



CLERICAL IDEOLOGY IN A REVOLUTIONARY AGE: THE GUADALAJARA CHURCH AND THE IDEA OF THE MEXICAN NATION (1788-1853)

by Brian F. Connaughton

ISBN 978-1-55238-608-8

THIS BOOK IS AN OPEN ACCESS E-BOOK. It is an electronic version of a book that can be purchased in physical form through any bookseller or on-line retailer, or from our distributors. Please support this open access publication by requesting that your university purchase a print copy of this book, or by purchasing a copy yourself. If you have any questions, please contact us at ucpress@ucalgary.ca

Cover Art: The artwork on the cover of this book is not open access and falls under traditional copyright provisions; it cannot be reproduced in any way without written permission of the artists and their agents. The cover can be displayed as a complete cover image for the purposes of publicizing this work, but the artwork cannot be extracted from the context of the cover of this specific work without breaching the artist's copyright.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: This open-access work is published under a Creative Commons licence.

This means that you are free to copy, distribute, display or perform the work as long as you clearly attribute the work to its authors and publisher, that you do not use this work for any commercial gain in any form, and that you in no way alter, transform, or build on the work outside of its use in normal academic scholarship without our express permission. If you want to reuse or distribute the work, you must inform its new audience of the licence terms of this work. For more information, see details of the Creative Commons licence at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU **MAY**:

- read and store this document free of charge;
- distribute it for personal use free of charge;
- print sections of the work for personal use;
- read or perform parts of the work in a context where no financial transactions take place.

UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU **MAY NOT**:

- gain financially from the work in any way;
- sell the work or seek monies in relation to the distribution of the work;
- use the work in any commercial activity of any kind;
- profit a third party indirectly via use or distribution of the work;
- distribute in or through a commercial body (with the exception of academic usage within educational institutions such as schools and universities);
- reproduce, distribute, or store the cover image outside of its function as a cover of this work;
- alter or build on the work outside of normal academic scholarship.

2

Imperial Spokesmen for Regional Interests

The Clergy and Government of Guadalajara in the Colonial Period

Imperial Plans and Regional Energies

Over the course of the eighteenth century, New Spain experienced the growing regionalization of "economic spaces" in the hands of local elites. Alejandra Moreno Toscano and Enrique Florescano have described the regional consolidation of Guadalajara within this larger setting. Regional competitors grew stronger in the face of Mexico City, which attempted with mixed success to rule over the whole territorial economic space of New Spain. Guadalajara exercised progressively larger influence over an important portion of western Mexico. As the seat of an *audiencia* and an extensive diocese, Guadalajara was already a legal and administrative center, and now it expanded its economic and cultural role.¹

New dynamics in Spain favored the strengthening of Mexico's regions. In fact, the goal was to break them away from their old colonial center, Mexico City. In general terms, the objective was to produce a commercial renewal of Spain based on the promotion of Spanish agriculture and industry. Manufactures in particular were to be destined for the American market, which itself would grow due to the greater prosperity produced by the development of regional resources. To this end, the idea was to encourage in the Americas the mining of precious minerals and large-scale agriculture for domestic and export markets. Even



subsistence agriculture was to expand, through the redistribution of excess lands to indigenous communities and higher-ranking casta groups. The desire to effectively carry out this great transformation led Spanish authorities to consider how regional government in America could be made more effective. As a result, the interests of the affected regions would have to be promoted.²

The new drive was set within a larger, clearly military effort at imperial defense. Since the 1760s, there had been interest in fortifying regional interests in northern New Spain. This meant defending them from foreign attacks by building a stronger socio-economic basis for military power. This turned out to be a difficult task. But it involved the Guadalajara region from the beginning, with the outfitting of the port of San Blas for supplying the population of California and Sonora. Shortly afterwards, artisan industry began to grow. The causes were the war in the Atlantic and its interruption of overseas commercial flows, along with the growing regional population. Both commerce within the region and exports outside the region expanded. The traditional linking of regional growth to the livestock market of the center of the country – and to the power of Mexico City – weakened. The agricultural market of Guadalajara grew stronger along with the population increase, and local manufactures expanded dynamically.³

The policies of Charles III produced hopes that this expansion, in good measure spontaneous and without state direction, might continue. The death of the monarch in 1788 led to a certain ideological reading of the situation on the part of the Guadalajara elite, encouraged by new Intendant Jacobo Ugarte y Loyola and members of the traditional high clergy. To understand this, we should stress that, by this time, New Spain had been administratively reorganized, with the creation of the system of intendancies and a centralized military command on the northern frontier [*comandania general de las provincias internas*].⁴

The new situation also brought territorial adjustments to Guadalajara. The intendant of Guadalajara assumed clear military functions and proceeded to organize militias at strategic points across his territory. The new intendancy of Guadalajara gave clearer administrative definition to the territory under the economic sway of the city market. Nonetheless, the financial interests of the capital reached beyond these new limits. The founding of a merchant guild in 1795, six years after the effective organization of the intendancy, officially reasserted the supraregional role of Guadalajara by



establishing its control over the entire territory of New Galicia. Similarly, the Royal and Literary University of Guadalajara, created in 1792, exercised effective power over the enormous hinterland of New Galicia, and not merely over the immediately neighboring territory of the intendancy. The *audiencia* consolidated its broad jurisdiction, and the creation of the mint in 1812 should be seen as an additional sign that the scope of Guadalajara's influence was more New Galicia than Jalisco proper.⁵

There was already talk of a new viceroyalty in the north of New Spain, and Guadalajara figured among the proposed capitals. The region was on the road to consolidation, but its exact future course was not yet clear. Invoking the legal framework of a viceroyalty for social life meant looking to the past, since this was a Hapsburg administrative form, not a Bourbon one. But this call was sparked by what was in many respects a radically new situation for New Galicia. In addition, the creation of a viceroyalty need not eliminate the system of intendancies as a mode of political organization subordinated to the new Viceroy. It could well be an instrument to make the future government of the new entity more viable. If so, the new regional force of Guadalajara would draw most of northern Mexico towards it, creating a parallel with the traditional reach of the viceroyalty of New Spain.⁶

The Elaboration of a Regionalist Ideological Discourse

No single movement proposed a political platform and socioeconomic project for the future of Guadalajara, its immediate surroundings and larger hinterland. The elements that, bit by bit, would make up the vision of local interests and their project for the future became clearer over the course of the period under study. Before 1821, the clergy played a noteworthy role in the ideological formulation of this growing regionalism. The clergy had a forum for their ideas in the pulpit and the printing press and were subject to almost obligatory consultation in forging new directions for the political and socioeconomic development of the area.⁷

There was not yet any insuperable opposition between the clergy and the state, much less between the clergy and society. The ecclesiastical corporation, an entity inherited from the Hapsburg era, attempted to adjust itself to demands for change and saw an effective means of contributing to that change in the new



Bourbon approach to reform and transformation. For the regionalism that was taking shape, Bourbon efforts to shake up the Hapsburg regime seemed to augur a brighter future. It was not immediately evident that the prosperity foreseen would put the ecclesiastical corporation in check. Enlightened absolutism promised to carry out the necessary change without meddling in thorny questions of political power. Growth promised greater incomes — not only for individuals and the state, but also for the Church itself. With greater rents, the corporation could set its course for the future, increasing its presence in education and other activities of public benefit, as well as broadening its missionary efforts in the far north. Trimming away what was worthless about local tradition, and speeding up the flowering of what was best about it, seemed to constitute a clear mandate in Guadalajara. Here, love of the land was linked to support for its growth and regional consolidation. Reformulations did not seem to imply annihilating the old regime, but rather gradually improving it. Since there was no clear boundary between promoting local interests and new Bourbon measures, tradition was not opposed to modern ideas about the state, or to the architects of its transformation.

Thus, it is not surprising that leading figures of the Guadalajara priesthood fervently lined up behind eighteenth-century reformist policies. While these policies reached their peak during the reign of Charles III, they only produced powerful effects in the intendancy during the reign of his successor. After the change of the guard, examples of this kind of ecclesiastical thinking abound. In 1789, Doctor Gaspar González de Cándamo, canon of the cathedral, saw an opportunity to preach on the Bourbon reforms in his sermon honoring the recently deceased Charles III. He took advantage of the moment to favorably sum up the policies of Charles III and suggest that similar reforms be applied to New Galicia. The printing of the sermon, which ran to forty-six pages and a one-page errata, preserved for posterity the force of hopes for change and for political, intellectual and economic progress awakened by the government whose future was now uncertain due to the change of the throne. In the first six pages of his sermon, González de Cándamo found a way to remind his parishioners that they had received great benefits from the monarch, who had concerned himself with the well-being of his vassals and had always been guided by the recognition that “the love and trust of subjects are the only solid foundation for the duration and prosperity of empires.”⁸



In his speech, which was called a sermon although it did not touch deeply on any religious theme, the vigorous priest made clear that Charles III always strove for peace in order to "attend in its midst to the sole, solid, and true prosperity of his dominions, which he saw as his first obligation." This was necessary in order to straighten the erroneous ways of Spain over the past two centuries, since the death of Charles V. Because it had erred so tremendously in its government policies, this country

... which from the times of that Charles, who made himself obeyed and respected by the entire world, to those of his great-great-grandson Charles II, had fallen from the summit of power and opulence to the depths of weakness and misery, had fought in continuous and extremely costly wars in the days of Philip V, and had barely begun in the brief years of Ferdinand VI to lay down the foundations of its true happiness, when Charles III took in his hands the reigns of government.⁹

Canon González de Cándamo was now coming to his point. He immediately painted a portrait of a desolate Spain whose decline Charles III had come to conjure away:

Agriculture decayed, the countryside half-depopulated, industry fully lost, commerce in the hands of foreigners, the arts of all kinds ignored, and the sciences treated mostly in uncultured style, and nearly reduced to stubborn and useless disputes: witness the state of the Crown of Spain when it was placed on the head of Charles III.¹⁰

What was behind the agricultural misery of Spain? González de Cándamo pointed to the price control on grains and the defense of extensive grazing lands for the ranchers of the Mesta. These made agriculture expensive and stagnant. He declared that it was the wisdom of the statesman king which had overcome these difficulties, and along with them, those which had blocked the profitable exporting of grains. Old canals were widened and new ones were opened. At the same time, the difficult colonization of the Sierra Morena was carried out, leaving the area in the hands of "the simple worker, the industrious artisan, the man of honor and integrity, agreeable to the eyes of God and useful to the King and the Fatherland."¹¹

Charles III brought industry and commerce, those "two foundations of true riches," back to life in Spain. With this, he proved



that Spanish character was not made up of “laziness, idleness and slackness.” The “danger of the utter ruin of the Fatherland” and the dependence of Spanish consumption on imports were conjured away by the new monarch along with the mistaken system of government which Spain had followed for more than two centuries. Appropriate care was given to “the mechanical arts,” and this encouragement revived them. Textile factories managed to recover the markets of the peninsula and the Americas, and “all branches of industry grew greatly in [just a] few years. The means of subsistence increased, and with that, the population, which is the principal foundation on which the prosperity or misfortune of states is built.”¹² The canon declared:

Neither can commerce flourish without agriculture and industry providing material for its flows, nor can agriculture and industry endure, if they are not animated and enlivened by commerce, which for that reason is rightly called the soul of the republic and the life of states.¹³

To promote commercial interchange, Charles had opened new roads, pursued bandits, managed “to reduce and correct the coin to a single minting,” increasing the circulation of money with the founding of the National Bank of San Carlos, upheld the value of royal debts, facilitated and cheapened mercantile exchange, and impeded the clandestine flight of precious metals. He pushed for the improvement of old guilds and founded new ones in many places, while more effectively uniting Spain and the Americas by establishing maritime mail service. Even more importantly for the Americas, González de Cándamo argued, Charles had broken Cádiz’ monopoly over commerce with the dominions of the New World, a measure accompanied by the suppression of some taxes and the reduction of others. There was a strong push for overseas navigation: more goods were carried and the cost of sending them dropped. “The Royal Tribunal of Mining was created in these domains, and the price of mercury had previously been lowered, all towards the goal that a greater abundance of fruits and metals give a rapid push to commerce to the common utility of Spain and the Americas.”¹⁴ In addition, a greater human freedom was added to the free flow of goods:

Shortly afterwards, he removed from the necks of the unhappy inhabitants of the New World the heavy yoke under which they had



groaned in exhaustion, the barbarous and tyrannical custom which – in opposition to the liberty nature itself gives – had demanded of the miserable Indian that he sell the sweat of his brow to those who held the authority to value it as they pleased.¹⁵

Looking on the reaction that Charles III's reforms had drawn from monopoly interests and their allies as "worry and ignorance," the cathedral Canon comforted himself and assured his parishioners that "justice will prevail over cunning, and the son of Charles III will confirm and even extend the providences of his August Father." Undaunted, he turned immediately to the accomplishments of the King in avoiding war in Africa and Europe which, along with his creation of the Royal Philippines Company, had advanced commerce on all three continents. He quickly reviewed the King's promotion of the fine arts, including the creation of the San Carlos Academy in New Spain, from where "lights will reach these far-off provinces."¹⁶

As for the sciences, he asserted:

Charles opened the doors which *worry and ignorance dressed up in the cape of religion* had kept under double lock. Light came in, and shadows melted away immediately. The universities were reformed. Those endless disputes which had been virtually our only occupation, in which entire centuries had been wasted without advancing a single step, began to be looked upon with disdain, and the straight path that leads to truth was taken.¹⁷

Modern philosophy was cultivated. Theology was renewed by direct consultation with primary sources. The study of canon law was based on the history and "discipline of the Church." Public and national law replaced the preoccupation with Roman tradition. Oriental languages were positively valued, and natural history, chemistry, minerology and metallurgy were introduced, "sciences which were more important than any others, not to say indispensable, for the prosperity of the state." Similarly, botanists and naturalists were sent to the Americas to learn of "its mostly unknown wonders."¹⁸

As González de Cándamo drew nearer to American shores, near the middle of his speech, he apologized to his parishioners for going on at such length. Then the fearless Canon continued with his summary of what was most important about the regime of the deceased King. He celebrated the attack on vagrants,



beggars and the idle, the good government and cleanliness of cities, and the increase and enlightenment of the army and navy which had been achieved “without damaging agriculture or industry.” Among the new administrative arrangements, the King had “increased the number and staff of all the ministries of every judicial court in the Americas.” But more than all these wise and prudent measures – and many more similar ones – Charles had known how to fulfill the role of a monarch. He had shown this by declaring that “all the earthly tragedies that could befall me would affect my heart less than the unhappiness of my subjects whom God has entrusted to me.” The Canon’s voice boomed: “O words worthy of being etched in marble for the instruction of sovereigns! Come, Kings, understand your obligation, you who rule this earth; learn the charge the crown brings with it.”¹⁹

Again and again he came back to this same question of the political direction of the reforms, which ultimately was a reflection of the exhaustion of the Hapsburg hierarchy and the new attention to producers and merchants. This new direction promised to bear great fruit. Charles’ convictions had smoothed the response to complaints, reforming abuses and dictating

... such enlightened policies. A new light seemed to illuminate Spain. A new sun seemed to have been born. And since we have made use of this comparison, allow me to make use of one more. Just as in the regions situated on the other side of the Tropics, the rays of the spring sun bring to life a nature half-dead from the rigors of winter, or *as in these lands where we live, the summer rains bring lushness and greenness to fields scored by long drought*, so the deceased King Charles gave new life and made his dominions flourish again, after they had been reduced to nearly the lowest state of listlessness and misery.²⁰

Before finishing, González de Cándamo would find a way to praise economic societies, to recall the royal foundation of hospices, hospitals, and colleges of surgeons, to take advantage of the suppression of the branding of slaves to mention again “the laws you are given by nature,” to claim once more that the government of Charles had been in keeping with “the sacred right of property, foundation of civil society,” to praise the personal virtues of the King, and to demonstrate that the monarch’s reforms of clerical abuses were due to his matchless zeal for true religion, including his establishment of the dioceses of Linares and Sonora.²¹



This very kingdom we dwell in can testify to the large sums spent on its shores, and to the difficult and most costly voyages that were made in order to extend ... [the Catholic faith] to the furthest reaches of new California.²²

All that remained for the Canon was the required closing prayer, which he fulfilled with half a page on behalf of "a King at last, who fulfilled exactly the obligations of his crown, searching by all means to exalt his peoples."²³

The banner of Enlightenment don Gaspar González de Cándamo raised up in Guadalajara would have a worthy sequel. When Bishop Friar Antonio Alcalde was consulted, on 25 August 1791, about the viability of establishing a merchant guild in Guadalajara, he entrusted the matter to the doctoral canon of the cathedral. He was to write a response representing the opinions of the highest ranks of the Church, including the dean and the cathedral chapter. The terms of the response he produced are interesting. It supported the idea of a guild, not only to resolve disputes between merchants but also to duly help its members to avoid personal bankruptcies and extend commerce. Guadalajara's role was seen not only in terms of its remoteness from Mexico City, but also in terms of the even greater distance from Mexico City of many other towns in New Galicia (that is to say, places within the authority of the *audencia*, and not only the *intendancy*, of Guadalajara). On this basis, it explicitly supported the petition for establishing a guild that merchants had made to the *intendant* of Guadalajara.²⁴

The document stressed the last part of this proposal:

The *intendancy* of Guadalajara, which other parts are subject to, has twenty-seven subdelegations, twelve mines, and taking into account the jurisdiction of the Royal Audiencia, no fewer than sixty-seven mines. This Diocese includes seventy-four positions for parish priests, seventeen *doctrinas* [mission parishes] and six *encomiendas* [Indian jurisdictions under the rule of individual Spaniards or Creoles], totalling ninety-seven.²⁵

The sales taxes from the city of Guadalajara and its dependent areas exceeded 200,000 pesos, considered a substantial sum. The functions of the new guild, the document continued, would encompass the promotion of commerce in New Galicia, which the guild of Mexico was incapable of adequately advancing due to



its greater commitment to “the vast territory of the archdiocese of Mexico and the dioceses of Puebla, Valladolid, and Antequera.”²⁶

With the guild of Guadalajara established, commerce will flourish in the interior provinces, the population increase recommended by the Sovereign will be achieved, many abandoned mines will be worked, many uncultivated lands will be sown, tithing will multiply, and the worship of the true God and the Catholic religion will be able to spread more easily among the barbarous Indians, all of which would be *useful to individuals and to the state, to the Church and to the King, which are the objectives that should be aimed for.*²⁷

The ecclesiastical hierarchy proposed that the guild dedicate itself to “promptly providing for the grave urgent public necessities of this city,” such as the introduction of water. This would also contribute to improving surrounding agriculture and reducing the harmful dust of the area, which was a health problem. The dust would also be reduced by the swift paving of the streets, which the new guild would undertake. Another problem peculiar to Guadalajara which the guild would fight against was the constant erosion by rain and deepening of ravines “which are nearly at the edges of this city.” New roads would be made and the existing ones would be repaired. Meanwhile, under the authority of the guild of Mexico, the indispensable bridges to ease coming and going from Lagos and San Juan had not been built, even though that town celebrated nothing less than the “most famous fair in all of this America.”²⁸

The natural industries of the region would be spurred by the establishment of the merchant guild of Guadalajara. According to the cathedral chapter, these industries included silver and gold mining, the production of dyes and paint, “curing of all kinds of leather,” and cotton and wool textiles. The idea of promoting the spread of these enterprises fit into a broader vision of the social question in the area:

As a result of these establishments, Indians of little wisdom will be instilled with taste and civility and will seek employment in work useful to themselves and the state. This will uproot from among the remaining people vagabond begging, the object of indignation, *in order to aid true poverty, the object of charity* ... because experience has proven in this city that when there are public works such as the royal palace, the hospital, the cigar factory and other private works



employing many workers, if those works cease for lack of materials, then beggars abound and from this comes much vagrancy which, even if it doesn't cause any harm, at least causes alarm. Factories also lead to population, because having something with which to support a family multiplies marriages.²⁹

The document closed with a mention of how the founding of the port of San Blas had spurred agriculture, industry, population and commerce. It also mentioned the increased contribution of Guadalajara merchants to the well-being of the local and viceregal public coffers and to the development of mining, agriculture and other economic transactions "regularly carried out only by merchants, doing without the support of ordinary *alcaldes* [magistrates], *regidores* [councilmen] and other officials employed in public works." Bishop Friar Antonio dispatched it to Intendant Ugarte with a separate note recommending that he trust in the "solid thinking" of the cathedral chapter. The Bishop added that the example of Mexico City should be taken into account, along with "the feelings of enlightened reason and policy, which recommend the distribution of utilities derived from any source among those places and peoples aiding in their collection." The Bishop explicitly stated that his support for the measure in question – the establishment of the merchant guild – derived from his love for his diocese.³⁰

Not all the manifestations of clerical support for the spirit and practice of Bourbon reforms were made with such zeal for delving into detail. Yet fitting occasions for expressing sentiments like the above were not lacking. One appropriate moment, for example, was on 10 November 1792, at the funeral for Bishop Friar Antonio de Alcalde, who had been in charge of the diocese since 1770 with the exceptional support of Charles III himself, as expressed in a 1788 message. Don Juan Joseph Moreno, the distinguished treasurer of the Guadalajara cathedral, was entrusted with preaching the sermon. In opposition to the defamations of those who had accused the late Bishop of greed and avarice, Moreno turned to detailing his work on behalf of convents, the poor and education in general, whose colleges and schools would show "the Christian and political benefits of such useful establishments."³¹ Moreno could not help but mention

[t]hat hospital [San Miguel] as ample and open as his heart, and so many other buildings in which sums have been spent from alms



distributed wisely, since they were directed to uproot idleness and larceny and to promote the arts, so that money might circulate among all the city's inhabitants by means of the close ties and dependence among them, and in this way the poor would have a means to aid those who were poorer.³²

According to Moreno, the Bishop had lived in dignified Christian retreat. But he had not lived in an "Anchorite retreat," since he rightly thought that "the day is for the public, and the night is for me".³³ Moreno reproduced Alcalde's own words again in explaining the emphasis placed on detailing the Bishop's charitable gifts – made, we might add, with a certain touch of modern philanthropy. It was necessary, the Bishop had said, "to avoid after my passing the malice which can emerge from one or more men who dislike the light but zealously love the darkness, and take to be true whatever their passion or imagination tells them."³⁴

It is significant and symptomatic that, despite the Enlightened current evident throughout these documents, the sermons leave room for some doubt about the support Bourbon reforms enjoyed on religious matters. Who was it who was tempted to associate new ideas and the eradication of clerical abuses with irreligion, in González de Cándamo's words, or to denounce Alcalde with calumnies, according to Moreno?

Locating the resistance to committed reformers without falling into their own polarized reading of the ideological situation is always a delicate business. Fortunately, we know of another sermon Moreno preached earlier, on the occasion of the two hundredth anniversary of Santa María de Gracia. Moreno celebrated then the "negative benefits" this convent had received, in contrast to the natural disasters that had affected so many other religious houses.³⁵ Then he asked, with emotional rhetoric:

How many monasteries of the religious orders have we seen suppressed in our own days? How many of the religious orders have we seen extinguished, abolished even in the memory of men, in these two hundred years? O God, unchanging and eternal in your Being! How great is the goodness with which you transmit a fragment of your sovereign attributes to living creatures who, by their very being, are walking headlong towards not being? Four are the religious orders confirmed by the Apostolic See which have been extinguished in these two centuries.³⁶



And the magisterial Canon of the Guadalajara cathedral enumerated the four orders in a side note: "That of the Jesuatos, that of Saint George *in alga*, that of the Jerónimos of Fiesoli, and that of the Jesuits." He immediately turned to how the convent of Santa María de Gracia had fortunately been founded as "a workshop of customs" and so the nuns had become "distinguished in human society." Here he balanced, then, the fear of the strong hand of reform with the implicit assertion that the Church and its various institutions could make useful contributions to human society.³⁷

To be sure, not all of the Church was ready to walk the tight-rope between reformist demands and its own corporatist interests. If we look forward, the ideas expressed in Spain by Friar Fernando Cevallos in 1812 and reprinted in Puebla in 1820 were kept alive in Guadalajara. Cevallos denied secular authorities the right to reform the clergy and invoked both Protestants and Rousseau to show that such attempts by the state lacked any foundation.³⁸ He defended the clergy's right to "inherit or receive inheritance," but he opposed clerical conscription in militias. He asserted that there was a large but not excessive number of priests in Spain, that the Inquisition was feared only "by those ready to sin," and that reform and discipline of the clergy could only be achieved by "provincial, or national, councils." Cevallos held the reformers of the state really to be traitors to the throne. For him, their gazes were primarily directed at usurping the Church's goods and jurisdiction. Yet clerical riches, which the Church held as "rigorous property," in reality propelled the economy.³⁹ The illustrious Bishop-elect of Michoacán, recipient of a doctorate from the Royal and Literary University of Guadalajara and well known in the area, had expressed more moderate ideas along similar lines on the matters of Church property and jurisdiction.⁴⁰

In between Moreno's insinuations and Cevallos' strong pronouncements, the Church had gone through difficult times. It had been forced to stretch itself in order to link its loyalty to absolute monarchy and reform to the defense of its own institutional and corporatist integrity. With the passing of time, the easy accommodation between old and new guidelines wore thin. Differences of opinion appeared, along with frictions between the representatives of old interests and the aims of the new royal bureaucracy and its spokesmen.

These tensions are barely evident in the pastoral letters and edicts of Bishop Alcalde, compiled and published by Alberto



Santoscoy.⁴¹ His first writings in this genre were dedicated to putting in order questions of chaplaincies, annual confessions by Indians and castas, and the observance due in towns and haciendas on religious feast days. One edict from 1773 dealt with a Bull by Pope Clement X, duly authorized by Charles III, which dealt with strictly religious questions of indulgences and confession.⁴²

Several of the later communications, from 1774, clearly did reflect the shared and delicate relationship between Church and state, as well as its particular complexity in this period of pronounced absolutism. Discussions of matters such as "lessening asylum" for prisoners who fled to churches, the Papal extinction of the already expelled Jesuit order, and the prohibition of clerical interference in the marriage of soldiers without a royal license, suggested strict adherence to state decrees. The renewed stress on the prompt fulfillment of religious obligations and the immediate suggestion of a state jealous of its authority, however noteworthy, did not yet seem to indicate a crisis. The overall emphasis on the throne and altar as social pillars supporting each other did not change radically.⁴³

Other writings appearing shortly afterward took up the subjects of the correct administration of confraternities, parish altars, incest in marriage and a general tour of part of the diocese. Clearly the extra-religious aspects of these missives pointed towards the Church's strong ties with civil society. And perhaps there was some indication of relaxed conduct by the latter, and reestablishment of effective Church control. For example, a 1775 edict condemned those who, in trying to marry close relatives, attempted to pressure the Church by means of "carnal mixing with their projected spouses."⁴⁴

Only after 1778 do certain themes become more notable in the Bishop's writings, and perhaps the beginnings of a slight change of tone can be detected. A 1778 edict transmitted the Royal Edict against recurring to the Roman Curia without first passing through the diplomatic channels of the Spanish Crown. Another message from 1779 detailed a dispute with "*alcaldes ordinarios* [magistrates], *alcaldes mayores* [superior magistrates], *corregidores* [governors], their lieutenants and other secular justices" over their right to consult parochial records. With the support of the Viceroy of New Spain, the Bishop managed to severely limit that right.⁴⁵

There was friction between the civil and ecclesiastical administrations. In 1778 the Bishop resorted to the King to change



customary protocol regarding religious practice on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. He considered the exposure of the "Most Holy Sacrament to the Vice-Patron" [the provincial governor] to be an unacceptable irreverence, which the King accepted. These frictions must have seemed like a sign of the growing uncertainty about the roles of the two bureaucracies. But the union of throne and altar was still in effect. Although it was especially careful and precise in citing the intentions of the civil authorities, a 1781 missive about the Church's cooperation in tax collection written on the occasion of a patriotic campaign clearly reproduced the long-standing cooperation between both hierarchies.⁴⁶

More noteworthy are the pastoral writings of 1782, which address apparent problems relating to "disorders in the administering of sacraments" and "the notable diversion and decline of tithing income in recent years." On the first point, interestingly, Alcalde indicated the high clergy's lack of control over a wide range of activities carried out by lower-ranking priests.⁴⁷ He wrote:

Having seen, with great suffering for us, how certain ministers ... who do not wish to expose themselves to the work of administering [sacraments and related activities] to which they are subject by force of the vows by which they were promoted to the holy orders, voluntarily separate themselves from administering [sacraments], with false pretexts of illness, or what is even more worthy of reproach, to demand greater earthly gains they move to other parishes, under their own authority, abandoning the parish priests they were employed with.⁴⁸

On the matter of tithes, the Bishop asserted that the problem "is mostly attributable to the carelessness [!] of many contributors, who refuse to pay what is appropriate on the crops produced on their haciendas, or at least hide part of their harvest, in order to decrease their contribution." The remaining writings from later years, however, returned to strictly religious questions, or were devoted to other instances of effective collaboration between the government of the Church and the government of His Majesty. In 1785, for example, the Bishop addressed the shortage of food and how to aid in relief.⁴⁹

Interestingly, some sermons from this period place particular emphasis on the mysteries of the faith, and show notable leanings towards Marian devotion. This gives the impression that



the Church was looking for a space of its own, over which it could exercise unquestioned power. Similarly, this suggests that the Church was aware of its own institutional weaknesses in terms of providing moral guidance for society. A greater emphasis on the purity of religious practice thus offered the Church possibilities of renewal. A greater integrity would prepare it for the changes in society.

One of these sermons deals with the “Eucharistic mystery.” Incidentally, it is dedicated to “the Indian nation, so enlightened as to be able to compete with all nations presently existing.”⁵⁰ The sermon promises to “mathematically” develop three points, in order “*to provide the clearest of ideas about the darkest of mysteries.*” This was the “sacrament of sacraments”: “God could give us nothing more, or nothing greater.”⁵¹

In the first point, the glories of transubstantiation – “the greatest of all the miracles divine omnipotence has worked” – were contrasted with its inability to yet win “from human liberty a perfect and rational obedience.”⁵² In the face of the invitation to men to renew themselves in Christ, that is to truly live as Christians, results were meager:

And what efforts have the sons of Adam made to destroy the old man, and to transform themselves into the new man, so that they could truly say, I live, but I am no longer myself, it is Jesus Christ who lives in me? On the contrary, they prefer instead to exert themselves by usurping from His Majesty what is so rightly his.⁵³

The second point emphasized the miraculous and absolute surrender of Christ to man. Yet man in his “indolence” had turned away from the fervor of ancient Christians, going so far as to not even voluntarily comply with the minimal demand of receiving the Eucharist once a year at Easter. Sadly, the priest indicated

[w]e unfortunately have come to a worn-out world in the depths of corrupted times, when it is not enough for ministers to go forth down streets and plazas, or to take every path and route across the fields, or even to climb up to a lookout post on the walls, to rise up and lift their voice from the fortress or the pulpit.⁵⁴



Faced with such a situation,

[i]t has become necessary for the Church, coming to terms with the average worshipper, to restrict such a strict obligation to only one occasion during the entire year. For this observance, the Church, even though it is a dove without bitterness, has found it necessary to use the strength of the secular arm [of the state], to wield the rigor of its censure, and to employ the loud racket of its outside jurisdiction *compelle intrare*.⁵⁵

In the third point, the symbolic functions taken up by the Eucharist can be seen even more clearly. These functions reasserted Christian thinking's objective of sacralizing and making transcendent man's social life, in addition to the question of individual salvation.

O sacrament of piety! O banner of unity! O bond of charity! The members [of the body] can hardly be united with the head, if they do not remain united themselves.

Why do you think that among such a variety of foods Christ chose nothing more than bread and wine as material for this sacrament? It is only because, as Saint Augustine and [Saint John] Chrysostom noted, bread is made of many grains of wheat, and wine is formed from the juice of many grapes, but they are so united and mixed that later on, no one could separate them. O symbol of charity! It is right that of all the mysteries of the Catholic religion, only the Eucharist rises up with the glorious name of Communion, that is, of *Common Union*. This is not so much because infants and magnates, the ignorant, the wise, the poor and the rich, the good and the bad, the weak, the blind, the lame, the crippled, the paralyzed, the leprous, all sit at this table without distinction, perhaps not even excluding lovers and madmen, as because, as the Apostle explained, all of us who partake of a single bread form a single body, without ceasing to be many: *multi unum corpus sanum*. That is why Eucharist in Greek is called *syntaxis*, that is, congregation, confraternity, or joining.⁵⁶



Proposing a way of thinking or living outside the framework of Christian tradition was not a step forward, but a step back. Directing himself “to the people,” this clerical thinker stated:

And you, Christian, recognize your dignity, and as a partner in divine nature do not try with crude actions to slip back into your ancient baseness and villainy. At all times keep in mind which Head and which Body you are a member of.... Let us expend all our possibilities, all our judgment and goods, to dedicate all our words, works and thoughts to the service of the Holy Eucharist. I don't know why all Christians do not become living flames which, fed continuously by the oil of all virtues, burn day and night waiting for this Sanctuary!⁵⁷

And all of this was a function of the sacrament whose memory should serve “so that we can never forget that immortal benefit which overcomes time.”⁵⁸

Seven years later, this same preacher gave another sermon (published only in 1798).⁵⁹ He began with a verse that beckoned to the public: “Do not then conform yourselves to the ideals of this age.” On the occasion of a young woman's profession as a Dominican nun, the preacher was able to take potshots at this “windstorm of an age,” and make a point of the uncertainties of salvation. In his eyes, the profession of the young woman left her “forever bound to Christian perfection.”⁶⁰

Oh, how many are the advantages you have over [those in] common states! Since they have no method to base their conduct on, nor daily distributions except those subject only to their judgment, they regularly fail to stand up for their virtuous actions, they easily give up on them, they pursue novelties, they shift shapes more than Proteus, and they are satisfied with nothing. Even among the exercises they do practice, they nearly always prefer the ones which conform to their complexion and humor to those which repel them. Even in the most hidden parts of the Sanctuary, they consult their personality, their ease and their very nature, which they would do better to mortify with actions more useful, or less fitting their natural leanings under such circumstances.⁶¹

The preacher pointed out that religious life, with all of the struggle it implied between Christian transcendence and the temptations of a more sensual existence, was no more nor less



than what the novice would face “in any other state or situation of life.” What the preacher found most terrible was that some, in their desire to surrender to the sensuality of earthly living and elevate it to an ideal, now attacked religious life precisely because of what it represented in terms of this ancient struggle of Christianity against immanence, and because of what it suggested about the difficulties of virtue outside of religious life.⁶²

Here are the sophistries with which the sons of the age, fascinated by the terrible aspect glimpsed in Christian conduct and religious perfection, use logic to discredit them. Not happy to fool their own indolence, they aim to delude others with their same vanity. Could this be believed among Catholics?⁶³

Finally, this was a matter of avoiding that “the torch of the good example be doused by a gust of any vanity” and of achieving “the consummation of the perpetual holocaust of the entire earthly man, which renews you for another, purely spiritual, life.” The preacher reminded them that if “each of those present fulfilled the obligations of their respective state,” all were invited to eternal bliss.⁶⁴

Three other sermons before 1810 were dedicated to the Virgin Mary in her avocations as “the Most Pure Conception,” “Our Lady of Guadalupe,” and “Our Lady of Refuge.” It seems significant that only the first of these sermons was published around the time it was presented to the public; the other two were not published until 1852. Their powerful invocation of the image of the Virgin Mary on behalf of the Mexican people may have seemed excessive.⁶⁵ The first, printed by the Zacatecan miners “as a testimony to their cordial devotion and with the greatest desire that this be spread as much as possible among all the faithful,” was the least likely to attack undesired tendencies in society or the state, since the miners’ devotion was evidently a tribute to the Church and its spiritual message. Even so, a few teachings could be underlined. Thus the knowledge of Mary’s miraculous exemption from “the ugliness and crude rub of guilt” of original sin was intended to move the public. It would be very bad “if after all this your spirit remained sterile.” The Christian purity of Mary should inspire other Christians to “purify our souls.” As for the miners, the abundance they had been blessed with in mining should be directed “as a gift to you, to the worship of God and the aid of the needy [so that] we might deserve the priceless prize of eternal bliss.”⁶⁶



Although the first sermon did not markedly advance its message of renewal, despite its focus on a mystery of the faith, specifically Marian devotion, the other two sermons – which were not published immediately – were able to go further. The sermon in honor of the Virgin of Guadalupe began by citing the Psalm that “no other nation has received so much good.” Right away the preacher declared that the issue to be addressed was “the most stupendous of the wonders on behalf of the American nation.” Through this apparition, the Mother of God had declared herself “your protector” and “come at last to declare herself in these countries as a doctor of the faith, as an apostolic teacher of the Gospel, as a strong column and unbreakable foundation of our holy religion.”⁶⁷

In this case, this was a “great mystery of clemency.” The preacher referred negatively to the pre-Hispanic and pre-Christian era, comparing it to a “contagious and pestilent poison with which the ancient serpent infected the provinces of this vast country.” But this was contrasted with the new protection Mary offered to Americans: “Rejoice! For you will soon be the chosen portion, the favored ones, the ransomed people, and the sole object of the caresses, attentions, and care of the Mother of the God of Mercies.”⁶⁸

America would defeat the temptation of sin, just as it had received the Gospel during evangelization, with special assistance from the Virgin Mary:

Who could doubt Most Holy Mary’s having spread in these countries faith in Jesus Christ, if he meditates seriously upon how observance of this very religion for more than three centuries has kept it beautiful, flowering, and always free of the malign attacks of dissent and heresy?⁶⁹

But things had to be taken further still. It was necessary to sacralize, to see the life of northern America sacralized, by the force of Marian intervention. This was coming soon:

How fortunate the natives or inhabitants of this happy soil, who Most Holy Mary did not disdain to visit, descending from the heights of heaven down to those whom she declared to be her children, enlightening them in the maxims and foundations of Christian religion, down to those whom she promised her favor and support near the shadow of that image of hers with which she



wished to bless us, down to those whom she filled at last with her gifts and graces, until she awakened the imitation and the envy of all other nations. To you it has been given for these and many other reasons to bear the glorious name of sons of Mary, and to reciprocate by fulfilling the corresponding obligations justly and faithfully. To you it has been given to serve as a model and example for all true devotees of this Great Mother and to prove, with your conduct and behavior, to be a living replica of the virtues she bequeathed to us in this image of her original eminence.⁷⁰

And lest anyone think otherwise, he drove home the point that this was no superficial matter. No, "she will throw [frivolous actions] away like stinking excrement, being in her judgment nothing more than an ingenious artifice of self-love." What was wanted was a purified religiosity, far removed from "corrupted customs" and in keeping "with the practice and exercise the Gospel prescribed for us."⁷¹

The invocation of a transcendence based on surrender to the Virgin in no way suggests that all was well in Mexican religiosity. Instead, it seemed aimed both at countering the lack of popular devotion to systematic and constant religiosity, and at avoiding the spreading of foreign influences closer to the secularizing thinking of Western Europe. The references to the latter kind of thinking indicate a fear that a new set of human values was being created. At the same time, the lack of religious devotion or observance by Mexicans was denounced as "indolence." The promotion of Marian devotion now offered to the practitioners of that imperfect religiosity a new, hardly intellectually demanding direction which was dependent on clerical guidance. The success of this orientation would cement an organic relationship between the clergy and other members of society, independent of the government and of new secularizing tendencies. Morality was based more on a well-directed will than on flawless conduct.

The third Marian sermon closed stressing that last aspect. It offered Mexicans the consolation of the Virgin as a "refuge for sinners":

Does the tyranny of bad habits, the violence of the passions, the ugliness of sins, and finally all the weight of inveterate vices, of bad inclinations, of ungratefulness and infidelity under which you have been so long groaning, not leave you any breath for raising your eyes to the heavens and looking there for your remedy? Then know, says



Saint Bernard, and never let it be erased from your memory, that the great quality of Mary is especially being the Mother of sinners.⁷²

It is worth noting that by the time of these last sermons, even Canon González de Cándamo, well known from his sermon praising Charles III, was showing certain signs of disenchantment with his earlier Enlightened positions. In 1800, in his new post as magisterial canon of the metropolitan cathedral in Mexico, he gave another sermon, in honor of the late Archbishop Alonso Núñez de Haro y Peralta. In apparent contradiction to his vision in 1789, now the priest saw noteworthy barriers to the harmonious development of secular and religious life. He cautiously declared that only science united with Christian charity could reach “true wisdom, whose source is the fear of God.” Similarly, he asserted that only Christianity could be the basis of human coexistence, rather than “all that much-vaunted humanity of philosophy,” because it offered “that peace of the soul which the world cannot give, which is only proper to the spirit of God.” González de Cándamo emphasized that the late Archbishop had been a man known for his understanding and clemency, but that he “never gave anyone the least motive to offend the lofty dignity of the high priesthood.” The Canon counseled the prelates of Mexico to guide their parishioners with love, not with fear. This did not mean they should act with irresponsible tolerance. To the faithful, the priest had to “make easy the yoke of His [God’s] divine law, and lighten his precepts, without profaning his holiness with a new looseness repugnant to the spirit of the Gospel.” Haro y Peralta was a singular example, for he “settled disagreements, reconciled spirits, and amiably resolved the differences which so harm religion and the state.”⁷³

After mentioning the “countless benefits Mexico received” from the deceased archbishop, González de Cándamo specified something which further underscores our point:

If the temporal needs of his flock were worthy of so much attention, even more worthy were their spiritual needs. The most pressing spiritual objective was driving his sheep away from the harmful pastures they were frequenting, and nourishing them in the healthy pastures of true Christian morality, not yet fully cleansed at the time of the black stains with which casuistic polemicists of recent times had disfigured its candor. The Vatican and the Throne, the Priesthood and the Empire worked together to restore its pristine purity as quickly as possible.⁷⁴



Church and state supported each other, he claimed, but “their cries, although they did not fail to make an impression on the spirits of lovers of truth and justice, still found much resistance from laxity, bias, and ignorance.”⁷⁵

Haro y Peralta had understood that Christianity could only be based on “the sole and solid foundation of good study,” as he had shown by intervening in the seminary program.⁷⁶ The Canon exhorted the young in particular to

[d]isdain the voices of the foolish who, confusing enlightenment with impiety and religion with ignorance, and disguising themselves with the cloak of piety, never cease to try to draw you away from the path your wise Father placed you upon. No, do not abandon the only road by which you may come to be worthy pastors of Jesus Christ’s flock, and useful workers in his vineyard.⁷⁷

Before finishing his sermon, the fiery Canon praised the Archbishop for one more achievement: his use of the College of Tepotzotlán, abandoned by the Jesuits, as a place of “instruction, voluntary retreat, and correction for the clergy of his diocese.” He added,

Who can fail to see how important this place was for the reform of the clergy and for the spiritual good of the faithful? We can rightly call it a safe port where the priesthood turned from the storms of the world, and a life raft where the unfortunate victims of shipwreck found life.⁷⁸

The problems between Church and state, and Church and society, would become even clearer and more evident in the pastoral letters of Doctor Juan Cruz Ruiz de Cabañas y Crespo, Bishop Alcalde’s successor in the Guadalajara diocese and the one responsible for presiding over the difficult period that followed. Cabañas was bishop of Guadalajara for a lengthy period, from 1796 to November 28, 1824. He should be understood within the context presented here. This man was the promoter both of the house of charity, which proposed to teach trades to the underprivileged, and of the clerical seminary, which sowed the hope of an enlightened and disciplined clergy for Guadalajara.⁷⁹

As his actions and ideas indicated, Cabañas was not insensitive to the winds of change in society and the Church. What largely ended up defining him historically was the need to take a stand



against the 1810 insurgency led by Father Hidalgo and its occupation of Guadalajara. After being installed as bishop of Guadalajara, Cabañas continued Alcalde's work, and much of his public discourse directed toward cooperating with the government on social and religious matters. He wanted economic and social progress and ecclesiastical reform.⁸⁰ Nonetheless, even before Hidalgo's uprising he had grown disenchanted with some of the social changes he helped produce. Months before the outbreak of the insurgency, he had already declared that "the days are so evil that there is no one who does good, and human acts know no other motive but sensual pleasure and sordid interest, following the erroneous principles of the evil and dominant philosophy of the last century."⁸¹

In the midst of "the dark reign of self-love," the good Bishop would ask the faithful "to give at least the leftovers of your rents, entails or patrimonies, and also of your mines, industries, and profitable commerce" for the defense of the Spanish dominions.⁸² He would ask,

Is it not luxury that ruins families, brings continuous quarrels, promotes competitions and odious imitations, confuses all classes, strikes against our manufactures, holds back agriculture and arts, impoverishes the richest provinces, and does away with the most opulent and abundant Kingdoms? Is it not luxury that enriches the foreigner, and that necessarily produces the shortage of coin that you so bitterly complain of?⁸³

But Doctor Cabañas was not certain he could count on his parishioners' support, because "luxury has been ruling us for some time, now." Nevertheless, not being an easy man to defeat, the Bishop appealed to "science, or the mania for calculation that has become so common in our times," asking those so inclined to "calculate the exorbitant sums spent on luxury and gaming and other disorders" in order to show that their suppression "would provide enough to meet the needs of the budget." Cabañas reminded the faithful that the legitimate King of Spain counted on God's blessing. But if that was not enough, he predicted: "You know the infinite importance of holy brotherhood and mutual love – or social ties, as it is called now – and the baneful consequences of discord and division in every realm, province or town."⁸⁴

By 1812, now facing the revolutionary forces unleashed by Hidalgo, Cabañas would phrase his good shepherd's language more effectively. The forces unleashed by the insurgency, he explained,



wished to overturn even the foundations of the great and still glorious edifice of our religious, political and moral society, the Holy Sanctuary of Laws, of Justice, of Truth and Majesty, overthrowing or plunging these precious Countries into the dark and deep abyss of the anarchy of the most execrable immorality and impiety, of that monster with as many heads as there are furies of Hell and capital sins, and attempting to seize, devour and annihilate everything that was necessary, useful or delicious among us, in Towns, Villages, and Cities as well as in the Fields, Haciendas, and Mines, which for the good of all were greatly prospering, and still aspire honestly and importantly to greater increase, richness and perfection.⁸⁵

The Church had an obvious function at this moment when piety and prosperity had to be jointly re-established. Moreover, it had to extend to all the people the knowledge that

[t]he overabounding grace of amnesty is nothing more than a shining testimony to humanity and charity properly understood, and a most evident sign of a great and generous political government, which, deeply penetrated by the supreme Law of any state, [strives for] nothing other than public health and happiness, and uses all means to achieve it, increase it, and secure it in all its dominions.⁸⁶

While the situation stabilized, priests should provide broad information to the Bishop of suspicious movements on the part of presumed "enemies of the throne and the altar."⁸⁷

To be sure, the support Bishop Cabañas offered to the alliance of the Crown, the Church and the largest economic and social interests of the intendency of Guadalajara was not given lightly, nor did it lack a solid foundation prior to the immediate crisis of insurrection. We have already seen many examples of clerical discourse in earlier years. In addition, the Church had helped to overcome the dangerous famine of 1785/1786 and to spread the smallpox vaccine at the beginning of the century.⁸⁸ In 1813, it was the pillar of the effort to contain the advance of "the terrible plague which currently afflicts some of the towns in New Spain," and in 1814, in keeping with the attack on the plague, it supported both ending burials inside churches and creating cemeteries outside towns.⁸⁹ But in these years, new emphasis was given to defending "that eternal and universal law of subordination to the head, and unity of the parts and of the whole of the body and society we are members of" since "our civil and



religious existence" was threatened by "the scathing and impious insolence of libertine philosophers" and their disciples.⁹⁰ The latter, finally meeting in a "so-called Mexican congress," set out to draw up a constitution and arrange the Church's matters in the territory under its control. Doctor Cabañas specifically exhorted the clergy to close ranks with "the civil, military and ecclesiastical corporations which speak for the whole of its inhabitants" to form "a powerful and great nation," "ruled by a government as ancient, respectable, rational, equitable and just as the sovereign himself is domestic and paternal." Cabañas did not cease promoting certain leading aspects of the clergy's alliance with Enlightened Guadalajara regionalism, but met with the challenge of the insurgency, he ended up explicitly invoking the framework of Hapsburg patrimonialism.⁹¹

In this context, it seems opportune to mention another singular document from this period. This is the memorial petition in which the municipal council of Guadalajara and the cathedral chapter joined forces, in 1816 and 1817, to ask the King "that granting their just and submissive requests, he establish in this Capital a General Captaincy totally separated from the Viceroyalty of Mexico, investing it with all the authority, faculties and privileges with which all the other superior heads of other realms are invested."⁹²

Clearly, this petition was not framed in exclusively civilian terms. The union of Church and state seemed to the municipal council and cathedral chapter to imply that raising the civic status of Guadalajara and its rulers would also spur a raised status for the diocese of Guadalajara and its ecclesiastical authorities. And so, apparently speaking from a civil perspective, they stated:

Similarly, [the province] expects that with its Capital elevated in this way, what would be most appropriate for the ancient discipline of the Church would be for Ecclesiastical power to follow civil power in every way. This is why, wanting to draw ever closer the bonds of union and perfect harmony between the Priesthood and the Empire ... in accord with these canonical dispositions, and considering that the Mitre of Guadalajara, with its two hundred seventy years of age, and with a greater extension and increase in the faithful than Tolosa (already elevated to an Archdiocese with assigned subordinates), has already been dismembered three times with the establishment of the dioceses of Durango, Monterrey and



Sonora, whose churches are truly and legitimately daughters of this one, as well as being notably less distant from this Church compared with Mexico, this [the establishment of an Archdiocese in Guadalajara] will save it from immense difficulties, many harms, and excessive expenditures.⁹³

The bulk of the document, which closed with this call on behalf of an archdiocese in Guadalajara, was dedicated to retelling the great potential and achievements of the realm of New Galicia,

[w]hich, overcoming the narrow limits of smallness and subjection in which it has not been able to survive without suffering the most violent and back-breaking, disfiguring oppression, justly and necessarily demands not only greater distinction and freedom, but also persuades and promises this will bring the greatest of advantages to Crown and state, which the current system of subjection has denied them until now.⁹⁴

The memorial petition specifically applauded the Bourbon reforms on the matter of subdividing provinces and archdioceses, creating intendancies and establishing new dioceses. The situation in South America, it stated, was now more balanced. What was missing was a similar adjustment for Mexico so that New Galicia might serve the interests of the King even better.⁹⁵

The clumsiness of administration from Mexico City, lamentable in civil and ecclesiastical matters and disastrous in economic and fiscal terms, held back the growth of the realm. By causing discord, it exposed Guadalajara to the envy of foreign powers. "And so we must proceed with the necessary and immediate dependence of these colonies on Guadalajara which, invested with all authority, will be able to firmly preserve these dominions and make their inviolability respected, with fewer barriers and greater promptness and correctness." Indicating how useful the existence of several independent governments had proven to the Crown in South America, as it had thus always preserved a base of support, even in full insurgency, the memorial petition underlined the usefulness of the changes requested. Needless to say, it did not mention that in South America only the oldest viceroyalty, not the new ones, showed signs of unyielding loyalty to the Crown. More recent independent governments were precisely the centers of rebellion.⁹⁶



Conclusions

One cannot help but see the Guadalajara Church as taking part in, and benefiting from, the regionalization of life in New Spain. The Church, above all in the person of the Bishop, was behind the creation of the Royal and Literary University of Guadalajara, helping to found it in collaboration with other social sectors.⁹⁷ In keeping with the times, it duly compiled its statistics, supported the establishment of the merchant guild of Guadalajara, and contributed to other improvements in social, economic and public health affairs. By means of the merchant guild, it awarded money prizes to innovative growers, and in 1812 it participated in the high-level consultations in which agreement was reached to legally recognize the improvised and controversial international commerce run out of San Blas as a response to the interruption of normal commerce by the insurgents. Time and again, the clerics found themselves, by their own volition, within the reformist line of the Bourbons and their "enlightened policies."⁹⁸

Nonetheless, it would be naïve to think that this meant that the clergy were not clearly distinguished from other social sectors in some way. Signs of this have already been seen in clerical discourse itself, but there are other indications. Of the first ninety-one graduates of the university between 1792 and 1821 for whom we have information, only about thirty-six percent took government posts, while more than seventy-five percent ended up as priests, monks, members of ecclesiastical councils, or some kind of church official. Similarly, of the first 119 graduates, more than three-quarters opted for a degree in theology or canon law.⁹⁹

The Church was not a monolithic group. It is noteworthy that during the insurgency, Bishop Cabañas called on the village priests for help, the same priests he had created a clerical seminary to aggressively correct and he had antagonized with a reform of parochial fees. It is evident that the same split between high and low clergy that took place in other parts of the country also took place here.¹⁰⁰ But the Church spokesmen had a record of promoting change. It would seem contradictory, at the very least, for Cabañas to lament that this was an age of materialism and pretentious calculations. The Church's interests were tied to the new economy; after all, didn't he himself raise funds against Napoleon – and against the insurgents – from the new businesses, and didn't he propose to advance them in various ways in his campaign



against vagrancy? His predecessor, Alcalde, had already set a course in this direction.

It is important to grasp that the Church did not face a united and opposed civil society. In 1792, the municipal council of Guadalajara was indignant because it was only belatedly consulted about the establishment of the merchant guild.¹⁰¹ And this happened despite the fact that, by this time, merchants already controlled the council.¹⁰² The government had preferred consulting the Church on the matter. In no way do we see here a lay society profoundly disenchanted with its Church. Among the first graduates of the university, many opted for a degree in theology or canon law, supported by prominent members of commerce and government. There were graduates in other studies supported by clerics. Maldonado, a priest, was scandalized because Hidalgo had broken social concord, an eminently secular concept from a certain perspective. Other clerics ended up appealing to the King's civic responsibility to his people to halt the radical change in the status of the clergy. Commerce in Guadalajara had maintained the Virgin of Guadalupe as its holy patronness since 1746, and its zeal would even deepen at the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁰³

Yet it is evident that there was a certain social division between the clergy and lay society. While Tutino and Powell have pointed out cases of priests who sometimes acted as merchants in central Mexico, no priests have been found among the notables of commerce in Guadalajara, although there certainly were a few *hacendados*. At the very least, the near monopoly sectors of commercial and landowning wealthy were not even remotely dominated by the clergy. Similarly, although the holders of Church offices in the area included some individuals who were neither priests nor members of the religious orders, the Church itself did not carry out any extensive business directly, except for renting its urban properties.¹⁰⁴

With the creation of the clerical seminary and the University of Guadalajara, the highest ranks of the Church reached new cultural heights. The merchants of the city, however, were eminently practical men, perhaps fascinated by high culture and clerical education but not necessarily a product of them. In fact, Lindley has suggested that many of the merchants were the classic Bourbon-era Spaniards who came to America to make their fortune. On the other hand, the most important *hacendados* were directly involved in reorganizing their lands and increasing their output, while the clergy only applauded them from its theoretical heights.



Certainly the tenor of the lives of these merchants and land-owners must have been very different from those of the high clergy. As already seen, Cabañas showed his distaste for materialism and calculation, but even the youngest clerics who were most filled with the thirst for change must have been distant from the activities that forged these values. Although one could cite the inventions and commercial interest of at least one outstanding priest of the period, this was an exception and not the rule.¹⁰⁵

The strongest indications of the split between lay society and clerical society only emerge in the 1820s, and even then they are a decidedly minority trend. The terms of the ideological discourse analyzed until now show how members of the Church were forced to bring themselves up to date with Bourbon reforms without losing their validity as a corporate institution. The drive of Enlightenment thought was profoundly anti-corporatist, as shown by its attacks against corporate bodies, guilds and various religious groups. The new University of Guadalajara was not "Royal and Pontifical" but "Royal and Literary," and life statistics had begun to be collected by royal bureaucrats and members of the local merchant guild. The Church nevertheless still found much room to maneuver and to adjust its corporatist policies to changes in society and the state.¹⁰⁶

The composition of society could not yet be imagined without an ideological discourse which in some way overcame different interests and reunited them in an idealized whole. Similarly, the Church's preoccupation for the well-being of the population thought of as a whole stood out again and again. The Church promoted government measures at the same time as faith and charity. It supported various aspects of commercial activity and favored the participation of the masses in the works and culture that the civil and clerical authorities considered useful and socially acceptable. The Church still played an important ideological role here, characterizing the Spanish government by its Christian and wise character, and not by its recourse to power and armed subjection of the people. These were days in which popular sovereignty barely showed its head, and the divine legitimization of a power that was as impartial and rational as possible – in the words of Bishop Cabañas – still convinced many. This was good for the gradual change that both the government and certainly the lay authorities preferred.

The rupture of this arrangement after 1810 would have grave consequences. It would not be until the second half of the



nineteenth century that Mexico would briefly return to the mutual accommodation that the Church and the absolutist monarchy had managed for so long. In the meantime, society was subject to progressively more bitter internal conflicts. But it is significant that up to this point, the principal representatives of the new economic forces who would benefit from change did not often manifest their ideological positions in convincing political actions.¹⁰⁷ Could it be that in these moments of transition, the most powerful bourgeois elements of the population were characterized by a divided, politically accommodationist way of thinking that contrasted sharply with the high flights of totalizing theory characteristic of ecclesiastical theologians and their immediate successors? In the end, indecision and pragmatic syncretism are also a kind of politics, and the Church's continued efforts to link up with a gradual change, as well as to guide it, would open up more alternatives than is usually suspected.

This page intentionally left blank