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# Religion, Politics and War In the Creation of an Ethos of Conflict in Colombia; The case of the War of the Thousand Days (1899-1902)

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

RELIGION, POLITICS AND WAR IN THE CREATION OF AN ETHOS OF CONFLICT IN  
COLOMBIA: THE CASE OF THE WAR OF THE THOUSAND DAYS (1899-1902)

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

MASTER IN ARTS

in

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

by

Margarita Díaz Cáceres

2018

To: Dean John F. Stack, Jr.

Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

This thesis, written by Margarita Díaz Cáceres, and entitled Religion, Politics and War in the Creation of an Ethos of Conflict in Colombia: The Case of the War of the Thousand Days (1899-1902), having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgement.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

RELIGION, POLITICS AND WAR IN THE CREATION OF AN ETHOS OF CONFLICT IN  
COLOMBIA: THE CASE OF THE WAR OF THE THOUSAND DAYS (1899-1902)

by

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The purpose of this thesis is to understand the way in which religion and politics played a role in the formulation of a cyclical ethos of conflict, focusing in the last and most important civil war of nineteenth-century Colombia: The War of the Thousand Days (1899-1902). A historiographical review was used to understand the interactions between these two structures, and it pointed at a main problem centered in the political use of religion, as well as the transformation of political debate into a matter of political faith. In conclusion, the War of the Thousand days strengthened narratives of vengeance, worsened the situation of the country, and solidified an ethos of conflict in which the State used the Church to legitimize itself against the threats to the status quo of systemic inequality.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Thousand Days' War is considered the most bloody and destructive conflict that afflicted nineteenth-century Colombia. Spanning between 1899 and 1902, this war fought between Liberal and Conservative forces marked the end of an era of political strife and federalist initiatives. By the end of it, eighty thousand people had died of diseases or in combat, a staggering number given that the Colombian population was around four million people. This decrease in population produced a sharp decrease in agricultural production, which in turn brought an economic and political crisis that caused the separation of Panama and the fall of the regime that had won the war (Martínez Carreño 1999, 211).

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the relation among politics, war and religion in the context of this war, and how the connection among these elements created a cyclical model of conflict. The main thesis of this research claims that the War of the Thousand Days' reinforced a model of extreme political dualism that worked through belief instead of scrutiny, creating a cycle of armed conflict that could be manipulated by the elites of the two opposing factions. This led to the creation of a model of exclusivist identity based on partisan relations, that uses the methods of religion to understand politics.

As historian Germán Colmenares stated, there are a series of "historiographical cages" regarding the treatment of Colombian history (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 514). These cages are assumptions created by taking historical sources at face value: these ideas lay uncontested for years, working as the basic analytical structure for research. Two of these conventions will be confronted in this work: being Catholic could be equated to be

a member of the Conservative Party, the Catholic Church was an unified institution that used the State to accomplish its goals.

These ideas will be challenged in four chapters: the first is an overview of the relation between the Colombian State and religion in the nineteenth century, the second is an analysis of the Regeneration and its policies as the main causes of the Thousand Days' War, the third is an overview of the war itself, focusing on its fragmentation, and the last will be about how the issues of religion, identity and politics fueled the conflict and built a framework for future problems.

The sources of information for these chapters are mostly secondary sources, except for the third chapter, that will be based in both historiography and testimonies of those who participated in the war. Both sources will lead to a deeper understanding of the multiple actors in the War, as well as the motivations behind their actions.

These texts will be analyzed and compared with one another to find divergences, blind spots and common themes among them in order to find the common themes that constitute the basis of the ethos of conflict. After all, the Thousand Days' War must be seen not as an isolated incident, but part of a greater historical and social pattern of cyclical conflict in Colombia.

## II. RELIGION, POLITICS, AND SOCIETY IN COLOMBIA 1810-1880



Map of Colombia, 1886. Taken from the "Atlas geográfico e histórico de la República de Colombia, 1890" by the Geographical Institute Agustín Codazzi.

Colombia is a country located in the northwestern part of South America, and as the map shows, it is divided by three mountain ranges that belong to the greater Andean mountain range (Ministerio de Salud y Protección Social 2016, 16-17). Most of the population lives in these mountain ranges, with the larger cities such as Bogotá or Medellín located in the highland valleys and plateaus, while other important cities, such as Cartagena or Santa Marta, are in the Caribbean coast. Other regions, such as the Pacific coast, the Amazonian rainforest or the eastern plains were sparsely populated

during the nineteenth century, and therefore held little importance to the political power of Bogotá.

Geographical division has a great influence in Colombian culture and politics; the unity of the nation, though possible through common political and economic practices, must be understood in terms of a union of regions. Of all the former colonies of Spain in America, Colombia is one of the most isolated from communication from the outside world, given how far the seat of power is from the closest seaport: the modern road between Bogotá and Cartagena spans for 643 miles of difficult and diverse geography that was even harder to traverse before the advent of modern transportation technologies.

These conditions did not foster economic development, and during the nineteenth century, the economy of Colombia was based on a model of scarcity, lack of industry and the exportation of unrefined products such as coffee, tobacco, cotton, gold, and cocoa. This economic model, based mostly in commodities, consisted in a series of cycles between booms and crisis of exportation, making Colombia a country dependent on the forces of international markets, but never fully integrated to them (Bergquist 1973, 1-3). Such economic fragility was mixed with an education system that fostered a classical education in rhetoric and grammar, and produced a situation in which the young men of the elites had to compete for the jobs at the government either in the elections or in the several civil wars of the nineteenth century (Quijano and Esguerra 1919, 525-24).

In this scene of geographical division and economic fragility, the Colombian government tried to maintain control of the population through taxes and laws. However, this purpose was thwarted by other factors: communications were slow thanks to the geography, and the lack of literate population made administrative tasks much harder.

During the nineteenth century, most of the population was illiterate; according to the education law passed in November 14, 1898 only 16% of the total population knew how to read and write (González Rey 2015, 256). It is plausible to think that literacy regarding Latin, the official language of the Church, was even lower.

It was in this context that the power of the Catholic Church can be properly understood. The Church had a great amount of literate personnel, with a social network that crossed the entire country and had continuous contact with people in Europe and the rest of the Americas. The fact that this institution also predated the independent Colombian republic made for a context in which it held an immense amount of power over the nation (Fontecha 2009, 14-16). Albeit immense, this power was not completely uncontested, and it waned progressively from 1810 to 1886, when a new political Constitution gave away the control of the education, healthcare, the registration of the population and other social services to the Church, as it had been in colonial times (Abel 1984, 14-15).

Beyond any change in time and any specific role, the Church also had a great part to play in the discussion about one of the most important aspects of national identity: religion. Just like any other social institution, the Church it was not monolithic, and harbored many different perspectives over different issues, including the most contentious one: which should be its place in society (González 2006, 35). This problem was the cause of many difficulties between the Church, the State and the political parties that dominated Colombia through all the nineteenth century.

### Church and State under the '*Patronato*' (1810-1860)

The Spanish conquest of what is today the territory of Colombia was not an easy enterprise; even before their arrival, the geographical difficulties played a part in the social fragmentation of the territory. Unlike Peru or Mexico, Colombia was not part of a great pre-Columbian empire: instead, the groups that lived in it relied on trade routes that crossed the Andes (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1989, 27-28). The complex geography made for a slow conquest of the territory, one that was not even complete by the period of independence: by the end of the nineteenth century, territories like the Amazonian rainforest, the Pacific coast and the eastern plains were still outside of the influence of the State.

The conquerors brought with them two institutions; the State, represented by the Spanish Crown and the Catholic Church. These two seats of power were related through the figure of the '*Patronato*', a patronage in which the Church gave the Crown a tribute from the tithes it collected, giving the Spanish monarch the right to ask for an oath of fidelity from the clergy, and allowing the Crown to control the communication between the Holy See and the Church personnel in the American colonies (Tirado Mejía 1989, 167). This institution was not meant to be an egalitarian treaty: The Crown had power over the Church, and not the other way around, as it could be seen during the time of the Bourbon Reforms, a series of policies enacted in the second half of the eighteenth century, with the purpose of taking the power from the creole elites and give it back to the Spaniards. Sectors of the clergy protested these reforms, and in some cases supported those who rebelled against them, an act that was considered treason by the laws of the time (Bidegain 2013, 203-206).

The tensions caused by these reforms, along with the power void left by the Napoleonic invasion of Spain, caused a movement that resulted in the independence in 1810, a period of political upheaval in which many priests, who did not belong to a religious order, supported the claim for liberation from Spain (W. Plata 2010, 66-67). As an important part of the intellectual class of the New Granada, the priesthood wrote about the situation; Spanish priests wrote about the authority of the king, while the *criollos* wrote in favor of the independence movement. (Tirado Mejía 1989, 168). As Ferdinand VII started the process of reconquest of the former colonies, the republican priests also suffered: under the rule of General Pablo Morillo and his Vicar, Louis de Villabrilie, priests were incarcerated and their property passed to the conquerors (Bidegain 2013, 227-229).

Though the Independence from Spain, ratified by the military campaigns of Simón Bolívar, made the territory of what is now Colombia free from the Spanish Empire, it also severed the relations between the Church in Europe and the Church in Colombia (Plata 2014, 67). The Spanish priests had to leave the country, making the education of new clergy even more difficult, besides this, religious orders such as the Franciscans and the Dominicans saw a steep decline in prestige thanks to the image of the secular clergy as more compromised with Republican ideas. Smaller convents were closed in 1821 with the support of the secular clergy (Plata 2014, 88-90).

Religious institutions did not remain unscathed after independence: power was divided between the Church, the Independence Army and the nascent Republican State. Being in a deep economic disadvantage, the State had to find new ways to finance itself and balance the accumulated wartime deficit. However, it was difficult to expropriate the Church or to start taking away its power, mostly because it had everything the State

lacked: literate personnel, a firm position in the national territory, and popularity among the population (Ortiz Mesa 2013, 11-12).

This renewed and strained relationship pointed out some of the general aspects of nineteenth century Colombia: the general weakness of the State regarding public order and sources of revenue practically made the Church a pillar of social order (Bergquist 1973, 23). It also gave way for a continuation of the merging of religious and political affairs: between 1821 and 1835, the State had power to modify the tithes, appoint Bishops, create new dioceses, and give limits to those that already existed. It also allowed local functionaries to appoint parish priests. This situation caused the proclamation of a new, Republican '*Patronato*' in 1834, before the Vatican recognized Colombia as an independent nation in 1836. As the State took privileges over the Church, an antagonistic relation stemmed from the tension between those who wanted a free Church and those who considered it to be a hindrance on the development of the new nation (Ortiz Mesa 2013, 12-13).

The development of this antagonism can be seen in the social criticism of the Church after independence; after a period of religious fervor, the religiosity of the population seemed to falter. According to the clergy, this was the fault of the 'impious writers' that took people away from religion with their new philosophies and stories (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 79-80). However, the main problem was the lack of personnel and the abandonment of clerical discipline after the Spanish Bishops left the country; Colombia did not have proper seminaries until 1840, and there were no clear regulations for priests in the territory. Some left their posts, some resorted to gambling or alcohol, and most of them were not able to educate the people at their charge (Vega Rincón 2011, 103-105).

In spite of these problems, there was a clear domain of the Church regarding the education of the citizens, a matter that caused tensions between the religious institution and the State. Short after the Independence Campaign of 1819 President Francisco de Paula Santander proclaimed an education policy based on the pedagogical theories of Johann Pestalozzi, taking away some of the privileges that the Church had over education (Jaramillo Uribe 1989, 224). Though it was a measure that didn't last long, it opened the debate over the educational policy; for the Church any kind of education that didn't answer to Catholic dogma was a way to give the country away to nefarious influences (Díaz Díaz 1989, 205).

This fear of the foreign marked many of the political expressions and conflicts of the nineteenth century, along with a Eurocentric perspective, in which any of the political changes of the country was seen through European categories (González 2006, 41-42). The French Revolution and all its symbolism was one of the most reviled points of comparison of the Church, and since political identity was one of the most contentious points of this period, these categories were appropriated in political discourse. In the case of this example, practically any policy or group that contradicted the Church was seen as part of the same conspiracy that deposed the monarchy in France (Bergquist 1973, 267).

The appropriation of political discourse was just a piece of all the blurry framework that articulated political and religious conflict. This structure can be seen in the case of the War of the Supremes (1839-1841), in which the closing of the convents and monasteries with less than eight members in the city of Pasto sparked the first civil war of the century (González, 2006, 37-38). After all the problems between the State and the Church, the closing of religious institutions was seen as the last offense to religion

itself; those who allied themselves with the convents called their associates, who called their clientele, while the opposing side did the same, developing a network of alliances and actors, some with agendas that had nothing to do with the Church, like José María Obando, that changed the conflict from a local dispute to a national civil war (Tirado Mejía 1989, 172).

Escalation of conflict in the War of the Supremes, as well as the wars of 1851 and 1854 was caused by the structure of the two main political factions in Colombia: The Liberal party, founded in 1848 and the Conservative party, founded in 1849 (Tirado Mejía 1989, 159). These parties were structures based on clienteles, with an elite comprised of rich members of society, a middle class of regional landlords and a base of mostly illiterate citizens (Fontecha 2009, 10-11). The main differences between the Liberal and Conservative party were about issues of individual liberties and the place of the Church in society. Conservatives wanted to uphold authority, centralism and a state where the Church took care of issues of education and social welfare, while the Liberals wanted to uphold individual liberties, federalism and a Secular State.

Conservatives were seen as traditional landlords, while Liberals sold themselves as businessmen, though reality was far more complex than that, as the case of Liberal landlord Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera would show in the second part of the nineteenth century (Tirado Mejía 1989, 161). As the Conservatives had the Church as their institutional allies, the Liberals had the freemasonic lodges of Colombia; the image of the Liberal freemason transcended the boundaries of everyday realities and became an established trope of Colombian historical narrative of the nineteenth century (Abel 1984, 18).

Like any other institutions, these parties had inner divisions, mostly regarding the role of the main leaders: personal leadership created tensions within the party, and yet it didn't break them apart entirely. This unity has more to do with the mutual animosity of Liberals and Conservatives than with the ideas of the party, since both groups were mutually exclusive and became more radical with every action undertaken by the opponent. Perhaps the only moments in which both parties could reach compromise was when the political establishment was so weak that it could be overridden by people from lower social classes, a phenomenon that was tackled after 1854 (González 2006, 44-45).

By the decade of 1850, the division between the two parties shifted from a discussion between two elite groups to full mutual exclusion from politics. As the Conservatives allied themselves with the Church and its plights, the Liberals took more measures against the ecclesiastic hierarchy, mostly because they considered that the involvement of clergy in politics was more about supporting the Conservative party than about fulfilling their spiritual role (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 107-108). It is necessary to point that the Conservatives allied themselves with the Church, not the other way around: there were Liberal priests within the Dominican Order from 1820 to 1850 (Plata 2014, 78) and at least a couple of members of the clergy who were also part of Freemason lodges, a organization known by its ties to the Liberal party (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 184).

The reforms of the middle of the century represented a great shift in the relations between the State and the Church in Colombia, mostly because it brought a separation and a reform of their financial ties. These reforms made possible for priests to be elected in their parishes just as mayors were, took away the tithes that the State gave the Church, and proclaimed academic, religious and press freedom. The Liberal State saw in

these reforms the dismantlement of the privileges of the Church, while the Conservatives and the Church itself saw this as a grave offense to its rights and the rights of Colombian Catholics (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 154).

The reasoning behind the perspectives of both institutions was based in one single difference; while the State saw the Church as an earthly institution, the Church saw itself as the bulwark of an absolute, sacred truth. To touch the tithes was to violate the commandment of loving God, because it meant that the government didn't care about maintaining His institution; to make the position of parish priest a matter of election was an intrusion of the government in the discipline of the Church; and to take away the Church control of education and religion was an invitation for immorality (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 161-174). The State wanted to become a stronger institution, and to do this, it became an intruder on matters that only competed to the religious institution, creating a tension that could hardly be resolved with this kind of intrusive politics.

Catholicism was seen as the one and true religion of the Colombian people, and therefore all these tensions affected most of the population, according to the Church. Liberalism claimed that tithes and limitations restricted both the economic and the intellectual development of the same population (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 156). Beyond any of these claims, both factions represented the people of Colombia as victims that needed their salvific policies, a claim hard to contradict thanks to the rampant illiteracy of the time.

An example of how partisan factions played out in the political context of this time is the debate about the presence of foreign clergy in Colombia, with the case of the Jesuits being the most contentious one. Liberals considered that members of this order were part of a foreign interference, and some sectors of the Church mistrusted them

because they did not answer to Colombian Bishops (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 176-79,186-89). Jesuits were exiled in 1851 by the Liberal government with documents signed by the King of Spain in 1767: the paradox of those who were against the legacy of colonial times using colonial documents had not been lost to time.

The case of the Jesuits also gives an example of the practice of exile as a punishment for those whom the State considered its enemies, but it was not the most controversial, or the one with more political repercussion. That case was the exile of Manuel José Mosquera (1800-1853), the Archbishop of Bogotá, who had broken the law written in the article 269 of the penal code of 1837, that prohibited public servants to obstruct the actions of the State. The Archbishop was against the part of the law that gave the government authority over the election of parish priests, and protested against it, disobeying its instructions. His trial began in May 24 1853, and he was sentenced to exile, dying in France in the same year (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 201-211).

The exile and subsequent death of Archbishop Mosquera in exile was taken as an act of persecution; he was one of the many martyrs of what the Church considered an international persecution. In Colombia, Catholicism was part of the sacralization of political power through the combination of religious and political rituals (i.e. consecration of the presidency), and so the steps that the State took to take control of the ecclesiastical institution under Liberal principles was considered an attempt to destroy religion (Tirado Mejía 1989, 115-117). However, the Liberal reforms of the mid-century were halted, not by the Church, but by the coup of General Jose María Melo in 1854, which was preceded by a short civil uprising supported by the emerging working class of Bogotá (Tirado Mejía 1989, 173).

This coup points at a contentious problem in the historiography of Colombia: the fixation on written sources causes history to be written exclusively about the elites, and the majority of the population comes to light only in cases such as this upheaval. It was in this War of 1854 that fear of popular movements developed more clearly among the political elite of both Liberal and Conservative parties. In order to control the masses, and in light of the uprising and the influence of the clergy in politics, the debate about the nature of the political subject in Colombia started to focus in electoral matters, mostly regarding who could and who could not participate in politics through elections. While in the beginning, the Liberals had the opinion that universal suffrage was necessary for the development of the nation, they discovered in 1858 that their ideas were against their political interests. Besides this, Liberalism was split in two different factions; the “*Gólgotas*”, high-class urban businessmen who defended a model of free market, and “*Draconianos*”, low-class artisans who wanted a protectionist economic policy (Tirado Mejía 1989, 173). The change of electoral rules had the objective to exclude all opponents, including those within the same political party, and those who could benefit from social change.

Melo was forced to resign by a coalition of both Conservative and Liberal generals, that kept intact the new legislation that abolished gun control, and yet they reduced the army to its most minimal expression, in order to arm themselves whenever they deemed necessary and to not allow popular movements to acquire power through the military (Tirado Mejía 1989, 173). After the victory of Conservative candidate Mariano Ospina Rodríguez, the Liberals blamed the clergy and decided to implement voting restrictions based mostly on classist standards of property and literacy, which they did when they returned to power after the war of 1859-1862 (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 243-244). However, after the crisis caused by Melo, both parties decided to keep the

electoral mechanism intact, averting military coups and social crisis without the loss of the clientelist political structure.

After the conservative electoral victory of 1858, president Ospina declared a new constitution that respected the federal organization proclaimed in 1853. This constitution was one of the six documents sanctioned by the Colombian State in the nineteenth century (1832, 1843, 1853, 1858, 1863 and 1886) (Tirado Mejía 1989, 155) .These changes of legal framework were generally preceded by political upheaval or civil war, making the constitution part of the spoils of the victors, who usually used it to exclude the enemy faction, inciting the indignation necessary to spark another conflict this was the case of the war of 1859-1862.

This conflict was caused by the perceived interference of the central, Conservative government and the administrations of the States under its rule: Bolívar, Cauca, Magdalena and Santander were the first to rebel against the directives from Bogotá. The leadership and troops of Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, brother of the exiled Archbishop, proved crucial in this conflict. As a powerful landlord, member of one of the richest families of the Republic, and leader of one of the main freemasonic lodges of Colombia, Mosquera advanced in the ranks of the Liberal party, conquered the capital in July 1861, and started to establish laws that modified the relation between the State and the Church in the same way that the 1851 reforms did (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 293-294).

#### Liberalism and Catholic discourse (1860-1880)

The period between the first reforms of Mosquera and the political pact known as the Regeneration was dominated by the political ideas of radical Liberalism, which included

a proclamation of a new constitution in 1863. The United States of Colombia was a State of radical federalism, with freedoms of press, academia, weapon property and religion; the old Patronato was replaced by a more comprehensive and radical reform, in which, the radical Liberals implemented a series of policies that put the Church under the authority of the State, took away most of its property and cut down all financial support to the institution (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 298-299). Once more, the irony of the Liberal, supposedly more modern, state using colonial forms of power to ensure its power has not been lost to time.

To understand these measures is necessary to analyze the laws of cult inspection and tuition, as well as the decree of confiscation of Church property. Cult tuition was the policy that made mandatory for all priest to have the permission of the government to fulfill their religious functions; it also made possible for the State to control all the Ecclesiastic documents that circulated in the country and to exile all foreign religious personnel (Tirado Mejía 1989, 170). Though this measure was applied to all religious institutions no matter their origin, the Catholic Church, being almost the sole institution of the country was the only one who became the target of these measures.

But the policy of cult inspection and tuition was not the most controversial matter of these times; that dubious honor belonged to the Confiscation decree of September 9, 1861. Known in Spanish as the "*Decreto de desamortización de bienes de manos muertas*"<sup>1</sup>, this decree confiscated the real state the Church had gained through the contributions made in the wills of dead devotees, putting them in the market and selling them. The only properties that were not allowed to be confiscated were the temples themselves, the houses of religious communities, jails, markets and all property that had

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<sup>1</sup> "Decree of desamortization of dead hands' property"

any other public use (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 306-307). This decree was written and supported by then Secretary of Treasure Rafael Núñez, who was excommunicated, and later in the nineteenth century promoted measures completely against these kind of laws (Jaramillo and Meisel 2008, 11).

Along with this decree, the government of Mosquera exiled Archbishop Antonio Herrán, threatened with exile all priests who protested the law, and closed all the religious orders of both sexes. This degree of coercion was new, but the idea of taking away Church property was not something new; it had been part of the reforms of the Crown in the eighteenth century, as well as policies from 1826 and 1845 (Rico Bonilla 2010, 50-51). This process was also part of the story of the modern States: Paraguay, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and México had done it before Colombia as a way to undermine their colonial legacy and renew their internal markets (Jaramillo and Meisel 2008, 5).

These initiatives of government control were meant to reduce the political power of the clergy allied with the conservative party, to foster a more modern State in Colombia and to activate the real estate market. The profits earned through the confiscation decree were also meant to alleviate the deficit of the State, both in international and national debt (Díaz Díaz 1989, 210). Besides the controversy that this process caused, there were also many logistical problems regarding the quantification of the riches of the Church; given the problems of communication, corruption and lack of literate personnel, it was hard to carry on the processes of appraisal and auction of the new properties, this caused the process to dwindle in 1867 and to stop altogether by 1871 (Rico Bonilla 2010, 57,60). By this time, 15.362.429 pesos had been earned, mostly in the regions of Cundinamarca and Cauca (Jaramillo and Meisel 2008, 16).

This great amount of money did not compensate for the political and economic hassle that the Colombian government had undertaken. The Church was not as rich as it was estimated, and the general poverty of the citizens mixed with both the corruption of the political system and the desperation of the State to create a situation in which it was impossible to negotiate good prices for the confiscated properties. These economic measures also worsened the problem of economic inequality, as the land was concentrated in a few rich proprietors; although the GDP grew by 16%, it was not enough to pay the massive debt of the country (Rico Bonilla 2010, 55-56).

If the whole Church as an apparatus that hindered the economic development of the country, then religious orders were seen as sources of idleness, and those who resisted the measure against them were exiled, either to foreign lands or to the so-called 'wild' territory of the Eastern Plains, as was the case with the friars of the Dominic order (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 310, 313). Exile, was favored as a punishment before any other sentence for Church members because they were not considered citizens, for they swore allegiance to another set of laws that came from a foreign nation: the disciplinarian codes that came from the Holy See (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 328). These massive exiles also helped the State to protect its own borders by deploying priests near them; besides, the work of these men was to convert the indigenous population, integrating them into the nation through the erasure of their identities.

The reaction of both the Church and the Conservative party to these actions was of rejection. However, in this case there were two characteristics that made the State-Church relation more strained than before. one was the fact that there were Liberal priests like Juan Nepomuceno Azuero and Pascual Afanador who followed the decree even if they felt abandoned by their own party, showing a tendency of the Church to

become more radical as an answer to the policies of Mosquera (Tirado Mejía 1989, 170). The second one would develop after the proclamation of both the Constitution of 1863 and the Syllabus of errors of 1864: the influence of the situation of the Church in Europe in the discourse of the Colombian clergy.

The Constitution of 1863, written by the Liberals in the town of Rionegro, Antioquia, was a radical departure from the Constitution sanctioned in 1858. Though it also followed the federal model, it put the Church under the authority of the State and granted the States the rights to make their own laws, print their own money, have their own tax models and their own army. Written in its entirety by Liberal politicians, this constitution was the product of a rift between two factions of the same party: those who were against Mosquera and those who supported him (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 317-318, 322).

Feeling that the general wished to perpetuate his power, the radicals who wrote the constitution weakened the central government by reducing the presidential term to two years, declaring its absolute neutrality in the rebellions of the states, and reducing its military power to the National Guard, a force that had little else than symbolic purposes. Political power shifted from the clientele of Bogotá, to the clientele of the sovereign states, breaking down the structures of power under a philosophy of *laissez faire, laissez passer* (Tirado Mejía 1989, 174-175).

Under this form of government, the States became more and more powerful; in the case of Antioquia and Tolima, their power not only worked in a local level, but also in a national one, as both sovereign states had a flourishing economic situation, a strong army, and a conservative majority in power (Tirado Mejía 1989, 174). The association between the Conservative party and the Church solidified thanks to the actions of radical

Liberals in Colombia: both considered that the confiscation of goods was theft, and the sentences given to the clergy that resisted the measures of the government were part of a persecution against Catholicism. The Liberal considered that this alliance proved that the Church was not focusing on its spiritual work, but on the consecution of political power, a “theocratic rule” that had to be extinguished with more radical measures (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 346-347).

By September 1863, Pope Pius IX had written to the Bishops and Archbishops of Colombia, condemning the government and its laws with ‘apostolic authority’. Mosquera answer to the Pope was a ‘reminder’ that he was not the owner of Colombia, and therefore had no authority to interfere in the inner workings of the nation. Mosquera was excommunicated, and the Church experienced a rift between those who decided to follow the decrees of the government and those who protested against them (Díaz Díaz 1989, 213) . From then on, the situation became worse, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed the *Syllabus of Errors*, a document that explicitly condemned Liberalism and all the policies that went against the wishes of the Church.

The *Syllabus* was an addendum to the *Quanta Cura* encyclical, published in December 8 1864 as an answer to the crisis of the Church in Mexico, Poland, and France (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 401). This document was focused on the condemnation of what the Church considered errors of the time, all of them based on the idea that Scripture was not the source of absolute truth, and therefore the Church was not perfect nor it had any authority over political matters. Of the 79 errors listed in this document, those numbered from 77 to 79 refer explicitly to the errors of Liberalism, including freedom of religion and the idea of the Pope reconciling with the ideas deemed as mistakes in the document. Not only did the *Syllabus* condemn a whole political worldview

in name of religion: it also banned any kind of dialogue or reconciliation between Liberalism and the Church.

In Colombia, the Syllabus only worsened the already strained situation: Liberals considered it was the leading document of the Conservative party (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 405), and for the Conservatives it was a call for action, as well as a source of arguments against the actions of the government. In 1867 Colombian priests met in a synod with the objective of decide what to do with the situation of the Church, that seems to get worse thanks to the advances of Liberalism. When the synod finally met in December 1870, the government had already implemented policies related to the clerical monopoly of education, and the clergy met to tackle them.

In the session of the national congress of September 22, 1867, the federal government approved the act of the creation of a National University. Though the Liberal government had abolished all Universities in the name of destroying the monopoly over knowledge, it still needed a center to educate the necessary personnel. This endeavor was part of a larger educational program focused on technical knowledge for the sake of industrialization: in the beginning, the university taught courses in law, medicine, philosophy, natural sciences, engineering and arts. Though it was completely disconnected from any branch of the ecclesiastic hierarchy, the University had members of the Conservative party among its instructors, such as Miguel Antonio Caro and Manuel María Madiedo, who worked along prominent Liberals like Manuel Ancízar and Ezequiel Rojas. In theory, it would be a non-politicized institution dedicated to the propagation of knowledge (Jaramillo Uribe 1989, 239-241).

The same kind of justification was behind the Organic Decree of Public Instruction; signed the first day of November 1870, this decree made primary education

mandatory and secular, making religious education an option for the parents, but not a duty of the State (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 475). Though the decree was written as a neutral law regarding religion, the Church took it as a measure to erase Catholicism from the country, starting with the children. The fact that German protestant teachers were brought help bolster this perception, even when states like Antioquia compromised with the government by accepting German teachers but only if they were Catholic.

Both the clergy and the members of the Conservative party considered that a government that proclaimed a law that criminalized those who didn't want to take their children to a secular school, went against the liberty of parents to educate their offspring. This mandatory policy was seen as a confirmation of the intention of the government to erase Catholicism, and was quoted by the Bishops of Pasto, Popayán, Medellín and Antioquia as the reason why they would excommunicate parents that sent their children to government schools (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 484).

It was this problem of mandatory education that also sparked controversy in the National University, but this time about the mandatory texts written by Destut de Tracy and Jeremy Bentham. Rejected by the Church, the philosophies of this authors were part of the mandatory curriculum of the departments of Law and Philosophy (Jaramillo Uribe 1989, 242). Though Liberals considered themselves to be open in all matters of public life, the obligatory nature of these texts made all their claims feel fake amidst the denounces of their Conservative peers.

As most lawyers became politicians in this point in time, these texts were seen as another part of the Liberal conspiracy to destroy the Church and proclaim an atheist tyranny. Liberals, on the other hand, saw the rejection of secular values as proof that the Church and the Conservative party wanted to install a theocratic regime with the values

of colonial time. Both factions became irreconcilable, thanks to both the pressure of the Syllabus and the mandatory nature of government policies: by 1876, high tensions, lack of dialogue, and a looming economic crisis helped spark another civil war (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 452-454).

Known as the “War of the Schools”, the civil war of 1876-1877 was made in name of religion, but motivated by both economic and political reasons. Tolima and Antioquia were two largely Conservative States that rebelled against when they perceived as the tyranny of the central government; Cauca has an oligarchy in economic decadence (Tirado Mejía 1989, 174); Magdalena and Bolívar, the states from the Caribbean coast, had an economic crisis thanks to a crisis related to their customs revenue (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 487). These five States had their own armies, and rebelled against the government: they suffered military defeats, and had problems among themselves due to regional differences.

Since war threatened to destroy their sources of revenue, the rebels preferred a negotiated solution with the Liberal government. This gave the image of a victorious Liberal party, whose members in the National University claimed that war was an unfortunate but necessary event destined to stop the enemies of reason and progress (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 493-494). This positivist outlook of history was part of all Liberal governments around Latin America, unfortunately, it was not upheld in Colombia thanks to the lack of economic development.

With all ways of dialogue between the different factions already broken, the political establishment of radical Liberalism started to crumble, even when it seemed to have earned victory against its enemies. The priests who supported the rebellion of 1876 were exiled for ten years, confirming the political persecution of Church members, and

the party had begun to experience divisions between its most radical sector and the moderate factions. This faction, along with young upstarts, rejected Liberals, and the military and all those who did not support the growing political polarization helped a politician from Cartagena, Rafael Núñez, to win the elections in 1880 (González 2006, 56-57), marking the beginning of the end to the power of radical Liberalism in Colombia.

### III. COLOMBIA DURING THE 'REGENERATION' 1880-1899

As seen before, the projects undertaken by the Radical Liberals after 1863 were part of a whole strategy to make the country progress and the economy grow away from its fragile cycles of exportations and importations. Efforts such as the education reforms, the establishment of the National University and the creation of the Geographical Commission of Agustín Codazzi (Poveda Ramos 1989, 160) expanded the knowledge of the elite of the time, but couldn't break the cycles, which consisted in the exportation booms of quinine, tobacco, añil (*Indigofera suffruticosa*), gold and coffee.

Though more diverse, the economy was as fragile as ever. The diversification of products, based in the free-trade policies of radical Liberalism, didn't help to the monetary and fiscal chaos of the time: there was no national bank, and all the local banks had the right to print their own currency. This chaos made tax collection a burden, and therefore put the finances of the central government into a state of permanent disarray (Tirado Mejía 1989, 176). Looking for a total freedom of any kind of government intrusion in finances, the Liberal government of the time took away all the framework of the economy and was not able to capitalize on the possible opportunities for economic growth; unlike other Latin American countries, Colombia was not part of a larger international market.

Besides this lack of economic organization, the constitution of 1863 had not aged well by 1880: developments in the Colonies of England and the Netherlands had closed the market for Colombian quinine and añil (Bergquist 1973, 14). The lack of industry regulations enforced by the government also fostered the development of dishonest business practices, such as hiding plantain leaves in tobacco shipments. The loss of confidence in the nascent Colombian industry, the industrialization of western Europe

and the ties made through free trade flooded Colombia with imported goods, inhibiting the creations of any industry that didn't focus on agricultural commodities like coffee (Bergquist 1973, 22).

Amid a deeply unfavorable situation for the nascent national industry; young entrepreneurs also found difficulties in the already formed Liberal elite of Bogotá, and how their exclusive electoral policies denied them the access to the political world. With the looming threat of economic collapse on the horizon, the political situation was tense enough for President Rafael Núñez to reform the Colombian political apparatus through a series of changes: The Regeneration ("La Regeneración") (Tirado Mejía 1989, 174-175)

#### The 'Regeneration' and the Constitution of 1886

What we call the Regeneration was a political pact between Liberal dissidents and conservatives, all united under the leadership of president Rafael Núñez (Abel 1984, 1). Though its greatest success would be the proclamation of the 1886 Constitution, its ideological and political foundations were laid down in the first presidential term of Núñez. The main concepts of the Regeneration were Hispanism, the concentration of power in Bogotá, government oversight of the economy, and Catholicism and its ethics as the backbone of both national identity and the new legal framework (Blanco Mejía 2009, 167). This was a clear opposition to the Liberal perspective of the Colonial heritage as a burden of backwardness, and gave those who opposed the Liberal program intellectual elements to criticize it as an unrealistic plan to erase the culture of Colombian people.

However, the fact that the Regeneration had elements of Hispanism didn't mean it rejected everything unrelated to the Hispanic heritage of Colombia. This political program was based in traditionalist ideas, per which the absolute moral truth could be found in tradition; yet it took elements from the positivist philosophy of Herbert Spencer and did not reject the technological advancement of industrialization. It was industrial modernization without social or political modernity (Saldarriaga 2011, 9-10). It was a political program that benefitted the landowners and restricted the participation of the parliamentary institutions in favor of presidential power, creating an authoritarian regime that relegated the nascent bourgeois class of Colombia in favor of the landholders, especially the coffee growers (Blanco Mejía 2009, 4).

In practice, the first element of the Regeneration was the complete centralization of the country: though this was not an objective won until the constitution of 1886. In 1885 the State of Santander, mostly Liberal, rebelled against the central government, losing the war at La Humareda, a pyrrhic victory that marked the end of the Liberal constitution of 1863 (Tirado Mejía 1989, 174-175). This rebellion also gave both Conservatives and dissidents the chance to join in a new "National Party" under the leadership of Núñez and Miguel Antonio Caro. These two leaders came from different backgrounds: Núñez had been Secretary of the Treasure under President Mosquera, Consul in England and had a worldly perspective of politics; Caro was a Latinist whose income came mostly from the land his family owned, and who had never ventured outside Bogotá (Abel 1984, 49).

It would seem unlikely for the creator of the decree of confiscation policies to ally with one of the most outspoken critics of Liberalism. however, both were against the fragmentation of the country brought by the Constitution of 1863 and the inability of the

Radical Liberals to create economic growth. To transform Colombia into a country of "Order and Progress" it needed national unity, something that could be secured with the alliance between a centralist State and the social power of the Catholic Church (Andrade Álvarez 2011, 161-162). This proposal got Núñez and Caro the support of a sector of the Church, but also the backing from excluded Liberal politicians, the military, and young businessmen (González 2006, 56-57).

The Constitution of 1886, written in the name of God (República de Colombia 1886, 3) changed the political organization of Colombia in its entirety. Political power was centralized in the presidency, that now served for a period of six years; governors were chosen by the president; monetary and tax policies were unified, and the departmental armies disbanded to form a national army (González 2006, 62-63). The secular nature of the 1863 Constitution was abandoned in favor of the Catholicism, now considered a pillar of social order and the source of religion and moral for the great majority of the population (Bergquist 1973, 29).

This Constitution was far more repressive than the one of 1863; the death penalty came back to penal codes, the government could interfere with the freedom of press in order to prevent its "abuses", as well as install a state of "armed peace". This new legal framework favored the State and those who could act through it, making public order more important than any kind of right: Colombian people had freedoms, as long as those freedoms met the ambiguous idea of public order and "Christian morality" of those in power (Calle Meza 2006, 116-118). This mixture of religion and politics in the code of law made cemented the alliance between factions within the State and factions within the Church. However, it was the electoral legislation the one that prohibited a change in political power.

By changing the electoral rules, the National Party made sure that only high and middle-class owners could have any power in the presidential elections; just the kind of men who had placed the Regeneration in power. The concept of citizenship, defined by articles six to eighteen, was limited to the men twenty-one years old or older, who had a licit source of revenue, did not go in arms against the government of Colombia, nor had problems of drunkenness or mental illness (República de Colombia 1886, 6-8).

Though it was not explicit, these kind of law made possible an almost total exclusion of the Colombian population; neither women, indigenous people, people of African descent, or poor men were able to vote. Such basic act of democracy was a privilege of few, and one that did not change much, because local representatives were chosen by the President. Besides this, there was another measure: those who voted could not ask anything from those elected, a policy though to stop corruption that only worked to foster inefficiency (Calle Meza 2006, 130).

Such degree of centralization was planned to create an “Authoritarian Republic” that could bring order to the chaos brought by Radical Liberalism. The historical narrative of the Regeneration placed it as a return to the natural order, broken by Liberalism: its measures were justified as a reaction to the exclusion and the excesses of the 1863-1866 period (Bergquist 1973, 56). Within the framework of the Regeneration, law was an instrument of power meant to uphold order and proper conduct, which had been lost under the constitution of 1863. Under the 1886 constitution, society was more important than the individual, whose private and public life were mixed, and therefore could be regulated to prevent disturbances (Adarve Calle 2012, 151-152).

The legislation of the Regeneration was, at first, forgiving with its former enemies, the radical Liberals: by 1888 they were granted amnesty from the exile they had been

sentenced to. However, the situation soon changed with decrees such as the decree No. 151 of February 17, 1888 that created the category of crimes against society included publications that encouraged disobedience to the law, offended civil or ecclesiastical authorities, incited social uprisings, or questioned the monetary system.

But it was the Law 61 of May 23, 1888, better known as the Law of Horses, that made possible for the opposing Liberals to declare they lived in a Presidential tyranny. Written by magistrates chosen by then President Caro, the law was made to prevent enemies from undermining social order, and to give the President extraordinary powers to do so. This, combined with the renewed legality of the death penalty, caused common dissidents to be killed while the most famous ones were exiled (Adarve Calle 2012, 155-156). This law was supplemented by the decree 286 of March 27, 1889, that isolated the country by not allowing foreign press from entering the country, as it was seen as contrary to Colombian morality and culture (Blanco Mejía 2009, 2).

Núñez and the other leaders of the Regeneration knew that, in order to restore centralism in the country, a repressive legal apparatus and a national army were not enough. The institutions that took care of social order were severely weakened after decades under the *laissez faire* policies of Radical Liberalism; the Regeneration restored the place of the Church as the institution in charge of organizing education, social assistance, demographic records, and protection of territories close to the borders. This was both a measure of faith and practicality: The State was not in a good financial situation, and therefore could not create new institutions that could undertake the work pertaining those matters, and it needed an ideological support to carry on with its centralization programs.

The constitution of 1886 declared in its article number 38, that Catholicism was the religion of Colombia, and therefore the Catholic Church, its personnel, properties and interests would be protected by the State itself (República de Colombia 1886, 12). This guaranteed that the State would not undertake another confiscation effort, nor would it try to uphold an educational system without the approval of the Church: article 41 stated that all education would be planned per Catholic principles, and would not be mandatory (República de Colombia 1886, 13). Just as with centralization, these reforms were thought to restore order after the chaos left by the 1863 constitution.

The changes in the constitution demanded a new legal framework for the relation between the State and the Church. Since the Colombian State had the right to establish treaties with the Church, a new document was created by Cardinal Mariano Rampolla del Tindaro and Minister Joaquín Fernando Vélez in the name of Pope Leon XIII and President Rafael Núñez: The Concordat of 1887.

### The Concordat

Before discussing the nature of the Concordat, it is necessary to state that the situation of the Church in Colombia was not unique, nor it was the closest hit to the Ecclesiastic institution in the late nineteenth century: the hardest hit was the dissolution of the Papal States after the capture of Rome by Italian forces in September 1870. For the whole nineteenth century, the Holy See had experienced the tension with political liberalism across Europe, and it needed to ratify its authority over the clergy all over the world, authority that, in the case of Colombia, was shattered by measures such as the cult tuition and the confiscation of property.

As a solution, the Church, under Pius IX and then under Leon XII, devised a series of policies commonly known as “Romanization”: this included the consolidation of Papal authority and ineffability, the establishment of new relations with civil powers across the globe, and the development of new ways to support the laity that had been taken away from the Church (Bautista García 2005, 105-106). These ecclesiastical reforms were undertaken from 1846 to 1903, and included the First Vatican Council of 1870, in which the concept of Papal ineffability was finally formulated after being used by Pius IX in his dogmatic declaration of the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

The Romanization policies attempted to homogenize the Church, and gave it more power over the lay population, bringing it together with new devotions, groups and programs. However, these measures, just like the reforms of the Colombian State during under the Regeneration period, needed a framework: The Concordat. Unlike the *Patronato*, the Concordat was more a treaty on equal foot than a concession of privileges from the Church to civil power. This document was based on the Romanist policies and on the principle of “Regime of Christendom”, in which the State and the Church use the resources of the other to fulfil its ends. For Colombia, this was a matter of mutual convenience between the Church and the National Party of Núñez and Caro (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 495).

The Concordat gave the Church back the rights and privileges that it had lost during the 1863-1886 period, giving it elements to not negotiate its dogma but giving the clergy elements to adapt to the situation of their territory (Saldarriaga 2011, 8). It also stated boundaries for the State that had the purpose of repairing the damage done by the Liberal policies, and avoid the repetition of what happened before the Regeneration. Catholicism was the official religion of Colombia, and even if there was no express

prohibition of other religions, the official nature recognition of the Church gave it power that could not be emulated by other religious institutions.

Per the Concordat, it was the duty of the State to protect the Church, to respect the Canon Law, respect its property, give a payment to compensate for the property lost in confiscations, and abolish all laws that had been written before and were not compatible with the Concordat. As the Church had these rights, it also had duties: to pay taxes for every property but temples and houses of religious personnel, to do a prayer for the Republic and the President after every mass<sup>2</sup>, and to assure the frontiers of the country by doing missionary work in the territories still populated by indigenous groups (The Amazon basin, the Eastern Plains and some parts of the Pacific Coast). The Church also had the right to appoint military chaplains in the National Army for the spiritual needs of the soldiers.

Within the limits of the Concordat were also duties that the State passed to the Church, and vice versa. The Church revised the contents of educational texts and classes, making sure they were not against Catholicism; it could dismiss the teachers guilty of such offenses. After the reforms made on 1892 the Church was also in charge of the registration of births, deaths and marriages, as well as the administration of cemeteries.

However, as much privileges as the State could give the Church, there was a factor that tilted the balance of power: according to the fifteenth article of the Concordat, the President has the right to veto candidates for Bishop or Archbishop. Though the Pope was the only one who could elect them, the president could dismiss candidates for political motives, giving him an unprecedented power over the Catholic Hierarchy.

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<sup>2</sup> *Domini salvam Fac Rempublicam: Domine Salvum Fac Praesiden eius et supremas eius auctoritates* (Lord, save the Republic; Lord save the President and the Supreme Authorities)

Without Prelates able to contradict him, the factions of the Church that were against the measures of the State would be silenced and condemned to oblivion in poor parishes or in frontier territories.

This victory of traditionalism brought an immense power to the Church with the Concordat: a sacralization of political power in the form of ecclesiastical titles for the President (Abel 1984, 30), and gave the State a level of religious legitimacy that, combined with its control of education and registration, dissolved or radicalized opposition. The objective was to assure that the Liberals didn't come back to power, but what it caused was a radicalization of both parties and the Church itself, creating a situation in which dialog was shunned as a possibility to reach consensus (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 306).

#### Economic Crisis, Religious Conflict and Political Upheaval.

By 1887 Colombia was a country with an economy based on coffee exportations; after the crisis of quinine and tobacco, coffee had become the main exportation, reaching a staggering seventy percent of exportations in 1895 with Cundinamarca, Antioquia and Santander leading production (Bergquist 1973, 33). The entrance of international capital via coffee exportations helped the landholders and entrepreneurs acquire modern machinery, but made the conditions of workers worse: this "modernization without modernity" caused the already exploited Colombian farmers and laborers to depend even more on their employers, making this economic growth an exercise in inequality in regions like Cundinamarca and Tolima (Kalmanovitz 1989, 134, 144).

This economic bonanza also brought consequences in politics: even if they were defeated, the Liberal elite had assets in coffee production. Their riches strengthened the party, and helped build the image of the hard-working coffee farmer that colonized the low lands, in contrast with the idle landholder of the highlands who depended on a static economy (Bergquist 1973, 98-99). The economic policies of the Regeneration favored the great producers with cheap credits, fiscal protection, and monetary centralization. However, these policies were also product of a weak state, that produced a crisis within the newly founded National Bank, an institution that ended up printing more paper money, instead of offering guarantees when the prices of coffee suddenly dropped in 1896 (Kalmanovitz 1989, 145-146).

The dramatic drop in coffee prices worsened all the political tensions that had plagued Colombia since 1895. The economic policies of the State did not help the economy, nor strengthened the internal markets; instead, its centralization made corruption an everyday matter, as well as inefficiency regarding fiscal and monetary policies. Miguel Antonio Caro, then President, was not an expert in economy, and his perspective about policy and government caused the State to keep on with inflexible policies against free trade.

Rafael Núñez had died in 1894: though he had been re-elected for the 1892-1898 period, it was his vice-president, Miguel Antonio Caro, who took over the Presidential Office (Martínez Carreño 1999, 27). Though both had helped in creating the Regeneration policies, Núñez considered them a codification of already existing practices, and therefore had a certain degree of flexibility regarding the legal framework built by the constitution. Caro looked at the Regeneration as the only chance to save

Colombia, an absolute good that had to be preserved against the “anarchy” of liberalism (Bergquist 1973, 56, 66-69).

The hard line of Caro strengthened the political subjugation already codified in the law 61 of 1888, making the situation between the National party and the Liberals less stable: political exclusion and repression of the press caused the Liberals in Santander to rebel in 1895 (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 21-22). This conflict was short, for the rebels had not prepared accordingly, losing in the Battle of Enciso in March after defeats in Tolima and Cauca; though the rebels had help from Venezuela, their lack of preparation and the strength of the national army were more than enough to defeat them (González 2006, 66).

Beyond the defeat of the Liberal rebels, this war also showed the deep divisions between and within the parties, along with the problems of the National Army and the extent of the armed peace of the Regeneration. The victory of the government, though certain, gave more power to the faction of the Liberal party that advocated for war. From their perspective, there was no point in negotiating with the government, and it was possible to destabilize the regime with a stronger rebellion. On the Conservative side, those that did not approve of the measures of the government started to call themselves the Historical Conservatives, and were seen as suspicious by the National Conservatives of the government, mostly because they did not reject the rebellion with the same zeal (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 21-22).

There was a degree of religious zeal in the position of the government against the compromise with Liberals. Liberalism under this regime was nothing short of a form of heresy, an opinion against the revealed truth of religion: it was impossible to be a good Catholic and a Liberal at the same time (Saldarriaga 2011, 20-22). Bishops like Ezequiel

Moreno y Díaz, from Pasto, and Pedro Schumacher, exiled Bishop from Ecuador, claimed that Liberalism was a sin and all those who followed it were imitators of Lucifer, who wanted to be free from the will of God (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 309). Both of these clergymen had problems with the conciliatory position of Monsignor Bernardo Herrera, Archbishop of Bogotá, whom Díaz considered guilty of the sin of negotiating with those who represented a fundamental moral mistake (González 2006, 72-73). As the country sank deeper into economic crisis, the consideration of this conciliatory perspectives became more common, as the elites looked for someone to blame for the disarray of the economy and the subsequent social turmoil it created.

The position of the government was clear: Liberals were enemies of the public order. Meanwhile, the Church chastised them with the threat of eternal damnation: a radicalization made possible by the persecution the Church had lived in the period of radical Liberalism. For the Conservatives and the Church, the rebellion of 1895 was a confirmation that the Liberals were warmongers that wanted to wage war against the legitimate authority; for the Liberals, the repressive measures and the religious discourse against them were a confirmation of how their opponents were against any kind of freedom and progress. The conflict between them escalated with each movement, such as the political plans of Miguel Antonio Caro for the 1898 elections.

Unable to participate once more in the presidential elections, Caro chose two candidates to represent him: Manuel Antonio Sanclemente and José Manuel Marroquín. This action caused the Conservative party to deepen the divide between the National and the Historical factions, just as the issue of war had divided the Liberal party (Martínez Carreño 1999, 30). In both cases, it was the most aggressive faction that one that prevailed: for the Nationalist conservatives, the support of the Church gave

legitimacy to their claims, strengthening political exclusion and giving the Liberals who wanted war to have a stronger voice.

Another cause of division between Conservatives was the critiques of the Historical faction against the inefficiency of the central government regarding taxes and customs, the lack of planning of the infrastructure and monetary policy and the conscription policies of the National Army (Bergquist 1973, 102-104). These disagreements made them challenge the laws, annulling the repressive Law 61 of 1888 in 1898, giving the Liberals who wanted peace a chance to keep their discourse of reformation as the most effective way to change the country.

This chance however, was lost after the Conservatives won the elections of 1898: leaders like Rafael Uribe Uribe claimed that this victory was the ultimate abuse against those who did not live in capital. The division of Liberalism was not seen in terms of policy, like that of the Liberals, but in terms of sociology, with a young class of lawyers in the departments who wanted war, and a group of old merchants in Bogotá who wanted peace (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 24). The seeds of rebellion that had already been planted in 1895 started to grow, especially in the city of Bucaramanga, where the economic prices and the halt of public works had caused the bankruptcy of the coffee growers of the region, who depended on trade routes to Venezuela and the Magdalena river, closed due to the hiatus in infrastructure building and the chaotic administration of road tolls (Martínez Carreño 1999, 34-37).

In February 12, 1899, the direction of the pro-war faction of the Liberal party met in Bucaramanga around the local leader, Foción Soto, and signed a pact of going to war after gaining not just political leverage, but also the weapons they had hidden in secret caches after the rebellion of 1895. After discussing with the Liberal directory of Bogotá,

the Liberals in Santander declared war in October 1899: without enough weapons, recruits or international aid, the Liberals declared the most bloody and destructive wars of nineteenth-century Colombia: The War of the Thousand Days (Bergquist 1973, 171-172, 239).

#### IV. THE WAR OF THE THOUSAND DAYS

From October 1899 to November 1902, Colombia was engulfed in the most bloody and destructive of all the civil wars of the nineteenth century. This war caused the independence of Panama, and sparked the creation of a model of total war that went far and beyond the battles between the two main opponents (Calle Meza 2006, 26). The motivations of both factions in The War of the Thousand Days were layered with the narrative of wrongdoings of the opponent: the confiscations of the lands of the Church, the political exclusion of the Conservative Party during the federal republic, the exclusion of the Liberal Party during the Regeneration, and so on.

Though both the Conservatives in the government and the Liberal rebels had armed forces under their command, the presence of guerrilla groups was one of the biggest differences between this war and the other conflicts of the nineteenth century. Before this war, armed conflict was a matter decided by men of the elite, a 'War of Gentlemen' in which the common folk had little to do with the results of war (Rubiano Muñoz 2011, 178-179). In the case of this conflict, the scale of the military actions taken, the economic relations between workers and landholders, and the economic exploitation of Liberal farmers caused farmers to flee to the mountains and form new armed groups that worked independently from the militias of the Liberal Party.

The narratives of re-vindication were the ones that gave power to both factions, and mobilized the whole country to war. The economic crisis brought by the fall of the prices of coffee, along with the political exclusion of Liberals and the corruption of the government worked as catalysts for a conflict that had already begun in religious and political discourse. Both parties saw this conflict as a war of restoration: Liberals wanted to restore their political rights and the conservatives wanted to restore order (Rubiano

Muñoz 2011, 184). These beliefs in the righteous nature of their cause mixed with the lack of strategies and materials from both parties, with disastrous results for the whole country.

### Military actions of The War of the Thousand Days

Like a forest fire, this war started in a specific point, and then it spilled out to the rest of the country: the region of Santander, located in the northeast of Colombia, had an economy that depended heavily on coffee trade through Venezuelan harbors (Martínez Carreño 1999, 34-37). The lack of proper roads and infrastructure and with the low quality of its product, worsened the economic crisis caused by the drop on coffee prices. The government printed more money without any sort of regulation, destabilizing the economy even more, changing the monetary patterns that had already existed and making the fiscal crisis even more hard to tackle (Correa 2009, 171). These economic issues emphasized the issue of political exclusion of Liberals, and fed the already existing complot of a Liberal rebellion, one which eventually began in October 17, 1899.

Following their experience in the rebellion of 1895, the Liberals from Santander had kept hidden caches of weapons, and gathered national and international contacts that could facilitate more arms and supplies. This network included the leaders of Venezuela, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Ecuador: A Liberal coalition that promised to donate weapons, money and supplies for the rebel effort (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 279-280). Besides these assets, the Liberals also had the veterans of the 1895 rebellion; and the leaders of the party who wanted war, such as Rafael Uribe Uribe and Benjamín Herrera.

Unfortunately, they were not prepared; the weapons they had hid were piles of rusted metal, the international aid was long overdue, their militias had no training nor experience, and communications were almost impossible because the government owned the telegraphic lines (Martínez Carreño 1999, 46-48). The idea that the rebellion would strike swiftly vanished as soon as its problems became obvious. However, the rebels did not lose their impulse, and formed a new revolutionary government in Bucaramanga, propagating their ideals to other parts of the country, especially the northern coast, where Liberalism was strong.

The first months of the conflict were disastrous for Liberals from a military point of view; though the Liberal militias seized Barranquilla, the government reconquered the city on October 25, 1899, after the battle of Los Obispos, a disastrous defeat marked by the tactical folly of Liberal fighters using lanterns in a nocturnal naval battle (Robles 2015, 47-48). The Liberals also lost Bucaramanga, their capital city, on November 11, 1899, once more because of lack of proper equipment, training, and military discipline (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 244) in a battle where the bulk of their forces was made up of young students from Bogotá who came disobeying the instructions of the party elite (Bergquist 1973, 242). On the other hand, the National Army, prepared with enough provisions and newly recruited conscripts from Boyacá and Antioquia, crushed the Liberals and inflicted them a series of defeats that restricted their actions to the territory of Santander. However, the Army did not take any decisive initiative to destroy the Liberal armies in the region, giving the Liberals a chance to regroup.

Besides the problems with supplies and weapons, there was a deep divide among the Liberal generals; Herrera and Uribe Uribe had made clear that they hated each other (Bergquist 1973, 282). Given that neither of them wanted to compromise, they chose to

follow a more elderly commander, Gabriel Vargas Santos, who was a veteran of the wars of 1876 and 1895. Given that the Liberal party was already divided between those who wanted peace and those who wanted war, this problem did not improve their situation at all, breaking down an already uncoordinated war effort. The Liberal militia that formed in Santander had no communications with the guerrillas formed in other regions, such as Tolima, Huila or the Northern coast; the rebellion was breaking apart before its first victory.

When General Uribe Uribe failed to retake Bucaramanga after the victory of the government, he and his troops mobilized north, and in December 15 engaged in another battle in a bridge over the river Peralonso, in the northern part of Santander. The Liberal militias emerged victorious thanks to the inner conflicts between Conservative generals, and assured a path to Cúcuta, the biggest city near the border with Venezuela. Besides the tactical advantages earned by this victory, Peralonso represented a big morale boost for the Liberal fighters, and gave general Uribe Uribe a level of prestige that worsened the already tense situation between him and the other Liberal generals (Martínez Carreño 1999, 97-99). After Peralonso, most of the rebel militias stayed in Cúcuta, waiting for a weapons shipment that never arrived, losing precious time while their allies of the rest of the country resisted against levies, war taxes, and selective confiscations of the government (Calderón Molina 2000, 18).

After a long delay, the Liberal militias gathered in the town of Rionegro, north of Bucaramanga: the plan was to keep going south, but near the city, they found the Conservative army, engaging in a battle that would change the course of the war. Between May 11 and May 25, both armed groups clashed in skirmishes in the plateau known as Palonegro, west of Bucaramanga. The Liberals, based in the town of Rionegro

and led by General Gabriel Vargas Santos had no clear plan, did not have the needed ammunition for their weapons, and not enough supplies, while their enemies, commanded by General Próspero Pinzón, had a strategy and enough supplies and weapons for the oncoming battle (Martínez Carreño 1999, 189).

What happened in Palonegro can only be compared to the long battles of the First World War: victory was not a matter of strategy, but of arithmetic, turning Palonegro into a meat-grinder that overshadowed not just the other battles of the War of the Thousand Days, but all the civil wars prior to it (Guerrero Apráez 2013, 568). By May 15, the Liberal militias stopped receiving ammunition, and started using machetes; there were no doctors, and the water supplies of the field were polluted, causing an epidemic of dysentery and cholera in both the battlefield and in the nearby urban centers (Naranjo Villegas 2001, 30-33).

The total amount of fighters fluctuated between 14,000 to 25,000 men on both sides, with approximately 1,500 to 4,000 dead and 5,000 wounded, mostly young farmers (Bergquist 1973, 298-299). Since there was no official census, nor were there doctors or bureaucrats in the aftermath of the battle, there is no certainty about the numbers related to the battle. However, it can be assured that an entire generation of working men died in this battle, just as a generation of students had died in the Battle of Bucaramanga before, crippling the economy of the region even after the survivors returned to their lands (Naranjo Villegas 2001, 34-35).

The situation of the region would become worse when the National Army of General Pinzón seized the momentum and marched to Cúcuta, hoping to sever the main communication route between the Liberal militias and their allies from Venezuela. In a siege that lasted from June 11 to July 15 of 1900, most of the city was destroyed, and

the affluent foreign merchants left for Venezuela, leaving Cúcuta in both material and financial ruin (Martínez Carreño 1999, 200-201). The siege also sparked an international crisis, as the defenders were supported by Venezuela, not just with weapons and food, but also with troops (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 294-295). Amidst the general unrest of the country, the issue of these alliances being considered treason became a strong argument of the government against the Liberal rebels.

After severing the main Liberal forces and their allies, the National Army had a chance to win the war; but just as the Liberals were paralyzed by the crisis of leadership among them, the Conservative party was also deeply divided. By July 1900, a coup by vice president José Manuel Marroquín deposed president Miguel Antonio Sanclemente, widening the already existing gap between the Historical and the National factions of the Conservative Party, bringing a new edge on the debates about the war. Marroquín and the Historicals allied with the Liberals who wanted peace, promising them negotiation and political reform, but ended up giving the office of minister of defense to Aristides Fernández, the narrow-minded chief of police of Bogotá (Bergquist 1973, 304-305). Instead of pursuing negotiations, Marroquín and Fernández strengthened the laws against rebels, sentencing all men who fought against the State to death, either by firing squad or as conscripts for the National Army (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 359).

The measures installed by Fernández had the objective to end the rebellion and to defend the true government and the true religion against those that wanted to destroy them. Such narrative was marked with the kind of intransigency instated by the Syllabus of errors, and used religion to justify his actions against the Liberals (Martínez Carreño 1999, 141). This made the war go for a longer time, and confirmed the view of the Liberals of a tyrannical government that did not seek peace, but the eradication of its

enemies, causing them to go forth with the same mentality of obliteration, though with fragmented armed groups and without a clear strategy.

The Liberal militia had lost its chance to walk into Bogotá as an organized group, moved to the Caribbean coast, taking Sincelejo and Tolviejo and tried to regroup in Magangué, a riverine town in the lowlands that worked as a strategic point between the coast and the inner Andean regions. Between September 21 and October 4, 1900, the remnants of the Liberal militias fought in a series of skirmishes against the National Army, but was defeated when the battleship 'Colombia' took over the river harbor with its superior armament that included heavy cannons and a machine-gun (Botero Palacio and Botero Campuzano 2005, 64-78).

What happened at Magangué solidified the separation of the militias between those who traveled with Herrera to the Pacific coast and then to Panama, and those who went with Uribe Uribe to the Caribbean coast, leaving behind the Andean guerrilla groups on their own (Botero Palacio and Botero Campuzano 2005, 55). These 326 Liberal guerrillas fought mostly from Santander, Tolima and Cundinamarca, continuing the armed struggle in their regions without being recognized by the larger armed groups, much less integrated to their strategies (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 103). The decentralized struggle between the guerrillas and the National Army ravaged the country side and pushed the central administration into fiscal ruin: from 1900 to 1903, the struggle between these groups and the government became an essential part of the war.

The guerrilla phase of the War of the Thousand Days cannot be understood as just one conflict between two factions, but as a war on many fronts that ended in a stalemate between a weak government and a myriad of armed groups that did not use the advantage they had to seize power (Martínez Carreño 1999, 123). This stalemate

was not something static, but a series of strikes that did not change the balance of the war and only worsened the brutality of all actors: each massacre only confirmed the fears of both the State and the rebels, and took away the control that the party elites once had (González 2006, 75).

The government was aware of the chaotic situation, and in January 14, 1901 it proclaimed a decree that justified the prosecution of guerrillas as criminals, not as rebels. Guerrilla commanders who did not surrender in thirty days and continued to sustain their forces through forced loans and expropriations would be considered authors of robbery and leaders of criminal bands. All those who bought these goods, or gave donations would be considered accomplices, and would be confined in the prisons of Cartagena. These measures did not stop the guerrillas nor their supporters, and by February the government decreed that sentences for murder, theft, assault, property damage, and other crimes could be executed immediately without the need of a trial (Bergquist 1973, 332-334).

Instead of defusing the conflict, these acts of brutality made more people support the guerrillas, and by May 1901 these groups were at its peak; from there on the push from the government only caused them to dwindle (Robles 2015, 61). No matter how strong they got, guerrilla groups represented a clear threat to social order, and there was an implied agreement between party elites to disavow and persecute these groups as much as possible. However, given their knowledge of the terrain and their quantity, guerrillas could only be starved and persecuted instead of destroyed right away in military action (Calle Meza 2006, 132).

Perhaps the only group that could break the brutal stalemate was the militia led by General Herrera, which did establish a foothold in the urban areas of the regions of its

influence: Cauca and Panama (Caballero 1982, 86). By January 1902 Herrera had secured territory in the south west of the country, and moved to Panama with enough personnel and supplies to carry on with a successful campaign in the isthmus: besides a disciplined army, he also had a division for intelligence gathering that gave him an edge over the Government forces in Colón and Panama City (Caballero 1982, 101-102).

However, these military operations also threatened the interests of the United States, that had deployed its Marines to protect the railroad between Panama City and Colón, which ran parallel to the works of the Canal (Bergquist 1973, 368). Panama was the most isolated of all Colombian provinces, and it had gained international attention because of the construction of the canal sponsored by the United States. This territory had its own problems, which led to the creation of an indigenous guerrilla movement lead by Victoriano Lorenzo, whose motivations were less about party politics and more about the abuses perpetrated by white and mestizo leaders of the region (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 100). Though the situation in Panama was complex, its international importance didn't allow this territory to fall into bankruptcy, unlike the rest of Colombia.

The chaos provoked by the War of the Thousand Days only benefited the speculators, who negotiated lands and contracts with the State under great advantages; the country sank into an even worse economic crisis, caused this time by the lack of production and the financial disorder provoked by both inflation and speculation (Vanegas 2015, 163). Because of the war, the government approved a decree that allowed the National Bank to print as much money as necessary, and bring back the retired bills. This put 847 million pesos in circulation, causing massive inflation and a severe drop in the price of the Colombian Peso compared to the English Pound, the common international currency of the era (Correa 2009, 175).

These economic problems caused the government to consider the possibility of dialog and amnesty. By 1902, after years of chaos, the government stood between the intransigent position of Aristides Fernández and the slightly more flexible position of President Marroquín. On March, Fernández claimed that only repression could end the war (Martínez Carreño 1999, 210), but by June of the same year, President Marroquín presented a decree proclaiming an amnesty for all those who had rebelled against the state. However, this amnesty did not include those who had allied themselves with foreign countries battle Colombia, such as Rafael Uribe Uribe, Bejamín Herrera and the soldiers of the main Liberal militias (Rodríguez Gómez 2016)

The actions of the National Army, the guerrillas and the militias became more and more desperate and atrocious as 1902 progressed. The much-needed peace was negotiated with the two main Liberal militias, with Uribe Uribe signing the treaty of Neerlandia in November 5, and Herrera signing the Treaty of Wisconsin in November 21 (Bergquist 1973, 387-388). Neerlandia ended the war in the Caribbean coast, and Wisconsin, signed on the USS Wisconsin, property of the United States, ended the war in the territories of Panama, freeing the territory necessary for the construction of the canal.

The situation with the guerrilla fighters, however, was much more complex: since the Liberal leaders had disapproved them, and there were so many, there was no way in which the government could conduct negotiations with all of them. The rebels had no easy time returning to their lands: many died after having their passports, killed by government troops as traitors. Some only returned to see their lands deserted and their fortunes stolen by the government, having to move to another city; others had to pass days in jail because of local conservative officers who did not recognize the treaties

(Rodríguez Gómez 2016, 360-363). As the case of Victoriano Lorenzo shows, the war of guerrilla fighters did not end with the negotiations of Wisconsin or Neerlandia, but with the punishment the government reserved for bandits and common criminals: execution (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 100).

The war ended with approximately 80,000 military casualties in a country of four million people, either through combat or illnesses, with no statistics of refugees or civilian casualties (Martínez Carreño 1999, 211). Though it had won the war, the Conservative government fell from power in 1903, thanks to the efforts of general and then dictator Rafael Reyes: the victorious government had to face generalized ruin, massive debt, inflation and a lack of production that forced the country to import food or face starvation (Calle Meza 2006, 81). The loss of Panama in 1903 was an epilogue of the war, and though it was the most dramatic of the consequences of the war, it was not the worse of them all.

The exclusion of many Colombians from their own nation was the most devastating and real consequence of the War of the Thousand Days. The allegiance to the nation was seen through the allegiance to a party, and so the belonging to the imaginary community of Colombia was exclusive for those who belonged to the same political faction. This identification with the party passed from father to son as a common identity marked by narratives of insults and revenges that had to be executed. This also strengthened the clientelist subordination of the low classes to the party elites, which caused more inequality and a delayed recognition of the needs of the many (González 2006, 79-80).

Thirty years later, in a region where many veterans of the war had properties, Liberal politicians enacted their revenge against the conservative farmers and owners of

the land. What followed in that small region of northern Boyacá and eastern Santander was a series of massacres and uprisings that served as a prelude of La Violencia (1946-1958) (Guerrero Barón 2007, 183). To understand this development, it is necessary to analyze not just what happened in the war, but who were the ones taking part in it.

### Social Elements of the War

The War of the Thousand Days was the biggest of all the wars of nineteenth-century Colombia, not only in terms of human loss and economic setbacks, but also regarding the scope of military actions and the development of new war strategies. It was the last war of Colombia in which the rebel faction used militias instead of guerrilla groups, and the last war in which the partisan elites were involved as military commanders. It was also the first conflict that wanted to annihilate the enemy instead of just subjugating it (Calle Meza 2006, 68). All in a country amidst a terrible economic crisis and without either a comprehensive road or communications network.

Though there were two factions at war, three types of armed groups participated in the war: The National Army of the Conservative government; the Liberal militias; and the guerrilla groups. The first two can be considered 'regular' armies, since they had uniforms, a clear organization and fragile yet clear supply chains. They also had politicians and literate men among their ranks, making communication and gathering of information easier. Since the leaders of these two groups were part of the political elite, their justifications were based on ideals like the homeland, freedom, the republic, democracy and the rights of the citizens (Abel 1984, 2). The motivation of the soldiers also aligned with their party identity along with their personal interests, desire for wealth, and influences beyond their control (Tovar Pinzón 2001, 163).

Even with the ideological support given by the Conservative Party and the Catholic Church, the government was not able to form an Army of just volunteers: in fact, most government soldiers were conscripts, gathered from their hometowns without any warning (Bergquist 1973, 267). These men, aged 15 to 60, were forced to fight for the 'Church and the Legitimate government' (Robles 2015, 74-75), were given little training or attention; some of them were Liberals who deserted to the guerrillas soon after their deployment, others were simply farmers who did not want to fight and some were Conservatives who volunteered for the Army. This combination of origins and motives worked against the morale of the military, a problem that was reinforced by the lack of education of the officers.

Even though the National Army was supported by the policies of the Regeneration, most officers were selected not by their military expertise, but by their devotion to the party and its ideals (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 35-36). These were men without formal education, but with experience in other civil wars like the rebellion of 1895: this was not a problem exclusive to the government, for this was the only kind of formation offered to Colombian militiamen of both parties. However, it is necessary to point out how economic crisis and the inefficiency of both Liberal and Conservative governments worked against the founding of a military academy in Colombia.

In this context, Government Generals such as Isaías Luján, Manuel Casabianca, Vicente Villamizar, and Próspero Pinzón were not only non-professional officers; they also led an army composed of poorly equipped volunteers and conscripts. They compensated this with their own unity of purpose: even if the Conservatives were divided in the Historical and National factions, the generals rallied under the leadership of Casabianca as War Minister and Pinzón as General in chief of the Army in the first

period of the war, and under Aristides Fernández after the 1900 coup (González 2001, 111). Though their political differences still existed, they were put aside to combat the rebellion; this unity of purpose gave the Army a tactical advantage over their divided enemies.

The National Army had another advantage in its legitimacy as the agent of a government; thanks to this it could access supplies, information and weapons through regular channels. The government could negotiate with arms dealers upfront, and obtain international credits to pay for the weapons (for example, the shipment of decommissioned but functional Gras rifles bought to the government of France). These weapons were heavy and long, with accuracy mechanisms that needed basic arithmetic knowledge to be used, a dire problem in an army of mostly illiterate men (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 203). However, the government also procured a steady supply of ammunition by using both international credits and by having its own network of roads across the mountains.

It was this legitimacy of the government that benefitted the National Army: the use of telegraphs, for example, was a unique asset of the government, as was the access to money to pay for spies and messengers. It also allowed it to negotiate on the same ground with governments such as those of Venezuela, Ecuador, and most importantly, England, France, and the United States.

If legitimacy was the strength of the National Army and the Conservative government, the lack of it was the biggest problem for the Liberal rebels. Though the Liberal militias were not part of any foreign nation, they had the support of the governments of Ecuador, Venezuela and Nicaragua as part of a 'Liberal International' that sought to overthrow the Conservatives in Colombia. This support was supposed to

be an advantage, but became a problem when the government used it to undermine their cause, saying that this alliance was proof that the Liberals were traitors against the homeland and therefore could be sentenced to capital punishment (Deas 2001, 128-130).

Liberal armies depended on outside support to obtain food and weapons, as they had failed to secure their own hidden weapon caches from the last civil war. Farmers and landholders donated what they could to help these armies, but this only garnered the unwanted attention of the government, along with its war taxes and confiscations. However, since most of these men were volunteers, or at least men who followed their landlords and patrons to war, there were less problems of desertion and morale. But this proved useless against the lack of weapons, the limited supplies and the deep problems of the Liberal leadership.

Unlike their counterparts, the Liberals could not mend the rifts between their factions: it was not only the division between those who wanted peace and those who wanted war, but also the differences between leaders and their followers. The greatest Liberal Commanders, Benjamín Herrera and Rafael Uribe Uribe, loathed each other and tried to undermine their successes, sabotaging any attempt to unite their forces. The leadership of Gabriel Vargas Santos, a man that had been fighting for the Liberal party since the war of 1860, was a smokescreen that covered the lack of communication between the generals; its lack of unity proved fatal in the battle of Palonegro.

During and after this battle, the Liberal faults became glaring mistakes. Barely having enough weapons, food or medicine, the Liberal militias did not have the chance to travel through the main roads of the Andean region. The little infrastructure that existed in Colombia was not available for the use of the Liberals, given their lack of numbers and

of personnel capable to use telegraphs, fix roads or manage spy networks (Martínez Carreño 1999, 117-118). However, their worst mistake was the choice of not using the guerrilla groups as military assets.

Guerrilla groups, just like the Liberal militias, depended on the donations of local allies, but since their influence was mostly local, the quality and amount of supplies they could get was significantly lower. To compensate for this, guerrillas had to loot from the Army, from conservative farmers and from local landlords, squirming in the limit between political struggle and common banditry (Oviedo Arévalo 2013, 67-69). Guerrillas relied on women for medicine, food, laundry, espionage, and communications between different groups: ignored by the official stories of both parties, women were part of the war effort of all irregular armed groups regardless of their affiliation (Martínez Carreño 1999, 108-115).

Although they were afflicted by the same scarcity of weapons as the liberal militias, some guerrillas had access to the Austrian *Mannlicher* rifle, whose ammunition exploded after hitting the target with terrible physical and psychological effects on enemy groups. All guerrilla fighters had *machetes*, agricultural tools that were easily available and could be wielded effectively in the ambushes and night attacks, crucial for guerrilla warfare. Both the wounds of the *Mannlicher* and the tactics of the *machete* were exploited in terror tactics that crippled the capacity of the Army to act in regions like Santander and Tolima (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 205-206, 208-209).

Some groups, especially those in Tolima, had their strategies based on the 'Código de Maceo', a manual brought by General Avelino Rosas from Cuba, written by Antonio Maceo, a Cuban Independence fighter (Bergquist 1973, 339); the tactics of this code were based on ambushes, looting, and terror, and they worked to destabilize the

government, but they didn't give any way to keep control over the territories controlled by the guerrillas. Urban centers like Ambalema, Buenaventura, Rioacha and Tumaco could be taken by the guerrillas, but the lack of discipline and supplies made these victories short lived enterprises amidst more pressing war operations (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 47).

This inability to keep and control urban centers points out the critical problem of all irregular armed groups: guerrillas suffered from both the lack of professional officers of the government and the broken leadership of the Liberal militias. There was an excess of untrained officers, and the ranks were confusing and led to tactical problems (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 50-51). More than the weapons, supplies and tactics, it was the lack of clear organization, which led to the defeat and subsequent extermination of the guerrilla groups. Heterogeneity proved to be their stronger point, but also the main reason of the groups' demise.

There were, however, Conservative guerrillas: irregular groups that acted like paramilitary cells alongside the National Army. The sources only point out at a very specific form of organization, one led by priests such as the ones of Father Ordóñez in Cachirí, Father Renderos of Boavita, Father Domínguez, of La Uvita, and Father Herrera of El Espino (Martínez Carreño 1999, 141). The existence of this groups points out to a topic that permeated the war and should be analyzed as its own element within this narrative: the role of religion in the War of the Thousand Days.

## Religion in the War of the Thousand Days

Within the complex and large context of the War of the Thousand Days, the actions of the Catholic Church and its members were anything but homogenous. Most laypeople in Colombia, no matter their political sentiments, were Catholics, and the immense power of the Church over the social fabric of the country made it a ubiquitous institution. However, this large scope of operations also pushed forth the possibility of many types of actions: geography, formation and personal goals interacted in a way that allowed priests to range from the most intransigent to the more reconciliatory types, a continuum that can be exemplified by bishops Ezequiel Moreno y Díaz and Bernardo Herrera Restrepo.

As the Bishop of Pasto, Moreno y Díaz governed one of the most traditional dioceses of the country, during his administration Pasto became a haven for priests that were against the Liberal government of Ecuadorian president Eloy Alfaro, such as Pedro Schumacher, Bishop of Portoviejo (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 308). In his writings, as well as his sermons, Moreno y Díaz equated Liberalism with Satanism, as Liberals were imitators of the rebel Lucifer: Catholics had to defend themselves against their attacks, as any sort of rebellion against the conservative government was also against Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, Bernardo Herrera Restrepo Archbishop of Bogotá had a more conciliatory position; though he cannot be considered a progressive priest, at least he did not exacerbate the violent situation of his time. He condemned rebellion under the terms of peace, and calmed the zeal of men such as Aristides Fernández and his allies in the College of San Bartolomé (González 2006, 72). By 1902 he called for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, an enterprise that finished with the construction of the Basilica

of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, also known as '*Basilica del Voto Nacional*', as a symbol of reconciliation of both parties and the consecration of the Nation to that holy icon (Cortés Guerrero 2001, 188).

Within the ideological continuum that had these men as the prime examples of its extremes, priests from all over the country acted in different ways, depending on the region they were from. Those from the regions where the War ravaged the land, such as Tolima, Boyacá and Santander, and those from traditional conservative regions like Nariño, were far more belligerent than those from the Caribbean or Bogotá. Some priests, as those described in the last section, took weapons and joined the government effort as paramilitary leaders; using the same rifles and machetes as the Liberal guerrillas (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 320-322). Though most of the clergy did not join this kind of military operation, their alliance with the Conservative party made them the perfect spokespeople of the government.

Though there is little to no information about the military actions of the priesthood, violence is explicit in the of discourse that the Church brought during the hostilities. Perhaps not all of it was as belligerent as the ideas of Ezequiel Moreno y Díaz, but there was little else that the Church could do during those dire times: the sermon had a prestige that could be hardly denied in those times, and it was used to call to arms, as José Calderón described to his descendants about the 'special mass' brought to his hometown of Pitalito in November 1899 (Calderón Molina 2000, 55-56).

Though there is no other evidence of this, there is proof that the National Army had war chaplains who were treated as any other war prisoner by the Liberals (Martínez Carreño 1999, 142), and used prayers to Jesus or Mary before the battles, or even as battle signals (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 168). Religious discourse of the time not only

belonged to the priesthood, but also to the government officials, like Aristides Fernández or General Próspero Pinzón, who both claimed that they were defending the legitimate government, as well and religion, and their victories were caused by the protection of the Divine Providence (Bergquist 1973, 299;378). The devotion of Conservatives surpassed the official discourse of the Church, and it solidified the mixture of politics and religion that branded the Regeneration; the lines between political and religious discourse were blurred, and rebellion against the government became not just a matter of security and policy, but of religious morals. It is in this precise point in which politics, religion and war combined to create a model of conflict that transformed all wars from the Thousand Days onwards.

## V. RELIGION, POLITICS AND WAR

It is easy to understate the weight of Catholicism in nineteenth-century Colombia: priests were crucial social actors in the lives of citizens of all classes, registering their lives, administering their social welfare, and overseeing their education. For most rural Colombians, especially those from the Andean regions, the Church was the one of the few institutions with contact to the wider world, one that unlike the networks of commerce, was more open to those who were not wealthy (Abel 1984, 98-99).

No matter their political allegiance, Colombians of the time were overwhelmingly Catholic; religious debate focused on how the Church should relate to the State and vice versa. What started as a debate on policy became tangled with religious discourse as the Conservative Party allied itself with the Church; when it came to power, both the Church and the State used one another for the consecution of their goals, a system called Regime of Christendom (*Régimen de Cristiandad*) (Cortés Guerrero 2001, 173; 189). This regime had its roots in a version of Colombian national identity and, combined with deep inequality, created a cycle of conflict that solidified in the War of the Thousand Days.

### Catholic Identity and National Identity

Considered to be one of the main points of contention that caused the War of the Thousand Days, the Constitution of 1886 was written as an expression of the realities of Colombian people, a “codification of the thoughts and desires of the nation”, as stated by then President Rafael Núñez (Bergquist 1973, 26). Catholicism, the religion brought by the Spanish Empire, was a pillar of social order and part of the national identity: to be

Colombian was to be Catholic and follow the spiritual authority of the Church, and vice versa.

This concept of Colombian identity legitimized both the power of the Conservative Party and the privileges of the Church; politics became ratified by religion, and religious discourse was amplified in politics. The Liberal party, traditional opponents of the Conservatives, were considered enemies of the Church thanks to their actions during the 1863-1886 period, and therefore, their power was considered spiritually illegitimate. In the discourse of the Regeneration, socialists, liberals, atheists and freemasons were merged as one group that wanted to destroy the Church and the legitimate government: an enemy that was everywhere, and that needed to be defeated no matter the cost (Adarve Calle 2012, 152).

This reasoning falls flat because of its own implications: Regeneration politics claimed that Colombia was Catholic, while the Conservative party presented itself as the defender of the Church. Catholicism was equated to both Colombian and Conservative identities, but not all Colombians were Conservatives, and it is there where all problems began, because this logic made Liberals outsiders inside their own Nation and within their own Church.

The story of José Calderón is a clear example of what could happen when this logic was used; as a Liberal and a Catholic, Calderón found himself alienated thanks to the discourse of the Church, and went off to fight in the Liberal guerrillas until the end of the War of the Thousand Days (Calderón Molina 2000, 58). The spreading of this logic across the Colombian territory can only be understood when matters of education and communication are considered.

With a massive illiterate population, the kind of discourse that could prevail over this logic was circumscribed to the affluent classes of the larger cities. Besides, political discourse was limited to the traditional parties, not allowing any other option to participate in the debate; the press was limited by geography and resources. Church sermons, on the other hand, were everywhere, since the parish priests had a more constant way to communicate that did not need any kind of literacy to be understood (Fontecha 2009, 16).

Though the Mass was in Latin, the sermons were in Spanish, making them an effective way to communicate and legitimize ideals under the banner of religion. Sermons against the Liberal party or supporting the Conservative party were an important part of the debate before and after the War of the Thousand days: if the citizens were Catholic, did this mean the Church could interfere in politics, telling the citizens whom should they support? Liberalism claimed that it should not have this amount of power, and limit itself to the sphere of private spirituality, while Conservatives considered that since the Church had the objective of leading people to their true happiness, they had the right to guide people regarding their political choices (Cortés Guerrero 2001, 180).

This complex debate was an integral part of a narrative of Colombian history where both parties had different versions of the actions of past governments. The problem was that there was no system of acknowledgement of the faults committed to the other side, neither after the civil wars nor after the periods of political upheaval. On a practical level, Colombian society had a system of 'forgive and forget' that tried to erase the memory of the problems instead of its causes (Rodríguez Gómez 2016, 324-325), a

system that did not impulse the political elites to seek a real solution to the problems that affected the country.

What this empty forgiveness fostered was a need for retribution that made the debate over the scope of religious power within political discourse not a dialog over policy, but an argument where only the loudest voices prevailed. The fact that the War of the Thousand Days started as a reaction of a bellicose sector of Liberalism against the policies of a bellicose sector of Conservatism works as an example not only of this problem, but of how it perpetuated itself through time.

This also points out to the solution to the problem of Colombian identity in the nineteenth century: the development of a binary system in which political identity was greater than national or religious identity. Only those of the same party could be considered good citizens, and only those aligned with Conservatism could be considered Catholics (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 375). This final equivalence of Catholicism and conservatism alienated Catholics that considered themselves Liberals and gave the Conservatives tools to legitimize violence under the guise of defense of moral and religion.

Such false equivalency not only worked with laypeople, but served to strengthen the alliance between the Conservative party and a specific sector of the clergy that did not object to their actions. The priests in Panama and the Caribbean who solved problems with Liberal militias through dialogue, as well as those who protested the conscription of farmers by the government were ignored, and in some cases attacked, by the two belligerent parties (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 319-320). The image of the Church as united was not tarnished, and to keep it in its pristine state, the Ecclesiastical

hierarchy allowed the Conservative government to control it, an action that was censured when the Liberals had tried to do the same.

The Concordat, a document approved by the Vatican that gave the Church many privileges, also allowed for the President to veto Bishop candidates, giving him and his party influence over the Colombian Church. As for the War of the Thousand Days, this mechanism benefitted the Conservative party and the most intransigent elements of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Other factions, such as the Liberal party and the progressive clergy, could do little: Liberals would not ally with the Church for that would break their principle of a secular society, and the Church did not want to dismantle its image of perfect unity by going against its allies.

In the long run both the State and the Church used each other for their own purposes, consolidating their power. This also meant they consolidated the social, economic and political inequalities that were the base of that power while muddling the boundaries between religion and politics. Just as in Colonial times, the power of God and the power of the State were intertwined. And just as in Colonial times, this helped to both compensate the mistakes of the State as well as keeping the social status quo.

### Politics as Religion

Catholicism was ubiquitous in Colombia; everyday life was organized by the toll of the bells of local churches, where births, deaths and marriages were registered. Every neighborhood had a parish, and in territories that were not yet integrated into the nation, such as the Amazon basin and the Eastern Plains, the Church was the only institutional presence, instead of the State. Besides having a great amount of illiterate population,

Colombia was also a country isolated because of its geography and its lack of economic development; very few had the means to know what happened elsewhere, and those who did had to face another type of isolation.

The elite classes of nineteenth-century Colombia did not know their own reality. The war and conflicts of the nation were seen as the same phenomena of other countries: the formation of the 'Commune of Pasto' by Bishop Manuel Canuto Restrepo y Villegas to counter the efforts of the Commune of Paris serves as an example of this kind of perspective (Ortiz Mesa 2011, 108). This also meant that wars were not made against exterior enemies, but against those inside the nation, and that the culture of Colombia did not receive major influences besides those that were already inside the territory.

Isolation and the ubiquity of religion in everyday life created a special way to understand political conflict; political power was coopted by the educated elites, kept under a heavy blanket of ignorance and clientelism. Within this model, there was not a clear limit between religion and politics, and while political debate centered around the idea that religion became politicized, it was the other way around: in the nineteenth century, Colombian politics became like religion.

What happened in Colombia during the nineteenth century is very different from other problematic situations that relate religion with conflict. Colombian conflicts were not religious per se, but their narrative cannot be understood without considering the religious themes that saturate them. These religious tropes worked as assumptions in the background of all conflicts: the original sins that cannot be forgotten, the war against evil, the evil nature of the enemy, and the search for salvation. What was in stake was not just policy or power, but the moral core of the nation.

This situation was not a theocracy, nor it was a complete takeover of religion or religious institutions by the State, but an alliance of like-minded factions to consolidate power. To have a better grasp of it, it is useful to use one of the few theories that relate politics and religion: the model of political religion stated by Italian scholar Emilio Gentile, that works as an explanation for the totalitarian regimes of the first part of the twentieth century.

According to Gentile, totalitarian regimes bring what he calls 'political religions', since they depend on dogma, deification of a party, and the imposition of a cult of personality and social commandments (Gentile 2006, 12-13). Totalitarian regimes such as Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union wanted to eradicate heterogeneity and replace it with political homogeneity of the governed, who should be morally united by their faith in the totalitarian religion. Myths centered on the birth of the nation, as the new regime sells itself as a glorious rebirth where every person can now transcend under the glory of their country.

Totalitarianism mimics religion, it syncretizes itself to religious traditions, or as in the case of the regime of Francisco Franco in Spain, it positions itself as part of a National Restoration effort. Religions of politics are invasive, although they bring meaning to the lives of those who are vulnerable after economic or political crisis. However, they are short lived, as either generational change or pressure from the exterior can make them crumble. Though useful to unite a country, especially one without strong institutions, political religions tear down the social fabric after they have been implemented, making them a short-term solution that creates long-term problems.

This system is useful to understand the kind of political fanaticism that possessed Europe after 1918, but its scope is limited if it used to understand nineteenth-century

Colombian politics, especially after the Regeneration. Even if it had Totalitarian tendencies and methods, Colombia had not fallen to dictatorial governments as other countries of Latin America: though the power was concentrated in a small segment of the population, there were elections, as well as a distinctive lack of militarism and nationalism.

Though it pushed for a national Regeneration, the Colombian Conservatives lacked the desire to create a new type of person, yet shared the desire for homogeneity that Gentile attributes to political religion. His model cannot respond to this kind of situation where a still democratic government allies itself with a traditional religious institution, and both of them use the other to secure their power. Gentile can answer questions about Totalitarian States, but his theory is not enough to understand the formation of the "Authoritarian and modernizing State with a Constitutional facade" in Colombia (Calle Meza 2006, 43-44).

There is no doubt that political power in Colombia was religiously sanctioned, to the point where Mass included a prayer for the Republic, the President and the Authorities. By allying itself with the Church, and by creating a system where the Church took over some duties of the State while being controlled by it, the Conservative party brought religion to politics, and in doing so transformed the political establishment along the lines of religion, a stronger cultural force than political debate.

Within this system, political hierarchy was the basis of a clientelist system fostered by the constitution, in which the President and his party had the exclusive right to appoint governors and mayors across the entire country without counting with the people of the other party. Political parties were not structures of affiliates, but of clients that gave party membership and narrative, as an inheritance to their sons (Fontecha

2009, 10). To be part of the party was the only way to participate in the repartition of the State, and therefore, the only path to political and social significance (Guerrero Barón 2007, 19).

Just as the Church was the administrator of Sacred Truth, the political parties were the only administrators of power; no other association could have their share of power. The way in which political power worked was not through militarism, but through the rule of law, which in the practical sense meant the rule of Lawyers: a 'Constitutional Messianism' based in both the emphasis in the law inherited from the Spanish Empire and the continuous tradition of lawyers in power (Calle Meza 2006, 40) This allowed the status quo to continue through an antagonistic coalition, where the elite members of both the Liberal and the Conservative parties were against each other but indirectly cooperate by maintaining a state of war, where both could claim dividends (Munkler 2005, 114).

With the concentration of political power, along with the issues of political identity discussed before and the ubiquitous presence of religion in Colombia, it is possible to understand the development of political belief as a crucial part of conflict. The ideals of both Liberalism and Conservatism were barely known, but the deep-seated faith in the part and its struggles was very real for those who fought in the civil wars. Both Conservatives and Liberals understood their struggle in terms of religion and morality instead of intellectual debate (Jaramillo Castillo 1991, 313-314).

This created an atmosphere in which manifestations against Conservatism became manifestations against religion and therefore part of a dangerous problem that needed a violent solution (Guerrero Barón 2007, 23). This level of violence was answered with the same amount of force, destroying the relations between neighbors and regions. Only by understanding these issues of party politics as a matter of faith can

explain the testimony of Vicente Rangel after the slaughter at Palonegro: “It is enough to say that we fulfilled our duties on the battlefield with the passion, enthusiasm and determination accumulated in the 20 years, [we acted] as good Liberals. Nothing else” (Martínez Carreño 1999, 174). This faith on the values and the story of a political party, along with inequality and violence, created the foundation of a cycle of conflict that was perfected in the War of the Thousand Days.

### The Cycle of Conflict in Colombia

There are six stages within the cycle of conflict in Colombia: the presence of political grudges, the crisis that makes violence erupt, the war itself, the period in which the war consumes the resources of the nation but not destroy it, the threat to the status quo and finally, the period of negotiations between the elite groups that foster new grudges amidst the population.

The creation of grudges responded to the inherited stories of both sides. Conservative partisans learnt about the Confiscations of Mosquera and the policies of Radical Liberalism, while Liberals learnt about the Syllabus and the restrictive policies of the Regeneration. In the same fashion, these stories justified acts of vengeance as necessary actions that had to be enacted to avoid repeating the stories told. As explained before, this stage had everything to do with the construction of partisan identity in Colombia, and therefore answered to a logic of exclusion and violence. These grudges could keep quiet for a while, until a crisis in the country made people look for someone to blame: a scapegoat.

The social mechanisms that act here can be understood under the memetic theory of René Girard: two people are close to each other, and desire the same things,

from this desire arises conflict, which is solved with the death of a scapegoat (Girard 1986, 134). This model is unseen, yet woven into the social fabric of civilization, and it shines in moments of crisis, where social differences are weakened. It is crisis that brings forth the need for a scapegoat, for the narrative of desire, conflict, and death has already been established in the underlying narration of both myth and history (Girard 1986, 14-15).

In the specific case of Colombia, crisis could come in different forms, but just like violence, it was expected, thanks to a system of inequality and poverty. With an economy based on the exportation of commodities and a fragmented internal market, monetary crisis was inevitable. As for politics, the landscape of unsolved grudges and exclusion only needed an incident or a series of incidents to generate a political crisis. As there was no way in which common folk could participate in politics, violence became the most effective option for the disenfranchised to solve their issues, often against one another. Poverty and illiteracy made them powerless, so they would be easily manipulated or silenced according to the will of the main two parties.

After the spurts of violence came the conflict itself. Colombian civil wars started as regional conflicts and then spread across other areas: the war of 1859-1862 started when Cauca, Santander, Magdalena and Bolívar rebelled against the Conservative government of president Pedro Nel Ospina (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 293); the war of 1876-1877 started as a Conservative rebellion in Cauca and engulfed both this region and Antioquia (Guerrero Apráez 2013, 564). Ironically, this type of war could only be compared with those such as the Thirty Years' War in Europe and the 'New Wars' in Africa and the Middle East, when economic inequality made possible the appropriation of the State by either one or two belligerent groups (Munkler 2005, 10).

Colombian conflicts came to the point where they could wreak havoc among the population, yet they never came to a point of no return regarding the destruction of the country. War was waged to get the main bounty, power over the State; and there was no point in earning decisive military victory if that meant this bounty would be useless. No party wanted to rule over a heap of ashes and rebuild a whole economy from nothing; instead they led each other to a state of economic exhaustion where only negotiation between the two warring parties could be held. Generally, only the governing party and its opponent would be part of the negotiations, but because of its scope in both military and territorial terms, the War of the Thousand Days introduced two new actors in the conflict, as well as another stage in the cycle of conflict: a threat to the status quo.

Both guerrilla groups and international actors played a role in this war. The Liberal guerrillas were a dire sign for both parties, for their existence meant that their clientelist structures were compromised, giving different sectors of society voice through violence. Though their chance to triumph was uncertain, they were a clear and present danger to those in the government. Fortunately for them, the guerrillas were not able to secure a place of power, and were relegated to the place of bandits within the traditional narrative of the War of the Thousand Days, taking away their chance at political legitimacy by means of their illegal status. The other actors, namely the foreign governments that influenced the war, did not have the strength to invade and challenge the political status quo of Colombia. All except one: The United States of America, who had clear interests in Panama.

The negotiations phase had to deal with these new elements, besides of the usual conciliation between the two political parties. As described in the last chapter, the negotiations with the guerrillas were minimal, for they were considered bandit groups,

barred from all political standing. As for the foreign governments, most of the possible international crisis were averted when the governments withdrew their aid to the Liberal rebels or, as Venezuela, had to face their own inner turmoil (Robles 2015, 77). The situation with the United States was dramatically different, and the negotiations in the USS Wisconsin were done out of fear for the consequences of an American invasion in Panama, a clear possibility given the presence of the USA Navy in the area (Cortés Guerrero 2016, 284). The Treaty of Wisconsin removed the risk, but the separation of Panama in 1903 cemented American power in the area.

However, even with these new elements that challenged the status quo, the negotiations were still based on the principles of forgive and forget, with the added ingredient of ignoring the guerillas and their pleas. The executions of rebels were common, and point out at the incomplete nature of the negotiations: the war stopped, but the reasons that caused it were not addressed. The threat against the status quo was eliminated, but a new layer to the narrative of revenges was added to the first and last stage of the cycle: the presence of political grudges. Now combined with the knowledge of both the inner and outer threats to the status quo: the cycle changed in subsequent conflicts, but the basic structure that was laid down during the nineteenth century was perfected, via assimilation of new elements, in the War of the Thousand Days.

And it is there, in the first and last stage of the cycle, as well as in the historical foundation of this cycle, that religion can be found. The narrative of grudges amidst two groups of basically the same population became irreversible in the moment in which debate started to be seen as an intrinsic problem of faith, rather than an intellectual challenge. The War of the Thousand Days changed the story of conflict in Colombia, but within the structure of conflict itself, it just represented a transformation from the wars

between armies to the conflicts among many armed factions. By assimilating the pressure of guerrillas and international actors, the cycle of conflict continued in the ways of narrative and identity, solidifying exclusion and creating scapegoats out of the victims of said exclusion. As *La Violencia* (1948-1958) would later show, this new development was more subtle and dangerous than ever before.

## CONCLUSIONS

The War of the Thousand Days was not an isolated conflict, but one in a streak of many. Therefore, it cannot be understood completely in its own terms, but as a part of a longer, more complex process that entangled politics, war, and religion in a whole ethics of conflict, and a way to face and narrate the history of a whole nation. Besides these, there is another factor that, though overlooked for this thesis, permeates it all: oblivion, as in the opposing force of historical memory.

There are no great monuments, nor history books nor a sense of belonging of the narrative of the War of the Thousand Days. Palonegro, the site of the most important and bloody battle of all the civil wars, is known not because its historical significance, but because of the airport built over the former battlefield. There, a lonely monument stands, conflicting with the sharp and modern lines of the terminal behind it. Though only an example, it points out two phenomena: the dissociation of Colombia with its own history and the obliviousness of the nation regarding its core components.

The history of Colombia does not belong to the Colombian people: traditional historiography, taught in schools, is a long story of blood and boredom, of pictures of generals and their fights over the war spoils of governmental power. The stories of the forefathers and foremothers who went to war are seen as unimportant details of the larger narratives of great men. This chronic problem of oblivion guarantees that the cycle repeats itself, and it also makes crucial issues to melt in the background of everyday life, matters overlooked because of their omnipresence.

Scholars of nineteenth-century Colombian history are as aware of religion as a fish is aware of water. The Concordat of 1887 between the State and the Catholic Church organized and ratified the already existing combination of religion and politics

into the fabric of everyday life. The Church kept the records of those who lived and those who died, made marriages official, oversaw public education, and was an integral part of both rural and urban life. Catholicism was omnipresent, and its influence was so strong that could be easily overlooked under the erroneous perception that religion was confined to the actions of the priesthood and the walls of the Churches.

Another impression that this work had to struggle with was the idea of a monolithic Church, and the different ideas that circulated between the Church in Rome and the Church in the regions of Colombia. There are many questions left unanswered about the particularities of the Church and its members: The Concordat gave the President power to veto Bishop candidates, which created a situation where only Conservative Bishops could be appointed, eliminating the chance of a Church hierarchy that worked against the State and the elites that controlled it. Once more, obliviousness fueled a worldview that ignored the nuance of reality and produced a cycle of violence based on revenge, poverty, and inequality.

The main purpose of this work and its formulation of a cycle of conflict sheds light into what has been thought as obvious. It also points out the necessity of new studies that focus more on the historical elements that are taken for granted, as well as a new perspective that seeks to formulate its own theories from the data, instead of making the data fit into a theoretical apparatus. The situation in Colombia is so complex and deep that it needs its own framework, one that can dispel the mists of oblivion from the mind of Colombian people, and make them the protagonists of their own history.

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