

Introduction

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Abstract: *In this introduction, we intend to pay attention to the educational work carried out by different creeds, because this constitutes a particularly privileged point of observation from which to analyze the ways in which different religious institutions and communities related to the idea of nationhood and to the policies of nationalization promoted by the states. On the basis of these questions, we focus on two Latin American countries, Argentina and Uruguay. Although they followed different paths in terms of their construction of a secular state, both were characterized by an ethnic, cultural and religious pluralism which was reflected in different initiatives in the field of education. Such diversity coexisted both in harmony and in dissonance with the nationalization projects that accompanied the modernization processes and were reflected in the teaching of nationalist values through public and private education by the incorporation of national flags and symbols as forms of patriotic pedagogy.*

Keywords: *Nationalism, Religion, Education, Secularization.*

Nationalism crosses through different political cultures, geographies and social structures in contemporary history. It had a moment of strong expansion at the beginning of the 19th century with the spread of Romanticism and developed further under the umbrella of western Imperialism at the end of the 19th century¹. More recent derivations can be seen from the Second World War onwards, when nationalism accompanied the liberation struggles during the decolonization process². Thus, it is a multidimensional phenomenon that lies at the heart of the transformations that have shaped the contemporary world. Within this framework, it has grown and strengthened its ties with many religious confessions, including Catholicism, historical Protestantism and Judaism. This dossier will analyze this problem through an ecumenical prism, with the aim of de-centering the overwhelming weight of Catholicism³. That does not mean ignoring the weight

¹ E. Hobsbawm, *Naciones y nacionalismo desde 1780*, Crítica, Barcelona 1991; Id. - T. Ranger, *La invención de la tradición*, Crítica, Barcelona 1987; O. Dan - J. Dinwiddy, *Nationalism in the Age of French Revolution*, Hambledon Press, London 1998; O. Zimmer, *Nationalism in Europe 1890-1940*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2003.

² J. Breuilly (ed.), *The History of Nationalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013.

³ R. Di Stefano - J. Zanca, *Iglesia y catolicismo en Argentina. Medio siglo de historiografía*, in «Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia», 24 (2015), pp. 15-45, available on <https://revistas.unav.edu/index.php/anua>

of Catholic religion in Latin America, nor the role it played in the construction of Latin American nations during the 19th and 20th centuries – it is plain enough when looking at the history of some of the main Marian devotions, such as that of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico or Luján in Argentina⁴. However, in this dossier we are interested in changing, at least in part, the observation angle. As some of the articles gathered here will show, Catholicism has ended up making the role played, for example, by Protestant churches and some voices from the Jewish community, invisible even when both were active participants in the nationalization processes at the beginning of the 20th century.

Accordingly, we intend to pay attention to the educational work carried out by different creeds, because this constitutes a particularly privileged point of observation from which to analyze the ways in which different religious institutions and communities related to the idea of nationhood and to the policies of nationalization promoted by the states. In other words, focusing the discussion in the educational realm provides a particularly useful point of view to think on relations between nationalism, education and religion, where social actors and state agents, values, communities and religious institutions, national symbols and liturgies, and also pre-existing or invented traditions intersect. On the basis of these questions, we focus on two Latin American countries, Argentina and Uruguay. Although they followed different paths in terms of their construction of a secular state, both were characterized by an ethnic, cultural and religious pluralism which was reflected in different initiatives in the field of education. Such diversity co-existed both in harmony and in dissonance with the nationalization projects that accompanied the modernization processes and were reflected in the teaching of nationalist values through public and private education by the incorporation of national flags and symbols, in general as forms of patriotic pedagogy.

Our dossier brings together a set of studies that delve into different experiences which both reinforce some of the consolidated interpretations on this subject, and at the same time take debate further on. The studies relating to Argentina focus on different experiences that were the result of mass immigration that arrived in that country from the late 19th century onwards: on the one hand, the Salesians, an Italian Catholic religious order that found in the 19th century a wide field for its social work in Argentina; on the other hand, diverse Protestant and Jewish groups that grew widely and favored the formation of a more pluralistic society, both socially and religiously. Susana Monreal's work on Uruguay can also be included here, as it focuses on another religious order tied to immigration, the Hermanas del Huerto, active on both sides of the Rio de la Plata. Such pluralism soon aroused strong prejudices, however, since, although political elites bet on immigration since the mid-19th century because they saw it as a factor of civilization and progress, they soon discovered that those same immigrants were also a source of concern, insofar as they encouraged the growth of the working classes and, therefore, increased

rio-de-historia-iglesia/articulo/view/1918; D. Mauro, *Debates en la historiografía del catolicismo argentino (entre finales del siglo XIX y el peronismo)*, in J. de la Cueva Merino, *De la Historia Eclesiásticas a la Historia Religiosa. Estudios en homenaje al Profesor Feliciano Montero*, Uah, Alcalá 2018, pp. 153-171.

⁴ On this subject R. Di Stefano - F. Ramón Solans (eds.), *Marian Devotions, Political Mobilization and Nationalism in Europe and America*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2016.

social conflict. The “national question” began to be conceived as a dual strategy of integration of the masses and of forced cultural homogenization through civic rituals, the teaching of the national language and the introduction of diverse patriotic contents in the school system in order to forge an identity that would amalgamate them. Thus, cultural nationalism developed soon in Argentina, from the end of the 19th century onwards, especially among government agents who began to complain about the lack of immigrant nationalization. These immigrants included many members of the Catholic clergy, who arrived with immigration, sometimes preached in foreign languages and were not fully appreciated⁵. From positions that were still clearly cosmopolitan and Eurocentric in the beginning of the period here discussed, a more reactive nationalism emerged which in turn was nourished by a Catholic Hispanism on the edge of the 20th century.

The dossier opens with an article by Nicolás Moretti on the creation of the Pius X College of the Salesian congregation in Córdoba (Argentina). The work shows how Salesians encouraged the nationalization of their students, mostly from popular classes, through a set of cultural and sociability practices that involved students, priests, cooperators and also former students in an effort, as Moretti points out, «to transcend the institutional walls and appropriate public space, as a way to broaden the social consensus towards their work». Thus, Moretti provides valuable elements for understanding one of the ways in which Catholic nationalism has been built in Argentina. His work also makes clear that this construction was the result of the encounter between the global projects of the Salesian congregation, the dominant positions of hierarchies of the Argentine Church and the nationalizing initiatives promoted by political elites in both the national and provincial sphere, in a context in which the Catholic Church had a role of undoubted centrality, despite the important advances of laicism in the 1880s.

The articles by Silveira and Seiguer about different Protestant schools in Buenos Aires show, however, that this role of the Catholic Church was not exclusive. As Seiguer states in her study on the Evangelical schools led by Anglican pastor William Case Morris in the early 20th century, in certain circumstances Protestant institutions played a similar role too, and indeed received financial support from the state. Both Salesians and Evangelicals took care to make it clear to the educational authorities that their schools encouraged patriotism and social order. Although this support may have been less important in economic terms in the case of Protestant schools, its existence suggests that policies of nationalization were not incompatible with a certain religious pluralism, at least of a Christian nature, as long as they were institutions that contributed to strengthen the patriotic liturgies outlined by the National Council of Education. On the other hand, the crisis of Morris’ company in the 1930s, according to Seiguer, was due less to the strengthening of the links between the State and Catholic Church – as a hasty glance might suggest – than to the juxtaposition of a varied set of factors including the end of mass immigration of European origin, the impact of the economic crisis on sources of income and,

⁵ F. Devoto, *Historia de la inmigración en la Argentina*, Sudamericana, Buenos Aires 2003; Id., *Nacionalismo, fascismo y tradicionalismo en la Argentina moderna. Una historia*, Siglo XXI, Buenos Aires 2002; D. Lvovich, *Nacionalismo y antisemitismo en la Argentina*, Javier Vergara, Buenos Aires 2002.

above all, the relative institutional weakness of Morris' project, too centered on his own figure which was, therefore, irreplaceable after his death in 1932.

In the cases of St. Andrew's Scotch School (Presbyterian) and St. George's College (Anglican) studied by Silveira, there was no state support and funding came largely from student fees. Unlike the evangelicals led by Morris, their students originated mainly from the Anglo-Argentine community and, in the case of St. George's College, from the British and Anglo-Argentine elites in the country. Silveira shows how the impact of nationalization policies was especially felt from the second decade of the 20th century onwards, through a greater presence of state inspectors and pressures to strengthen the teaching in Spanish language and introduce patriotic liturgies, most clearly in the case of St. Andrew's Scotch School. The increased controls, however, did not generate major conflicts with civil servants, and the nationalization initiatives did not impose major restrictions on the Protestant education – Presbyterian or Anglican – provided by both institutions.

Therefore, seen as a whole, this set of articles suggest that the association between civilization and Christianity, which characterized Argentine liberalism in the 19th century along with the open immigration policies of those years, remained in place throughout the first decades of the 20th century and was at the very basis of the definition of Argentine secularism and the first forms of cultural nationalism⁶. Very different, of course, was the contrasting history of the Yiddish educational undertakings of the Jewish left in Argentina, studied by Nerina Visacovsky. Even when complementary to public education they were accused of propagating “dissolving ideologies”, considered “alien” to the interests of the nation. Far from the state support given to the Salesians or the Evangelical schools, the experience of the left-wing Jewish schools was harshly repressed by order of the national authorities on the 1930s. Teachers were often imprisoned, and the police even confiscated all teaching materials: magazines, books, notebooks and blackboards. This corpus, Visacovsky explains, was later translated into Spanish and formed the basis of the Repression of Communism Law approved by the Argentine Parliament in 1936. The fate of these schools, reaffirms, as shown by Seiguer, Silveira and Moretti, that the limits drawn by the project of nationalization of Argentine elites were more ideological and political than religious, in contrast to what Catholic nationalists used to assert pompously in those years⁷.

The Uruguayan case, on the other hand, followed similar paths to the Argentine one during the second half of the 19th century. As it is shown on the study on the Hermanas del Huerto studied by Susana Monreal, the national state encouraged

⁶ R. Di Stefano, *Por una historia de la secularización y la laicidad en la Argentina*, in «Quinto Sob», 15/1 (2011), pp. 1-31, available on www.scielo.org.ar/pdf/quisol/v15n1/v15n1a04.pdf; Id., *El pacto laico argentino, 1880-1920*, in «PolHis», 8/2 (2011), pp. 80-89, available on http://historiapolitica.com/datos/boletin/polhis8_DISTEFANO.pdf; D. Mauro, *Los “liberales” argentinos y la cuestión religiosa. El Partido Autonomista Nacional y los conflictos en torno al ejercicio del patronato en la década de 1880*, in «Ariadna histórica. Lenguaje, conceptos, metáforas», 5 (2016), pp. 45-67, available on <http://www.ehu.es/ojs/index.php/Ariadna/article/view/16132>.

⁷ For a debate on the limits to Catholic nationalism in the 1930s, see M. Lida, *Alcances y limitaciones del renacimiento católico en la década de 1930. Debates, conceptos e interpretaciones*, in E. Bohoslavsky - O. Echeverría - M. Vicente, *Las derechas en la Argentina del siglo XX*, Unicen, Tandil 2020, pp. 55-70; M. Lida, *Historia del catolicismo en la Argentina. Entre el siglo XIX y XX*, Siglo XXI, Buenos Aires 2015.

the establishment of religious orders of active life, especially on the educational sector, as they were seen as a factor of civilization and progress, and even as a vehicle for state consolidation. Although it is true that, as Carolina Greising asserts in her article, state controls on private education deepened from the 1870s and began to give rise to tensions and disputes, in no way did these conflicts stop – just as they did not stop it in Argentina – the exponential growth of Catholic education, mainly by the religious congregations that were continuously arriving at that time, where women played, as Monreal emphasizes, a central role.

The two countries paths nevertheless began to diverge in the first decades of the 20th century, as shown by Greising's analysis on the legislation discussed and sanctioned up to the mid-1930s⁸. The reasons for this bifurcation are undoubtedly diverse, but to start with one must pay attention to the contrasting hegemonic ideas that the political elites on both sides of the Rio de La Plata had on religious matters. As the articles by Moretti and Seiguer suggest, while in Argentina the nationalization policies promoted by the state gave a prominent place to Catholic religious institutions – and to a certain extent also to Protestant ones –, in Uruguay, the nationalization policies were built, as Greising shows, by encouraging a civic religion based on a secular morality that did not reserve any significant place for any faith. Likewise, in political terms, the emergence and strengthening of *Battlismo* during these decades placed the project of secular education at the center of the political agenda and gave shape to a nationalism based on an idea of civic morality contrary to the deepening of the religious aspect. Meanwhile, the path followed by the leading part of Argentina's ruling classes made Catholicism a major ingredient – although instrumental rather than essential – in the nationalization policies promoted by the state.

In sum, this dossier invites us to think about some of the ways in which nationalism was articulated with the state, educational policies and different religious confessions in order to achieve a nationalization of the masses in increasingly complex, multiethnic and diverse societies. The efforts to make them uniform soon produced tensions and conflicts. Both countries combined, in different doses, secularist policies with openness to immigration, but they finally discovered that those decisions taken from a cosmopolitan and modernizing point of view were difficult to reconcile with the needs and sufferings of emerging working classes – also multiethnic and complex – which could become “dangerous classes”. Faced with these circumstances, ruling elites in both Argentina and Uruguay made education one of the fundamental tools in their attempt to attenuate this diversity in order to achieve a more uniform national identity. As we have seen in the Argentine case, Catholicism held a privileged position, unlike in the Uruguayan case, but it did not nevertheless become exclusive. There was also support – even economic funding, in some cases – for other religious actors as long as their projects contributed to homogenize society, consolidate social order and spread the ideas of nationhood⁹.

⁸ On this subject, see D. Mauro, *Catolicismo y secularización en Argentina y Uruguay. 1900-1950. Perspectivas y debates para una historia comparada*, in «Anuario», 28 (2016), pp. 5-14, available on <http://anuariodehistoria.unr.edu.ar/ojs/index.php/Anuario/article/view/184>.

⁹ Translation review by Dr. Paula Seiguer.