his Forbears,” 289–335.

much by his connection to the French Caribbean and the revolution as it was by his connection to Ireland, since he accumulated wealth as the manager of real estate transactions for French-speaking émigrés and married the daughter of a French noble family. Over the years he became a member of Philadelphia's establishment. He served as a trustee at the University of Pennsylvania and worked as a manager of the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society. A paragon of the Catholic community, Keating held pews in three churches and provided funds and managerial expertise to the expanding diocesan infrastructure as president of the Friends of St. Charles Seminary. One Catholic author of the early twentieth century observed that Keating "was actively interested in all matters pertaining to the well being of the Church in Philadelphia, and seconded Bishop Kenrick in all measures affecting its growth and development."<sup>54</sup> As one would suspect, Keating donated to the St. John's building fund.<sup>55</sup>

Keating's family followed in the patriarch's footsteps. His sons, John and William, both attended the University of Pennsylvania and both also served in the commonwealth legislature. John served as legal counsel to Bishop Conwell, while William served as a board member of numerous Catholic institutions. Both died young. Keating's daughter joined a convent later in her life.<sup>56</sup> His nephew and adopted son Jerome built a textile business in Manayunk and endowed a church for his workers, all Catholics, who were required to attend Mass there regularly. Jerome's son William Valentine Keating became one of the driving forces behind the establishment of Catholic medical facilities in Philadelphia and served as director of St. Joseph's Hospital.<sup>57</sup>

Jacques-André Rodrigue headed a second Saint-Domingue refugee family that came to play an important role in the bishop's cause.<sup>58</sup> Rodrigue, who settled in Philadelphia in 1795, married into another prominent refugee family at Holy Trinity Church, the D'Orlics. Rodrigue

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 333.

<sup>55</sup> Griffin, "History of the Church of Saint John," 366; *Century and a Quarter*, 15.

<sup>56</sup> Keating, "John Keating and his Forbears," 323-27, 333-34.

<sup>57</sup> Light, *Rome and the New Republic*, 275-78; Gail Farr Casteline, "St. Joseph's and St. Mary's: The Origins of Catholic Hospitals in Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 108 (1984): 289-314.

<sup>58</sup> The papers of the Rodrigue-D'Orlic family are held in the archives of the Philadelphia Archdiocese. Much of the biographical information that follows is drawn from family letters, published as "San Domingo Refugees in Philadelphia, Compiled from the Original D'Orlic-Rodrigue Papers by Jane Campbell," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 28-30 (1917-1919).

and his children, like the Keatings, grew comfortable in Philadelphia society and provided financial support as well as advice on a broad array of matters, especially to John Hughes, whom the Rodrigue children called "Uncle." Rodrigue's daughters, Aline and Evelina, established one of the city's elite private schools, where they educated both Catholic and non-Catholic girls. William Rodrigue, an architect and civil engineer, played a major role in the design of St. John the Evangelist.<sup>59</sup> When his business obligations took him away from Philadelphia, he still maintained his interest in the project, writing to his sister Evelina, "Tell uncle [John Hughes] and Mr. [Marc] Frenaye to look out how they improve St. John's, for if they don't look out, I'll come tumbling down on them like a storm."<sup>60</sup> William Rodrigue married Father Hughes's sister Margaret in 1836 and followed his brother-in-law to New York to continue his career when the reverend was appointed bishop (and later archbishop) there. Another Rodrigue son, Aristide, became a well-respected medical doctor who conveyed theological advice to John Hughes during his famous public disputations over church and state with the Presbyterian minister John Breckenridge. These debates reached a wide audience and were compiled in a book published by Carey, Lea and Blanchard. Aristide requested copies of Hughes's side of the debate to distribute around his countryside practice.<sup>61</sup>

The least visible of the Saint-Domingue refugees outside of Catholic circles, and yet the most important within them would almost certainly have been Marc Frenaye, whose ultramontane writings are described above. Ultimately, though, Frenaye's wallet and his business savvy proved to be of greater use to the hierarchy than his pen. Frenaye absented himself from Philadelphia for several years in the 1820s, as he joined numerous speculative commercial enterprises in Alabama and Mexico. By the end of the decade, he returned to the mid-Atlantic region, living first in New

<sup>59</sup> Richard Shaw, *Dagger John: The Unquiet Life and Times of Archbishop John Hughes of New York* (New York, 1977), 75.

<sup>60</sup> "San Domingo Refugees," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society* 29 (1918): 147.

<sup>61</sup> Nolan, "Francis Patrick Kenrick," 138; "San Domingo Refugees," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society* 29 (1918): 81–82. The debate was published as *A Discussion of the Question Is the Roman Catholic Religion, in any or in all of its Principles or Doctrines, Inimical to Civil or Religious Liberty? And of the Question Is the Presbyterian Religion, in any or all of its Principles or Doctrines, Inimical to Civil or Religious Liberty by the Rev. John Hughes of the Roman Catholic Church and the Rev. John Breckenridge of the Presbyterian Church* (Philadelphia, 1836).

York, then in Philadelphia. Upon his return, he divorced his allegedly unfaithful wife and soon emerged as the “oeconom,” or financial administrator, of the Philadelphia diocese.<sup>62</sup> A confidant of both John Hughes and Francis Patrick Kenrick, Frenaye took up residence in the rectory of St. John the Evangelist upon the church’s completion. Using his business acumen and contacts, Frenaye became the medium through which many church goods were purchased in Europe and distributed in the United States. He managed Philadelphia’s first diocesan bank and, like Keating, served as a board member of numerous church entities, including Saint Joseph’s College.<sup>63</sup> In his various activities, Frenaye accumulated a substantial fortune and devoted the lion’s share towards the effort to, in his own words, “put down, if possible, the horrible trustee system.”<sup>64</sup> Frenaye donated forty thousand dollars for the construction of St. John the Evangelist alone.<sup>65</sup>

From the outset, St. John’s designers intended to form a bulwark for the Romanization of the church in Philadelphia, but also to make a related statement about Catholicism: to convey its connection to the sophisticated traditions of European civilization. With an exterior of much grander design than any of the city’s existing churches, the ongoing project became big news for the whole region. The city’s newspapers covered the construction process from the moment masons laid the cornerstone. Its interior was also expected to communicate the glorious tradition of Catholic patronage of the plastic arts. For example, Joseph Bonaparte, who spent significant amounts of time in the Philadelphia area with various family members after being driven from the Spanish throne, donated to the church a painting of the Flagellation of Christ by Annibale (Hannibal) Carracci (1560–1609). While Carracci has fallen out of favor with contemporary audiences, earlier generations considered his best work, like the frescoes in the Farnese Palace in Italy, “second only to the murals of Michelangelo and Raphael.”<sup>66</sup>

The city’s residents enjoyed numerous opportunities to see the church’s

<sup>62</sup> Much of the basic biographical information on Frenaye is found in “Marc Antony Frenaye,” 132–43.

<sup>63</sup> Nolan, *Most Reverend Francis Patrick Kenrick*, 399–400; David R. Contosta, *Saint Joseph’s, Philadelphia’s Jesuit University: 150 Years* (Philadelphia, 2000), 30.

<sup>64</sup> “Marc Antony Frenaye,” 137.

<sup>65</sup> Griffin, “History of the Church of Saint John the Evangelist,” 352.

<sup>66</sup> H. W. Jansen, *History of Art: A Survey of the Major Visual Arts from the Dawn of History to the Present Day*, rev. ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1977), 484–85.

interior as well as its façade. Dignitaries from various denominations received invitations to the dedication ceremony, held on April 11, 1832. A notice in the *American Daily Advertiser* invited the general public to view the church between the hours of noon and two p.m. during the week after the dedication.<sup>67</sup> In addition, during this inaugural year, with Bishop Kenrick's consent, John Hughes accepted an offer for St. John's to serve as the host institution for a Fourth of July celebration, providing another opportunity for non-Catholics to see the church and to witness an expression of Catholicism's consonance with American values. The event combined prayer, a musical presentation, and a keynote address by Charles J. Ingersoll, one of the city's important politicians. Ingersoll's long career included terms in the commonwealth and national legislatures, as well as the District Attorney's Office. Though not a Catholic himself, Ingersoll "knew and admired a good many Roman Catholic prelates" and defended Catholics against Protestant nativists.<sup>68</sup> As a public speaker, though, Ingersoll had more critics than admirers. Some thought him "sarcastic," "odd," and "never eloquent or profound" in his discourse.<sup>69</sup> Others found his voice "piercing and a little shrill" and noted that he could "maintain a vein of raillery" in his presentations.<sup>70</sup> Rev. John Hughes hated the event and thought Ingersoll's speech a "panegyric of revolutions." He vowed he would never again allow anything like this to take place in any church over which he had authority.<sup>71</sup> Afterwards, St. John's cultural programming returned to the sacred realm, as the church became the site of the U.S. debut of Mozart's *Requiem Mass*.<sup>72</sup>

As a result of such efforts, the church attracted a very "fashionable congregation," replacing St. Mary's as Philadelphia's nomination for the "foremost Catholic parish of the country."<sup>73</sup> With pew rents beyond the means of the city's humble Catholics, church leaders converted a former vinegar factory west of the new church into a chapel for the growing population of Irish immigrants working and living near the coal-shipping facilities on the banks of the Schuylkill River.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Griffin, "History of the Church of Saint John the Evangelist," 366.

<sup>68</sup> William M. Meigs, *The Life of Charles Jared Ingersoll* (Philadelphia, 1897), 316–17.

<sup>69</sup> Fisher, *Philadelphia Perspective*, 427.

<sup>70</sup> Meigs, *Life of Charles Jared Ingersoll*, 300–301.

<sup>71</sup> Griffin, "History of the Church of Saint John the Evangelist," 367–68.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 372; *Century and a Quarter*, 21.

<sup>73</sup> *Century and a Quarter*, 28.

<sup>74</sup> Nolan, *Most Reverend Francis Patrick Kenrick*, 250–51.

St. John's continued to enjoy an intriguing connection to Latin America, which the official history of the church attributed to Frenaye, who maintained contacts there. Indeed, as the church's expenses mounted and donations slumped, at Frenaye's urging, John Hughes contemplated a fund-raising trip to Mexico.<sup>75</sup> While this journey never reached fruition, individuals traveling in the other direction, whose lives were shaped by the ongoing upheavals in Latin America, often found a spiritual home at St. John's, joining Benjamin Franklin's grandson, Hartman Bache (married to Richard Meade's daughter), Joseph Bonaparte's physician, Joseph Nancrede, and the other wealthy merchants and professionals who worshiped there. The congregants also heard the rumors about Jeannette Hart, daughter of a prestigious Connecticut family who allegedly had her heart broken by Simón Bolívar on an extended South American journey. And Josephine and Nemesia de la Cuesta, from Mexico, expressed their piety as founding members of the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin and as donors to the fund to purchase a statue of Mary for the group.<sup>76</sup>

Another figure displaced by the hemisphere's ongoing political battles, Ana María Huarte de Iturbide (often spelled Yturbide in the United States), widow of independent Mexico's first head of state, also became a St. John's parishioner. Her late husband, Agustín de Iturbide, began his career as an officer in the Spanish royal militia in Mexico on the eve of the rebellion that would ultimately end the region's colonial relationship to Spain. Iturbide spent the better part of a decade defending Spanish imperial prerogatives before he joined the struggle for independence. His defection proved to be a tipping point in the battle to free Mexico from Spanish control. He then parlayed his heroic status as Mexican liberator into a putsch that proclaimed him Emperor Agustín I. Within eighteen months triumph turned to ignominy, as rebels drove the entire family to a European exile. Iturbide lost his life in an ill-fated attempt to regain control of Mexico in 1824. The Mexican congress then insisted that his widow and children stay away from Mexico. Shortly thereafter, the devastated family and entourage arrived in the United States. Ultimately, Madame Iturbide and several of her many children settled in Philadelphia.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Griffin, "History of the Church of Saint John the Evangelist," 373–74.

<sup>76</sup> *Century and a Quarter*, 29–30; *Golden Jubilee of St. John the Evangelist's Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 1852–1902* (Baltimore, [1902]), 6, 35–36.

<sup>77</sup> For the political and personal travails of the Iturbide family, see Timothy E. Anna, *The Mexican Empire of Iturbide* (Lincoln, NB, 1990). Perspectives from members of the family include

Despite her highfalutin title, the “empress” did not live an extravagant life in the United States. She expended great amounts of time and energy attempting to squeeze her promised pension from a cash-strapped Mexican government, and, if the settlement of her estate is any indication, she did not have great success.<sup>78</sup> The Iturbide family is not listed anywhere as major donors to St. John’s, although it did purchase one of a small number of crypts in the churchyard. Other sources confirm that Madame Iturbide “acted as the benevolent and charitable protector of a nunnery.”<sup>79</sup> One of her daughters made provisions in her will for the support of clergy in return for masses to be said for the repose of her soul.<sup>80</sup> Another daughter donated her brief life to the church as a nun in Georgetown’s Visitation Convent. One son married into a prestigious family in Washington, DC. The family’s confessor from Mexico later served as president of Georgetown College. In material and nonmaterial ways, then, the Iturbide family contributed to the special cachet of the parish. Certainly, Madame Iturbide’s “imperial title imparted to her something of the glamour of romance for a while in the eyes of some Philadelphians.”<sup>81</sup> The church used this perceived glamour when Marc Frenaye asked her advice in choosing new furniture for the bishop’s residence.<sup>82</sup> When she died in 1861, obituaries remarked upon her Christian simplicity and piety and reminded the city’s residents that, unknown to

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José Ramón Malo, *Diario de sucesos notables* (Mexico City, 1948) and Augustin de Iturbide, “Don Agustín de Iturbide,” *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 26 (1915): 289–310, and 27 (1916): 16–44.

<sup>78</sup> The family had numerous claims against the Mexican government, potentially worth a fortune, still pending at the time of Madame Iturbide’s death. When her estate was settled in 1861, however, its total value did not exceed fifteen hundred dollars. The pertinent documents are found in the Philadelphia Municipal Archives, Will Number A-139-1869 (AMHY). Note that the date of death is incorrectly registered as 1869 in the finding aid, but the documents are filed with other wills and probate documents from the correct year (1861).

<sup>79</sup> Will Fowler, *Tornel and Santa Anna: the Writer and the Caudillo, Mexico, 1795–1853* (Westport, CT, 2000), 122.

<sup>80</sup> S. Davis Page, Esq. to Bishop James Wood, Nov. 21, 1871, Wood Collection (group 50.00, shelf A-3, box 6), Archives of the Philadelphia Archdiocese.

<sup>81</sup> Daniel Rubin, “Another Philadelphia Story: The Empress in the Churchyard,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Jan. 7, 1999, D5. The quote is from an article in the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, published in 1913.

<sup>82</sup> Marc Antony Frenaye to Francis Patrick Kenrick, June [23?], 1847, in F. E. T. [Francis E. Tourscher], ed., *The Kenrick-Frenaye Correspondence: Letters Chiefly of Francis Patrick Kenrick and Marc Antony Frenaye, Selected from the Cathedral Archives, Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1920), 64–67.

many of them, royalty had been living within their midst.<sup>83</sup> From time to time, local Catholic and secular periodicals rediscover the “empress” buried at St. John’s, noting her “remarkable Christian charity” and even implying that some individuals think canonization might be worth investigating.<sup>84</sup>

From the French Revolution through the middle of the nineteenth century, the number of people from Latin America and the Caribbean who remained in Philadelphia reached into the hundreds, rather than thousands. Many of the early refugees returned to their place of origin or moved to other French- or Spanish-speaking territories. Those who remained often married into families with other origins and never formed large ethnic enclaves. Neither political, economic, nor social circumstances sustained extensive connections between these regions and Philadelphia through the nineteenth century. The 1850 U.S. census identifies with certainty fewer than 150 individuals in Philadelphia born in Latin America, including the French and Spanish Caribbean. While approximately half of this cohort was from the islands of Santo Domingo and Cuba, by this time New York had already displaced Philadelphia as the eastern seaboard’s most important center for relations with the Caribbean.<sup>85</sup> Nonetheless, circumstances within Philadelphia and the character of church affairs generally during the early decades of the nineteenth century created a context within which a small and dynamic group of Pan-Americans found itself at the epicenter of the struggle over Catholicism’s reconfiguration in the United States.

Some of the lay pillars of the Romanization effort lived long for the era. Remarkably, both John Keating (1760–1856) and Marc Frenaye (1783–1873) survived into their ninth decades. Each lived long enough to engage in bittersweet reflection upon the transformation of the church they loved and the broader society within which it functioned. While they could take pride in the important role they played in the hierarchy’s

<sup>83</sup> A death notice appeared in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on Mar. 22, 1861. A more extensive obituary appeared in the *Philadelphia Bulletin* on Mar. 25.

<sup>84</sup> Christine McCullough-Friend, “There’s a Mexican Empress Buried at St. John’s,” *Catholic Standard and Times*, May 6, 1999, 10; Rubin, “Another Philadelphia Story,” D1, D5.

<sup>85</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850* (National Archives Microfilm Publication M432); Linda K. Salvucci, “Supply, Demand, and the Making of a Market: Philadelphia and Havana at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century,” in *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650–1850*, ed. Franklin W. Knight and Peggy K. Liss (Knoxville, TN, 1991), 49–52.

successful efforts to gain control of the church's institutional development in the United States, they also lived through the roughest days of nativist, anti-Catholic agitation that the nation has ever experienced. Fanned by a hostile rhetoric that used some of the hierarchy's successes as further evidence "that every day we hear a bolder tone and see less cautious concealment of [popery's] peculiarities" and framed by a complex nexus of anxiety about the economic and cultural future of the country, violent confrontations between Irish Catholics and Protestant natives broke out in early May 1844.<sup>86</sup> The tumult culminated in anti-Catholic riots over the course of several days, which left at least twenty dead and over one hundred injured. Two Catholic churches, St. Augustine's and St. Michael's, burned to the ground and numerous others almost followed suit.<sup>87</sup>

Nativist violence gripped other cities as well during these years. The events opened a new chapter in the struggle to define American Catholicism, as the number of Catholic immigrants to the United States surged. In the following decades, efforts expanded to construct a universe of institutions for the temporal and spiritual well-being of Catholics, while a simultaneous war of words continued over the compatibility of Catholicism and U.S. political culture. By this time, however, the shape that both Catholic institutions and rhetorical positions would take had to a large degree been determined by the outcome of the preceding decades' clashes within the church. The future of American Catholicism, built on a foundation constructed with the financial muscle and strategic support of aging cosmopolitans like John Keating and Marc Frenaye, lay firmly in the hands of energetic clerical defenders of hierarchy like Francis Patrick Kenrick and John Hughes.

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<sup>86</sup> *Presbyterian*, Jan. 14, 1843, quoted in Light, *Rome and the New Republic*, 298.

<sup>87</sup> Michael Feldberg, *The Philadelphia Riots of 1844: A Study of Ethnic Conflict* (Westport, CT, 1975); Nolan, "Francis Patrick Kenrick," 167–86.