

RUBIAL GARCÍA, Antonio (ed.), 2013, *La Iglesia en el México colonial*. Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma de México, Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla and Ediciones de Educación y Cultura. 606 pp.

The historiography of the Catholic Church in colonial Mexico is extensive and rich. Since colonial times, laity and clergy took up the pen to reconstruct the history of early evangelization, pilgrimage sites and images of devotion, and the educational work of the clergy, among other subjects. But for a long time we have lacked an overall view of the social, political, economic, and cultural activities of the Church. The first major work of this kind was the *Historia de la Iglesia en México* by the Jesuit Mariano Cuevas, published between 1921 and 1922, which was conceived as a plea in defense of Catholicism against the anticlerical attacks that followed the Mexican Revolution. A more calm and rigorous analysis of the role of the Church in the colonial context was needed. *La Iglesia en el México colonial*, an extensive and well-documented volume edited by Antonio Rubial García, a recognized authority on the history of New Spain, fills this glaring void.

This is an ambitious and important historiographical project thanks to the participation of outstanding researchers and the variety of topics that are covered. For example, the sections on bishops and cathedral canons is written by Oscar Mazín Gómez. Leticia Pérez Puente explores legal aspects, provincial councils during the 16th century, the process of secularization, and seminaries and cabildos during the 18th century. Ivan Escamilla González is the author of some introductory texts and an article on the fourth provincial council. Corporations, lay brotherhoods and parishes are discussed by Rodolfo Aguirre, while Enrique González González writes about the papal privileges and the education of the clergy. The Bull of the Holy Crusade and the Inquisition are studied by Pilar Martínez López Cano and Gabriel Torres Puga, respectively. Francisco Cervantes Bello wrote the sections on ecclesiastical wealth; and Antonio Rubial García, the sections about the regular clergy, women's convents, the northern missions and the sanctuaries. The epilogue on the situation of the Church between Independence and "La Reforma" was the work of Brian Connaughton.

The book is organized into two sections. The first introduces the reader to general aspects of Church history and organization in New Spain: the composition of the clerical estate, the secular corporations, the cultural role played by monks and priests, the legal and political relationship of priests with the Spanish monarchy, and the economic assets of the ecclesiastical body (tithes, etc.). The second section consists of four chapters that correspond to four stages in the history of the Church in New Spain: foundation (1521-1565); consolidation (1565-1640); autonomy (1640-1750); and crisis (1750-1821).

The book raises a variety of issues. One of these, which I consider to be central, is the "colonial" character of the Church in New Spain. According to the authors, the ecclesiastical institutions adapted to an environment that conditioned their actions. Three factors are said to explain this situation: the process of evangelization of native peoples in rural areas, the strong links between the clergy and criollos and mestizos in the cities, and the actions of the Crown and its representatives as regulators of ecclesiastical policy. Moreover, the religious orders played a leading role that they did not have in the Old World. Furthermore, the history of the Church in the colonial period was marked by conflict: on one hand, there were confrontations between the clergy and the bishops; and on the other, there were disputes between archbishops and viceroys.

The history of the Church in New Spain is not only fascinating and complex, but comparisons are possible with the evolution of its counterpart in the Peruvian Viceroyalty. The actions of the bishops and agents of the Crown, the normalization of the situation of the Church only after the prelates accepted the government of their parishioners in the mid-sixteenth century, the introduction of the "alternativa" in the government of convents of friars, and the writing of mendicant chronicles as a means of propaganda in the 16th and 17th centuries are just some of the processes that occurred in both the Mexican and Peruvian Viceroyalties. Furthermore, if there was a process of enormous political upheaval in both territories from the 16th to the 18th century, it was due to the rivalry between the secular and regular clergy. Among its main causes was the former's interest in controlling the rural "doctrina de indios," the bishops' interest in extending their jurisdiction over the whole of the clergy, and the resistance of the friars and the Jesuits in paying tithes to the cabildos of the cathedrals.

But along with these similarities, there were also differences. The evangelization of New Spain began shortly after the Conquest, and its principal protagonists were Franciscans. In Peru, this order seems to have had a secondary role in comparison to the Dominicans and Mercedarians, allies of the Spanish conquerors, and evangelization had to wait until after the first meeting of the provincial council of Lima was held in 1551. Then the ecclesiastical hierarchy, in agreement with the mendicant orders, issued the regulations that initiated the institutionalized Christianization of rural areas. On the other hand, in both Mexico and Lima, provincial councils were held between 1583 and 1585 in order to implement the dictates of the Council of Trent. But while in Mexico the purpose of that meeting was, according to the authors of the volume, the strengthening of episcopal authority and the establishment of the diocesan Church, the council fathers who gathered in Lima put more emphasis on the evangelization of the peasant population. In the final stages of the colonial period, the Consolidation decree also was considerably different in Mexico and Peru. With this measure, the Crown took capital from Obras Pias as forced loans. In

Mexico, it was carried out with lucrative benefits for the imperial administration; while in the Andean region, as far as we know, it was implemented very weakly, and consequently yielded meager results. In Mexico, there was resistance and protests; the lower clergy resented the attack on their assets and part distanced themselves from the cause of the Crown. This would explain the fact that quite a few of the insurgent officers and guerrilla leaders who supported independence emerged from this sector of the clergy. In Peru, few priests were actively involved in the struggle against colonial rule.

The reading of this new history of the Church opens up new research perspectives for those interested in a better understanding of the social, political, and economic reality of the colonial period, and invites research on little known aspects of church history during the Peruvian Viceroyalty: the influence of the work of Bishop Juan de Palafox, the social function of the sanctuaries, and the impact of Bourbon reformism on the ecclesiastical body. For all these reasons, I welcome the publication of this book, which I recommend to readers, and I thank the authors for their work.

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