

Fray Alonso de la Vera Cruz, O. S. A.

(1507-1584)

A Study of His Life and His Contribution to the Religious and Intellectual Affairs of Early Mexico

(continuation *)

CHAPTER V

The Conflict between the Regular and Secular Clergy

The Nature of the Problem

The story of the conflict that developed between the missionary friars of the Augustinian, Franciscan and Dominican Orders on the one hand, and the secular clergy, especially the bishops, on the other, is one of the sad chapters of the history of sixteenth century Mexico. This unpleasant and very involved story must be gone into because Alonso de la Vera Cruz was one of the main figures in the conflict. In this chapter we shall trace the general lines of the disputes, especially as seen through the activities of the Augustinians, and in the following chapter, we shall consider more specifically the role of Vera Cruz and the consequences of his activity.

Before going into this matter, some preliminary remarks are necessary. While a truly enormous amount of paper and ink was consumed in the numberless letters and reports written by both sides, the quantity of documentation in itself means nothing. Many of the reports were extremely long-winded and contained very little substance. Both sides were anxious to maintain their own position,

*) See *Augustiniana*, V (1955), 52-124, 241-267.

neither hesitated to exaggerate freely and bring in extraneous matters with little or no connection to the immediate problems. Consequently, it is a mistake to take this conflict too seriously, or to put full credence in everything that was written. The following opinion of Mariano Cuevas is a reasonable one, though somewhat too lenient ²⁹⁰).

The violent language employed in these disputes, their inexplicable prolongation over so many years, and even certain insults and discourtesies originating therefrom, never reached the point of serious defects, nor do they signify anything more than affairs engaged in by hot-blooded Spaniards.

While that is generally true, however, the effect that this conflict has had upon Mexican history is lamentable. Any writer who wishes to present an unfavorable view of the Catholic Church in the Spanish Empire was only to turn to these copious manuscripts, written by ecclesiastics, to find all the accusations he may desire ²⁹¹). Such writers, however, do not always take the trouble to present the whole picture and indicate the real value of the evidence. In a word, the whole affair was unfortunate, and the ecclesiastics of that period, both religious and secular, have done themselves a real disservice by not having come to an early settlement.

The conflict has its origin in the very nature of the Spanish missions in the New World. At the inception of these missions at the end of the fifteenth century the Popes granted extensive powers to the Catholic Kings of Spain, Ferdinand and Isabel, as Patrons of the missionlands. The members of the religious orders, especially the Franciscans, became the special emissaries of the Crown and the favored missionaries within the realm of the Royal Patronage.

²⁹⁰) CUEVAS, *Historia de la Iglesia*, II, 176. «La violencia del lenguaje empleado en estas discordias, su inexplicable prolongación por tantos años, y aún ciertos desaires y descortesías de ello originadas, ni llegaron nunca a faltas graves, ni significan más, sino que los asuntos se trataban entre españoles de sangre caliente ».

²⁹¹) For example, cf. B. W. DIFFIE, *Latin-American Civilization. Colonial Period* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1945), p. 268. He says that the Cathedral Chapter of Mexico City in 1578 complained that the property of the Augustinians and Dominicans included the greater and best part of the city. In view of the conflict of which we have spoken, such a sweeping statement is immediately open to suspicion, but the writer apparently takes it on face value. This matter will be discussed further on in this chapter.

In order to make their work possible in an area where the Church had never been established, the Holy See gave the religious very extensive faculties for the administration of the Sacraments, faculties that normally rest in the hands of the bishops. These powers were transferred to the missionaries by the very fact of being designated to the missions by their superiors and the King ²⁹²). Hence, within a short space of time, with the very rapid expansion of the missions, what was really an extraordinary setup became the ordinary functioning of the Church in the New World; the religious became strongly entrenched in their favored position. The trouble began when the time came to establish dioceses in the mission-lands; the first Bishop in Mexico, Juan de Zumárraga, was appointed in 1528. The bishops found themselves in a disadvantageous position. They were, practically speaking, without authority, because the secular clergy were very few, and the religious operated totally independent of episcopal jurisdiction. The friars were the pastors of the churches, but they did not regard their territories as parishes, but rather as « doctrinas », unique organizations with no dependence upon the normal diocesan establishment. Obviously, such an arrangement could not go on indefinitely and conflicts of jurisdiction soon arose. It became a question of which side was going to make concessions, and how much.

The religious, as we shall see, were very reluctant to make any concessions, and sometimes even tended to extend their authority beyond previous limits. They constantly fell back upon their privileges and regarded their own rights and those of the Crown, both granted by the Holy See, as one. Their attitude is summed up in a statement by Grijalva where he mentions the rights of the Spanish king in ecclesiastical affairs ²⁹³). This statement was occasioned by an attempt on the part of the bishops, in 1555, to demand that the friars get permission before building a church or monastery within the diocesan territory. The King came to the defense of the religious, and Grijalva says that the King had the right and duty to defend the friars on three counts. First, the bishops were subject

²⁹²) LETURIA, *El regio vicariato de Indias y los comienzos de la Congregación de Propaganda*, in H. FINKE, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kulturgeschichte Spaniens*, II (Muenster, 1930), 133-177, esp. 138-140. The system of giving delegated Apostolic faculties immediately through the Franciscan superiors began in the missions of the East in the thirteenth century.

²⁹³) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.*, Edad II, chap. xvi, pp. 92-93.

to the Crown because they owed their appointment to the King. Second, in this specific instance, the Crown was not interfering in ecclesiastical matters because the King was merely settling a question of temporal justice on the basis of the privileges enjoyed by the religious. Third, and more fundamental, the King possessed delegated authority from the Pope to govern all matters within his realm with regard to the good of souls, granted to him especially by Pope Alexander VI.

Upon examining these three points we shall see that the first two are correct, but the third one demands closer scrutiny. As to the appointment of bishops, it is true that the Spanish king enjoyed the right of appointment to all benefices. Not only was he empowered to nominate bishops, but he could also set the boundaries of the diocese, determine the collection and distribution of rents and tithes, and appoint all beneficiaries within the diocese ²⁹⁴).

With regard to the second point, it is easy to see that the religious felt quite free to build monasteries at their discretion. Before the establishment of dioceses they were free to operate in that respect, needing only the approval of the royal government upon whom rested the responsibility of sponsoring the missions and defraying the expenses of building and maintenance. With the coming of the bishops, the religious saw no need to change their position. The privileges and exemption of the friars were based upon Bulls granted by the Popes, especially the *Alias felices* of Leo X, given April 25, 1521, and the *Exponi nobis fecisti* of Adrian VI, given May 9, 1522 ²⁹⁵). The Bull of Leo X confirmed all previous faculties granted for the administration of all the Sacraments, including ordination to minor orders, with the sole restriction that those faculties which normally pertain to the episcopal office

²⁹⁴) LETURIA, *Felipe II y el Pontificado en momento culminante de la historia hispano-americana*, in *Estudios Eclesiásticos*, 7 (Madrid, Sept. 1928, no. extraordinario), pp. 44-45, and note 17. These privileges were confirmed in all the Bulls erecting dioceses.

²⁹⁵) Copies of both Bulls are found in VERA CRUZ, *Speculum coniugiorum* (Milan, 1599), appendix, pp. 81-86. Actually these documents and some others of the same period are not Bulls in the technical sense. They were issued in the form of Briefs. But because of their importance, and in conformity with the custom of the period, the « bulls », or seals, were often attached to them. Technically, they were « Breves Bullatae ». Following the usage of most authors, this writer will refer to them simply as Bulls.

be not exercised in any place where there is a bishop. The Bull of Adrian VI was known as the « Omnimoda » because it contained a very extensive phrase, granting to the religious superiors « omnimodam auctoritatem nostram in utroque foro », in all places where there was no bishop or where, at least, the friars were a distance of « dos dietas » (about 40 miles) from an episcopal seat. The word « omnimoda », because of its elasticity, was to become the shibboleth of the religious in all their disputes with the Hierarchy. Both these Bulls were granted in favor of the Franciscans, but all their privileges were extended equally to the Augustinians by Clement VII, successor to Adrian VI ²⁹⁶). Hence, the friars possessed their faculties from the Holy See through their own superiors ; they had no need of either permission or approval from the bishops. As for the specific point about which we were speaking, that is, the right to found monasteries and churches, although this right is not mentioned in the Bulls of the sixteenth century, the friars reasoned that such foundations were obviously essential to the mission given to them by the Popes, so that no further permission was needed from the Hierarchy ²⁹⁷).

One of the effects of this unusual type of ecclesiastical organization was a deep attachment between the Indians and the particular friars who served their villages. The Indians paid loyalty and respect to the missionaries who had come to live among them, but they knew nothing of the bishops. Consequently, the bishops were sometimes chagrined to see the high regard paid to the friars, while their own office went unrecognized. The lofty position and independent jurisdiction which the missionaries enjoyed sometimes prompted them to assume authority in questions where even the bishop would hesitate to act. The Augustinian Juan de Medina Rincón, after he became Bishop of Michoacán, is quoted as saying : « When I was a religious, the simple prior of a monastery, I had more courage and audacity to make decisions than I do now as a Bishop » ²⁹⁸). An example of this kind of conduct is found in

²⁹⁶) This communication of privileges was obtained by the Augustinian General Gabriel of Venice (1514-1536). A copy of the Brief (Oct. 31, 1530) can be seen in the MS of Vera Cruz, Escorial iii K 6, fols. 109-110v.

²⁹⁷) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.*, Edad II, chap. xvi, p. 91. This was also the explanation given by Vera Cruz. Cf. MS Escorial iii K 6, fol. 287. He also spoke of specific privileges granted by Greg. IX and Sixtus IV. *Ibid.*, fols. 155v and 156.

²⁹⁸) RICARD, *La « conquête spirituelle »*, p. 293. « Quand j'étais religieux,

the method adopted by Agustín de Coruña, also an Augustinian, in handling a case of idolatry amongst some Christian Indians ²⁹⁹). He called the people together in the village of Olinalá and pronounced himself inquisitor by authority of the Bull « Omnimoda », even though the Inquisition did not exist in Mexico at that time. He then threatened to declare the villagers relapsed and impenitent, if they did not reveal the place of the idol. The Franciscans also were accustomed to employ this method of procedure. But the « Omnimoda », elastic though it was, could not justify such audacious claims.

Another aspect of the conflict between religious and Hierarchy arose when the bishops tried to replace the friars with diocesan clergy in some of the churches. This should have been a natural development in the ecclesiastical organization, but the religious were understandably reluctant to relinquish the churches which they had established and built by much sweat and toil. Furthermore, relinquishing the services of the church to the secular clergy also meant leaving their monastery which was attached to the church. It was not simply a question of handing over the office of pastor of souls ; it meant also a great loss of property and income. The reply of the friars to the demands of the bishops was that the secular clergy were not fit ; they did not know the Indians and could not speak their languages, they were poorly educated and lacking in zeal and self-sacrifice ³⁰⁰). In general, these charges were true, especially in the early years, because there were no seminaries for diocesan clergy in the New World, and sometimes the clergy who came from Spain were seeking opportunity more than priestly labor ³⁰¹). There were, however, some worthy and capable priests among them, but the friars made no distinction ; they were opposed to all efforts of replacement.

Of all the points of conflict the most hotly contested was the question of tithes, but we shall defer that for the present and take

simple prieur d'un couvent, j'avais plus de courage et d'audace pour prendre de décisions que maintenant que je suis évêque ».

²⁹⁹) GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Autos de Fe celebrados en México*, in *Opusculos varios*, I (Mexico, 1896), p. 276.

³⁰⁰) We shall see more of these charges when we consider the writings of Vera Cruz in the next chapter.

³⁰¹) BAYLE, *op. cit.*, chap. v, pp. 123-131. Cf. also chap. vii on the secular clergy as linguists. RICARD, *La « conquête spirituelle »*, pp. 296-299.

it up more at length later on. We shall return now to the third of the three claims made by Grijalva in favor of the Spanish King. He had said that the King possessed delegated authority from the Pope to govern all matters that pertain to the good of souls. This rather all-inclusive statement identifies something which later came to be called the « Royal Vicariate of the Indies »³⁰²). It is true that the king enjoyed very extensive ecclesiastical authority granted to him by the Holy See. In virtue of various Bulls given at the end of the fifteenth century and beginning of the sixteenth, he was declared the Patron of all the lands in the Spanish Empire with the right and the duty of sending missionaries to evangelize the heathen peoples ; he was granted the right of receiving ecclesiastical tithes with the consequent obligation of supporting the future churches in the new territories, the right of appointment to all benefices, of setting the boundaries of dioceses and of dividing dioceses under certain circumstances³⁰³). All these privileges together constituted the Royal Patronage, by means of which the Spanish king enjoyed exclusive control over the newly-discovered lands. In return, he was pledged to sponsor, aid and support the Church in all her affairs. These privileges, along with those granted to the religious in the « Omnimoda », welded into one the aims and the efforts of the Holy See, the Spanish Crown and the mendicant Orders. As a result, the King, through his Council of the Indies, exercised complete supervision and control over the Church in the Spanish Empire.

Hence it was that in the conflicts with the Hierarchy the friars

³⁰²) Two excellent studies on this matter are the above mentioned article by PEDRO DE LETURIA, *El regio vicariato*, *supra*, note 292, and an unpublished doctoral thesis prepared at the Gregorian University, Rome, by ANTONIO DE EGAÑA, *La teoría del regio vicariato español en Indias* (1948).

³⁰³) EGAÑA, *op. cit.*, p. 28. He lists the various Bulls.

Inter coetera, May 3, 1493, gave the King the right to send missionaries to the new lands. A second *Inter coetera* was given on May 4.

Eximiae devotionis, May 3, 1493, gave him the same rights of Patronage as those enjoyed by the King of Portugal.

Eximiae devotionis, Nov. 16, 1501, gave him the right to receive tithes.

Universalis Ecclesiae, July 28, 1508, gave him the right of Patronage in the Indies.

Sacri apostolatus ministerio, Jan. 24, 1518, gave him the power to divide a diocese in certain circumstances.

Cf. also LETURIA, *Felipe II y el Pontificado*, pp. 44-45.

always appealed to the king and the Council of the Indies, who, in turn, usually defended the religious, although that was not always the case. In favoring the religious there was an element of economy, as we shall see later. In the course of time, through the many appeals to the Crown in every kind of ecclesiastical affair, it came to be intimated that the king actually enjoyed papal delegation, vicarious spiritual powers above and beyond the rights of Royal Patronage ; that is the idea behind the term « Royal Vicariate » ³⁰⁴). This idea had its beginnings in the writings of some of the religious, principally Juan Focher, a Franciscan, and Alonso de la Vera Cruz. Unique though it was, the idea was taken up by the royalist ministers of the Crown, particularly in the next century, and especially in opposing the move by the Holy See to send Vicars Apostolic to the Spanish mission lands ³⁰⁵). In order to avoid direct interference by the Holy See within the empire, appeal was made to the apostolic delegation enjoyed by the king. Egaña, in his exhaustive study of the « Royal Vicariate », concludes that there is no evidence to show that the Popes actually willed to concede vicarious powers to the kings of Spain, and therefore, the theory of the « Royal Vicariate » must be regarded as false ³⁰⁶). But that is not to deny that the Popes did concede the office of universal patronage, and even a kind of super-patronage, embracing the wide range of powers that have already been mentioned. These powers were so extensive that it was sometimes difficult to determine the limits ; it was by exceeding those limits that the theory of the « Royal Vicariate » had its origin.

The Conflict over the Founding and Financing of Monasteries

In order to illustrate a particular aspect of the conflict between

³⁰⁴) Cf. the historical development of this idea as traced by LETURIA in *El regio vicariato de Indias*.

In the next chapter we shall see the indications of this idea in the writings of VERA CRUZ.

³⁰⁵) *Ibid.*, pp. 165 ff. The policy of establishing Vicars Apostolic in the missions was employed by the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, which was founded in 1622.

The chief proponent of the « Royal Vicariate » was Juan de Solórzano y Pereira in his *Política indiana*. He refers throughout to the opinions of Vera Cruz.

³⁰⁶) EGAÑA, *op. cit.*, pp. 299-301.

the Hierarchy and the religious, and to give a concrete example of the way the friars proceeded in their mission foundations, we shall consider two monastic foundations made by the Augustinians, one unsuccessful, and the other successful. The first monastery established by the Augustinian friars in Mexico had an unfortunate history. We have seen that upon their arrival in 1533 the friars went south of Mexico City to establish their first missions ³⁰⁷). Jorge de Avila stopped in the village of Ocuituco and was joined by Juan de San Román shortly afterwards. According to the custom universally employed by the missionaries, they immediately set about the construction of a church. It was planned on a large scale and before it was completed, the friars also began to build the accompanying monastery. A complaint was then made by the Franciscan Bishop of Mexico City, Juan de Zumárraga, that the missionaries were abusing the Indians by putting too great a burden of labor on them. He ordered the Augustinians to let the monastery go til after the church was finished ³⁰⁸). Ocuituco was only a small village, and the Indians, of course, were the only source of labor. The Bishop felt that the Augustinians were pursuing too ambitious a project, perhaps carried away by an imprudent desire to make their first foundation a truly outstanding one. But the friars felt that they knew what they were doing, and they were not without consideration for the Indians. At the first quasi-chapter of the friars in Mexico, held at Ocuituco in 1534, they showed themselves to be very earnest religious men and even displayed an unusual solicitude for the spiritual education and welfare of the natives ³⁰⁹). If it is true that they were not sufficiently careful of the material welfare of the Indians, it cannot be justly said that their carelessness was due to malice or selfishness.

The Augustinians decided to pay no attention to the Bishop's orders ; they went on with their plans as they had begun. It is probable that Juan de San Román, who had helped to make the foundation at Ocuituco and who was one of the leaders among the friars, had something to do with this decision. We know that

³⁰⁷) *Supra*, chap. ii.

³⁰⁸) This incident is related by CUEVAS, *Historia de la Iglesia*, II, 360-362, and by RICARD, *La « conquête spirituelle »*, pp. 297-298. The documentary source has not been available to the present writer. It is found in G. GARCÍA, *Documentos para la historia de México* (Mexico, 1907), Vol. XV, no. 43.

³⁰⁹) *Supra*, chap. ii.

he was an energetic and independent man, not one to be easily put off from his purpose. As a result of the Augustinians' determined stand, the Bishop appointed a secular priest to be his vicar in Ocuituco and administer to the Indians. The friars, angered by what they considered unlawful interference, walked out of Ocuituco, taking with them the bell, church ornaments, locks, and even the orange trees they had planted. Upon hearing later that Bishop Zumárraga planned to send Franciscans to take over the abandoned monastery, the Augustinians said they would resist by force any seizure of their property. The threat was never carried out, but the Augustinians thus ingloriously lost their first foundation. They were not the only ones, however, who resorted to extreme measures to defend what they felt were their rights. In another incident some years later at Tlazazalca in Michoacán an Augustinian monastery was burned in the course of a dispute³¹⁰). As a result, the friars introduced a suit against the Bishop, Vasco de Quiroga, and his clergy. We shall have occasion to speak more of Bishop Quiroga and this incident later.

Fortunately, not all the Augustinians were as impetuous as those of Ocuituco, and Bishop Zumárraga was a patient and understanding man, so that no ill-feeling remained after the affair at Ocuituco. The Bishop remained a friend of the Augustinian Order to his death in 1548, and both parties gained by the good relations. At his death, Zumárraga was in considerable debt to the Order, but that was not held against him because everyone knew he had incurred his debts by his numerous works of charity³¹¹). It has already been related in the second chapter how the Bishop assisted the Augustinians upon their arrival in the New World, especially in starting and financing their central monastery of San Agustín in Mexico City. He was instrumental in obtaining for them the rents of the village of Tetzcoco, the first encomienda held by the Augustinians. In his letter to Philip II on that occasion he praised the work of the Augustinian friars in Mexico, thus demonstrating his kindness and good will in spite of the incident in Ocuituco. With his help and that of the civil authorities, the building of San Agustín was solemnly inaugurated on August 28, 1541.

³¹⁰) RICARD, *La « conquête spirituelle »*, p. 294, note 5. CUEVAS, *Documentos inéditos*, p. 261. The incident occurred in 1560.

³¹¹) Cf. the letter of Vera Cruz cited above, chap. iv, note 281.

Many years were to pass and much labor and money was to be expended before this magnificent church and monastery were completed. Great expense was involved, not only in carrying out the extensive building and elaborate ornamentation, but also in overcoming the defects of the site. The location of the monastery was not wisely chosen; it was a low-lying plot of ground where an underground spring made the earth muddy and too weak to support a heavy structure. This was, and is still, a characteristic problem in all the terrain of that area. The Franciscan and Dominican monasteries also suffered from damage caused by water, but it appears that the site of the Augustinian foundation was a particularly poor one ³¹²). Several times the buildings were badly damaged by floods ³¹³). In order to make it possible to raise a heavy structure, they first had to pump out the excavation and then lay a solid foundation of stone strong enough to support the heavy wall ³¹⁴). When it came time to cover the buildings, an unorthodox plan was employed. The roofs were made of wood, both to lessen the weight and to have a pitched roof from which the rain water would run off more quickly. The use of wood, however, proved to be a bad solution, for one hundred years later, in 1676, all the buildings of both church and monastery were completely destroyed by fire, and the wood in the church is said to have burned for three days ³¹⁵). The new, and even more grandiose structure, built shortly afterward and containing some of the best Mexican baroque art, was covered with stone vaulting. It still stands today, but the Augustinians are no longer there because, in the confiscations of the nineteenth century, the church of San Agustín was converted into the National Library ³¹⁶). This was accomplished

³¹²) TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana* (Madrid, 1723), II, 70.

³¹³) MENDIETA, *Historia eclesiástica indiana*, edited by García Icazbalceta (Mexico, 1870), p. 367.

³¹⁴) GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Los Agustinos en México*, in *Opusculos varios*, II, 417, note 1. He quotes the description by Cervantes de Salazar, *México en 1554*, diálogo segundo.

³¹⁵) *Ibid.*, pp. 417-418. The fire occurred on Dec. 11, 1676. In a few days the friars were able to collect 70,000 gold pesos and begin a new church. It was completed in 1692. The whole complex of buildings constitutes one of the structures « más extensas, sólidas y pesadas » in Mexico City, says Icazbalceta. The great weight of the church has caused it to sink noticeably on the west end.

³¹⁶) *Ibid.*, p. 419. The conversion of the church into the Biblioteca Nacional cost a large sum, and Icazbalceta adds, « para cuyo destino será siempre im-

only after great expense both because the building was unsuited for a library and because it had been allowed to lie in ruin for many years.

The original church was first opened for public worship in 1571, but the ornamentation, especially the very ornate gilded and painted ceiling, was not completed until twelve years later. Finally, in 1587, the whole structure, church, monastery, schools and infirmary, was finished ³¹⁷). The total cost of this monumental work dedicated to St. Augustine came to the very large sum of 162,000 gold pesos ³¹⁸). The monastery, it appears, was also dedicated to Santa María de Gracia, for that was its title when Alonso de la Vera Cruz made his profession there in 1537 ³¹⁹). The devotion of Our Lady of Grace was popular among the Spanish Friars and it provided a fitting inspiration for such an imposing undertaking. The time required for the completion of this work, forty-six years, is itself an indication of the elaborate and expensive nature of the construction. Unfortunately, there is no detailed description of the art and architecture employed in the buildings, but every writer of that time who has referred to San Agustín indicates that it was « curiously and expensively constructed » and « very sumptuous » ³²⁰). The Augustinians had no doubt contributed one of the chief monuments of Spanish culture of that period.

propia ». The most notable art work in the church, the choir stalls, are found today in the « Generalito » of the old college of San Ildefonso. Cf. M. ROMERO DE TERRERAS, *La Iglesia y Convento de San Agustín* (Mexico City, 1951), p. 22, note 15.

³¹⁷) SANTIAGO VELA, *Convento de San Agustín de México*, in *AHHA*, XIV (Nov.-Dec., 1920), pp. 299-301. The church was dedicated in 1569 and opened in 1571. The monastery infirmary was completed in 1572.

³¹⁸) GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Los Agustinos en México*, in *Opusculos varios*, II, 416. A gold peso was a unit of computation set at 4 gr. 18 of gold. Cf. RICARD, *La « conquête spirituelle »*, p. 261, note 3.

³¹⁹) The explanation for the two titles may be that the whole church and monastery was dedicated to St. Augustine, while the monastery chapel was especially dedicated to Our Lady of Grace. The earliest reference to the latter title is in the profession form of Vera Cruz, in 1537. Cf. *BIA*, VIII, 156. The earliest reference to the title of San Agustín was in the first quasi-chapter of the friars in Mexico held at Ocuituco, June 8, 1534. At that time Jerónimo de San Esteban and Jorge de Avila were assigned to San Agustín in Mexico City. Cf. PÉREZ DE ARRILUCEA, *Los Agustinos en México en el siglo XVI*, in *La Ciudad de Dios*, 98 (El Escorial, 1914), 265-268.

³²⁰) MENDIETA, *op. cit.*, p. 367.

The question arises as to where the sum of 162,000 pesos had come from. One of the chief sources was the encomienda of Tetz-coco. Both the tributes and the Indian labor from that village were employed in the building of San Agustín. The wages paid to the laborers was two reales for six days work. It was a very small sum, but it was the wage set by the Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza when he assigned Tetz-coco to the Augustinians ³²¹). In his opinion it was a just payment, considering the primitive nature and needs of the Indians ³²²). The friars themselves in Mexico were not in favor of the encomienda in the beginning, but they were instructed by their superiors in Spain to accept it. They would have preferred to rely entirely upon contributions and royal subsidies ³²³).

The holding of property thus became a permanent system of economy among the Augustinians. It is interesting to note, just a few years later, a complete turnabout in the situation. Philip II, who had authorized the granting of the encomienda around 1539, wrote to the vicar-provincial in Mexico twenty years later to tell him to turn over the Augustinians' rents to charities or to pious works. This move on the part of His Majesty was doubtless prompted by complaints of the secular clergy against the religious orders, such as the long list of charges written by Archbishop Montúfar against the Augustinians in 1556 ³²⁴). The Vicar-Provincial Agustín

³²¹) GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Los Agustinos en México*, in *Opusculos varios*, II, 416. The typical Indian wage c. 1550 was « un cuartillo de plata » (one-fourth of a real) per day. At that rate the Indians working on San Agustín would have received one and a half reales for a six-day week, but in fact they were paid two reales.

Only silver coins were minted in the sixteenth century. Coinage of copper was tried, but the Indians did not understand its value and often threw away the copper coins. The basic coin was the « peso fuerte » or piece-of-eight, the famous Spanish silver dollar. It was equal to eight reales or 272 maravedís. Cf. A. SAYOUS, *Les procédés de paiement et la monnaie dans l'Amérique Espagnole du XVI^e siècle*, in *Revue économique internationale* (Nov., 1927). Also C. HARING, *American Gold and Silver Production*, in *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 29, no. 3 (May, 1915), p. 435, note 1.

³²²) The Indians had little appreciation of the value of money. In evaluating the justice of the wage scale, it would not be fair to compare Indian wages with standards in the United States today. One must bear in mind that in many places even today wage standards are extremely low. In Spain, for example, the average laborer earns only 30 to 40 cents (15 to 19 pesetas) a day. In Bolivia the highest-paid laborer, the tin miner, receives only one dollar a day.

³²³) *Supra*, chap. ii.

³²⁴) *CDI 1st*, IV, 491-530. Montúfar to the Council of the Indies, May 5, 1556.

de Coruña penned a reply and defense in 1561 to explain the financial situation of the Augustinians to Philip II ³²⁵). It is a singularly cogent document and goes right to the point without the usual verbose oratory. He began by acknowledging receipt of the King's order to relinquish the rents, and then he went on to explain how in the early years the friars got along well on the alms offered by the Spaniards. But as their numbers and needs increased, along with a diminution of the alms and personal service of the Indians in Mexico City, the friars began to be hard pressed and found they could not continue without some kind of aid. Their first appeal to the King was made in 1537 on behalf of the school which the Augustinians had founded in Mexico City ³²⁶). By mandate of His Majesty and of their superiors in Spain, the friars then began to accept rents, lagacies and chaplaincies. Most of their income, at the time that Agustín de Coruña wrote, came from the chaplaincies ³²⁷). But even so, continued the Vicar-Provincial, they had barely enough to get along on in Mexico City, where the monastery housed from sixty to seventy religious, including many students, plus all the sick of fifty monasteries. They had to maintain besides four or five houses of rest for the missionaries and of training for novices and students. For the support of two of those houses, namely those of Mexico City and Puebla de los Angeles, the friars possessed a small piece of land (probably meaning the encomienda of Tetz-coco) and a mill operated by permission of the Viceroy. The total amount of rents in both cities came to 4,000 gold pesos a year, while the cost of living even on the most modest level was 12,000 pesos a year. If the friars were to be deprived of the chaplaincies, they would be forced to beg from door to door in order to make ends meet. If His Majesty did not come to their assistance, complained Agustín de Coruña, the friars would have to abandon their work. He himself was about to go to Spain to plead their cause in person.

This then was the financial condition of the Augustinians in 1561. In spite of lavish expenditures for buildings and the many charges made against the friars by Archbishop Montúfar and others,

³²⁵) *Cartas de Indias*, pp. 152-155. Mexico, July 10, 1561.

³²⁶) *Supra*, chap. iii.

³²⁷) The chaplaincy was a kind of legacy left to the religious with the obligation of offering Masses for a specified intention. The legacy was a gift of property or a sum of money to be paid in rents,

they were not in the possession of great wealth. Although Agustín de Coruña may have painted the picture of their financial position somewhat blacker than it actually was, his account appears to be true, judging from what we already know. Such being the case, it is not possible that seventeen years later, in 1578, the Augustinians were in possession of the largest and best pieces of property in Mexico City, as one modern writer unjustly asserts ³²⁸).

What then was the source for the expenditures in building San Agustín, besides the limited rents? The greater part of the money must have come, apart from voluntary contributions, from the royal treasury. Many appeals were made to the King to help in the construction and furnishing of the church and monastery. In 1546, for example, Juan de San Román, on one of his journeys to Spain, obtained from Philip II the gift of two complete sets of solemn Mass vestments made of silk ³²⁹). In 1575, when Diego de Salamanca had returned to Spain and was Prior of San Felipe Real in Madrid, he wrote to the King to complain of the lack of funds at San Agustín ³³⁰). He said that, apart from normal expenses, there were extra costs for the sick and for the support of some Indians as well. He did not explain why the Indians were there, but the implication is that some work of charity was maintained at the monastery, perhaps a kind of clinic. Furthermore, the building program was being held up, for the annual rents of 6,000 pesos could not cover everything. On the back of this letter there is a note directing that an order be sent to the Viceroy in Mexico to visit San Agustín, take care of the most necessary expenses, and send a report to the Council of the Indies ³³¹). At the same time, Alonso de la Vera Cruz, who had just been elected to his third full-term as Vicar-Provincial, wrote to his friend Juan de Ovando, President of the Council of the Indies, to speak of the mission of Diego de Salamanca in quest of funds ³³²). Vera Cruz mentioned that he still had hopes of a new subsidy even though he had already asked three or four times without avail. Apparently his requests were granted because the records of the income of San Agustín show an

³²⁸) *Supra*, note 291.

³²⁹) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.*, Edad II, chap. ii, p. 67.

³³⁰) *A. G. I.*, Mexico 283. April or May, 1575.

³³¹) *Ibid.* There follows immediately a long report on the needs of San Agustín, probably sent by the Viceroy as directed.

³³²) *A. G. I.*, Mexico 283, May 31, 1575.

increase in this period ³³³). But their troubles were still not over, for again in 1582 we find the Augustinians making another request for funds to finish the church and monastery of San Agustín ³³⁴).

Although the King did make many grants, he was not over-generous. The records of the royal treasury in Mexico for the ten year period from 1553 to 1563 show that 77,715 gold pesos were paid out to the Augustinians ³³⁵). But that sum had to cover more than just the principal monastery in Mexico City ; furthermore, it was not just a building fund, for it covered many items, such as, wine, oil, fish, wheat, corn, chalices, bells, etc. Splitting it up amongst all those items, plus building, it could not have gone very far. Nevertheless, full credit must be given to the royal bounty for making it possible to construct the great church and monastery of San Agustín, and for eventually bringing it to completion in 1587.

A General Review of the Conflict between the Regular and Secular Clergy

Having seen the background and various elements of the conflict, we shall present here a brief over-all review of its development in order to understand the part played by Alonso de la Vera Cruz and to serve as an introduction for his writings to be considered in the next chapter. Although some difficulties arose between the religious and the first Bishop, later Archbishop, of Mexico, Juan de Zumárraga (1528-1548), relations between them were generally very good. Zumárraga was a Franciscan and he knew very well the contribution being made to the missions by the three

³³³) SANTIAGO VELA, *Convento de San Agustín de México*, in *AHHA*, XIV (Nov.-Dec., 1920), 299-301. Philip II was perhaps piqued at the continuing expenses for San Agustín. Tradition has it that when he saw the list of costs, he asked if the monastery was being made of gold. *Ibid.*, p. 300, note 2. Another complaint about the cost of San Agustín is seen in the letter of Louis Anguis to Philip II, Mexico, Feb. 20, 1561. Cf. CUEVAS, *Documentos inéditos*, pp. 250-267.

³³⁴) A. G. I., Mexico 285. Nov. 10, 1582. Seven Augustinians to Philip II.

³³⁵) CUEVAS, *Documentos inéditos*, pp. 277-279. Note by Fernando de Portugal, Treasurer General of New Spain, March 11, 1553, to Dec. 31, 1563. Philip II found himself in debt in Spain because of the cost of warfare.

In this same note the sum paid to the Dominicans is 72,759 pesos, and to the Franciscans, 38,431 pesos. Although the Franciscans did not hold property they may have had better means of income in the populous centers where they had become established many years before the other religious orders.

orders of friars. He was also a saintly man, patient and prudent, and he sought peace and compromise rather than conflict in the various difficulties that necessarily arose. In 1541 he conducted a series of conferences with the three orders, Franciscan, Dominican and Augustinian, to establish uniformity in the administration of the Sacraments and in the rites and ceremonies throughout the missions. In these conferences Vera Cruz played a leading part ³³⁶).

Archbishop Zumárraga died in 1548 ³³⁷). He was followed in the see of Mexico by a man of entirely different temperament. Fray Alonso de Montúfar, a Dominican, was appointed Archbishop in 1551 when he was already about sixty-two years of age ³³⁸). He was to become a kind of tragic figure in sixteenth century Mexico. Although he was a very good man, he was of irascible disposition, one used to authority, and already burdened with age. With such qualifications he was placed in a post where more than ever before there was needed a man of patience, tractability, and strong health to withstand a new climate and the rigors of colonial life. Montúfar was ill-suited for the job, and trouble was inevitable. He was to find himself in difficulties at one time or another with every authority in Mexico, the Viceroy and Audiencia, the religious orders, especially the Franciscans, and even his own cathedral chapter. In Spain he had a brilliant career, both in the Dominican Order and in the diocese of Seville. He was noted for his learning, had been a qualificador, that is, an official censor for the Inquisition, and confessor to the Viceroy Marqués de Mondéjar and other noble persons. In spite of his ability, however, he was totally unprepared to meet the situation that faced him when he arrived in Mexico on June 23, 1554. Furthermore, a five year vacancy in the see had helped to aggravate conditions. He found himself in a very unhappy situation, and under the stress of difficulties and poor health, his faculties and energy soon gave out. As early as 1556, an ecclesiastical governor, Bartolomé de Ledesma, also a Dominican, was appointed to assist him in running his diocese. By 1571 he had become a total invalid and died the following year on March 7th ³³⁹).

³³⁶) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.* (2nd. edition), Edad I, chap. xxx, p. 160.

³³⁷) For the biography of Juan de Zumárraga, cf. GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Obras*, Vol. V, *Biografía de D. Juan de Zumárraga* (Mexico, 1897).

³³⁸) RICARD, *Quatre lettres de Fr. Alonso de Montúfar*, in *Etudes et documents*, pp. 66-118, esp. pp. 66-77. CUEVAS, *Historia de la Iglesia*, II, 71-73.

³³⁹) Some have said he died in 1569. Cf. RICARD, *loc. cit.*, p. 71, note 7.

Alonso de Montúfar may have proved a good Archbishop for Mexico, if he had not been thrown into the midst of the brewing conflict with the religious orders. Not fully appreciating the situation, he tried to assert his rightful authority and crush all opposition. As a result he earned a very bad name and was charged with being an oppressor of the Indians and a scandal to the Church. An example of the charges made against him is seen in a letter of the Franciscans to the King, where, among other things, they accused him of scandal because he traveled about in a litter carried on the shoulders of Indians ³⁴⁰). Doubtless that did cut a poor figure with the Indians who were used to seeing the friars travel with sandaled feet, but the use of the litter was necessitated by Montúfar's age and poor health. He, in turn, was not remiss in replying to his critics and he penned many an acrimonious letter, some of them against the Augustinians, and especially against Alonso de la Vera Cruz ³⁴¹). But the true character of Montúfar is seen in a letter signed by eight Augustinians in which they defended the good name of the Archbishop ³⁴²). They declared that his critics were prompted more by passion than by reason, and that Montúfar was a worthy and faithful servant of God and the Crown, an example of virtue and goodness to all. They especially praised his humility, chastity, and use of moderation in his household furnishings. The Archbishop, too, in his more peaceful moments, found occasion to pay tribute to the religious and give fitting praise of their mission among the Indians. He acknowledged that the friars were responsible for the planting and cultivation of the Catholic faith and he admitted that « without them the prelates can do very little » ³⁴³). It must be said, however, that, while Alonso de Montúfar was a good and earnest man, the relations between the Hierarchy and the religious

³⁴⁰) *Cartas de Indias*, pp. 138-140. 1559, Francisco de Toral to His Majesty.

³⁴¹) Cf., for example, Montúfar's charge of ignorance against the Augustinians, *supra*, chap. iii. We shall see his charges against Vera Cruz in the next chapter.

³⁴²) A. G. I., Mexico 280. Mexico City, Aug. 23, 1567. The eight Augustinians were Jerónimo de San Esteban, Provincial; Juan Adriano, Prior; Juan de la Anunciación, Jerónimo Melendez, Martín de Perea, Diego Rodríguez de Vertavillo, Alonso de Villalpando, Alonso (?) de Castañeda.

This document is published in CUEVAS, *Historia de la Iglesia*, II, 73, but he omits the second, seventh and eighth names.

³⁴³) « ... los prelados sin ellos pueden hacer muy poco ». CUEVAS, *Historia de la Iglesia*, II, 191. Cuevas cites two letters of Montúfar to the Council of the Indies; one Sept. 18, 1555, and the other, 1566.

orders grew worse during his tenure as Archbishop, and much of the fault was his in his failure to meet the situation calmly and prudently.

Archbishop Montúfar was not alone, however, among the Mexican Hierarchy in his opposition to the friars. Both the Augustinians and the Franciscans were involved in a number of conflicts with the Bishop of Michoacán, Vasco de Quiroga (1538-1565). It was a particularly sad affair because Michoacán was the Augustinians' best mission field, and in the beginning relations with Quiroga were of the best. It appears that he considered himself almost a member of their order, and he put special confidence in Alonso de Borja and Alonso de la Vera Cruz. The former had been his assistant in conducting his famous hospitals of Santa Fe, while Vera Cruz had been his vicar-general and governor of the diocese when Vasco de Quiroga set out for the Council of Trent ³⁴⁴). It is said that he frequently came to stay at the Augustinian monastery of Tiripetío where he had a room just like those of the friars ³⁴⁵).

Vasco de Quiroga was a particularly upright and intelligent man. He had come to Mexico in 1531 as one of the members of the second Audiencia, the governing body which had done much to correct abuses in the colonies ³⁴⁶). In 1533 he was presented by the Emperor for the see of Michoacán which he assumed in 1538. Both during his time as a member of the Audiencia and later as Bishop, he showed particular solicitude for the Indians, especially in organizing their civil life and industry. The good work of the Augustinians in his diocese contributed to the success of his efforts. Bishop Quiroga died at the age of seventy-five at Uruapa in 1565.

Strangely enough, the chief incident in the conflict that developed between the Augustinians and Quiroga concerned two friars who had special ties to the diocese of Michoacán, Alonso de la Vera Cruz and Diego de Chavez. Vera Cruz had once been vicar-general and later became a nominee for the see. When he refused the mitre, Diego de Chavez was chosen, but he died before being consecrated. The troubles with Bishop Quiroga began not long

³⁴⁴) On the hospitals of Santa Fe and Alonso de Borja, cf. *supra*, chap. ii, and PÉREZ DE ARRILUCEA, *Los Agustinos en México en el siglo XVI*, in *Ciudad de Dios*, 97 (1914), 115-126.

On Vera Cruz and Quiroga, cf. *supra*, chap. iii.

³⁴⁵) ESCOBAR, *op. cit.*, p. 381.

³⁴⁶) CUEVAS, *Documentos inéditos*, p. xxiv.

after Vera Cruz' first term as Vicar-Provincial (1548-1551) when the Augustinians had expanded very rapidly in Michoacán and had built some of their finest monastic foundations. A few years later, March 17, 1553, Vasco de Quiroga secured an order from Prince Philip, obliging all the friars to get episcopal permission to build monasteries³⁴⁷). The Bishop had claimed that it was necessary to have some control over the religious in order to be sure that the foundations were made where they were most needed. As in the case at Ocuituco, the friars considered this an unlawful interference in their work and they, in turn, complained to His Majesty that they were being impeded and harrassed by the bishops. As happened many times in the course of these conflicts, Philip II rescinded the previous order and wrote to the Viceroy in 1557 to say that episcopal permission was not necessary³⁴⁸). The religious were to be free to found monasteries at their discretion, with only the approval of the Viceroy, who was to see to it that the missions were built a suitable distance apart, that the best interest of the Indians were served, and that the finances were handled by the Council of the Indies. The King reiterated his stand specifically in regard to the Augustinians a few years later in an instruction sent to the Audiencia in 1562³⁴⁹). He ordered that the interests of the Augustinians be protected against the Bishop of Michoacán who was attempting to seize the monasteries that had been built without his permission and replace the friars by diocesan clergy. Vasco de Quiroga apparently had taken the position that, on the basis of the original royal order of 1553, he had the right to dispossess the religious of monasteries that had been founded without his permission.

That was the background for the scene when the chief incident in the conflict took place at Tlazazalca in 1559, during Vera Cruz' second full-term as Vicar-Provincial. It is not clear from the extant manuscripts just how the incident developed. The chief sources of information are two long letters written by Quiroga to Diego

³⁴⁷) PUGA, *Provisiones, cédulas, etc.* (Mexico, 1563). Reprinted in facsimile in *Ediciones Cultura Hispanica*, Vol. III (Madrid, 1945), fols. 147-147v. The cédula was directed to the Viceroy in reply to the request of Quiroga.

³⁴⁸) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.*, Edad II, chap. xvi, pp. 91-92. Valladolid, April 9, 1557. Also to be seen in PUGA, *op. cit.*, fols. 194-194v.

³⁴⁹) GRIJALVA, *loc. cit.*, Madrid, July 11, 1562.

de Chavez, Prior of Yuriria ³⁵⁰). It appears from the Bishop's letters that he had assigned a secular priest, Cristóbal Cola, to Tlazazalca, and the Augustinians, after once leaving the village, had returned there to build a monastery. Both parties contested the right of the other to be there, and somehow it occurred that the parish priest used violence against the prior of the monastery in putting him out of the parish house ³⁵¹). As a result, Diego de Chavez preached a sermon to the Indians on the following feastday saying that Cristóbal Cola was excommunicated for his act of violence and was to be avoided by all the Christians. It is not clear whether Chavez himself was the prior in question; if so, he only had the office temporarily, since he was also the Prior of Yuriria. The first letter of Bishop Quiroga was a reply to Chavez and a condemnation of his action excommunicating the parish priest.

The two letters of the Bishop are interesting because they are a good example of the way these disputes were carried on, and they have a special interest for this study because in the margin of both letters there are comments and refutations written in the hand of Alonso de la Vera Cruz. Although Vera Cruz is not mentioned directly by Bishop Quiroga, it appears that he directed some of his criticisms against Fray Alonso, for the latter sometimes uses the first person in replying to the charges. Furthermore, since Vera Cruz was Vicar-Provincial at the time (1557-1560), he doubtless had a hand in the business and backed up Diego de Chavez. The general position of both parties was the usual one; Quiroga based his stand on the common law of the Church which gives the bishop prior authority; the Augustinians based their position on the numerous privileges enjoyed by the friars. Both parties marveled at the other's ignorance and intransigence. The two letters of Quiroga, like many similar documents of the period, are wordy and repetitious in the extreme, and frequently the material is irrelevant. In fact, if the question were not as serious as it was, one could almost say that both the letters, and the comments of Vera Cruz, are humorous, so outlandish are some of the charges.

³⁵⁰) FE 325, fols. 228-231 and 232-233v. The dates are Aug. 6, and July 21, 1559. Both are published by LEÓN, *Don Vasco de Quiroga Primer Obispo de Michoacán* (Mexico, 1903), appendix pp. 180-210. His text has been compared with the original and corrections made where necessary.

³⁵¹) LEÓN, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-69, mistakenly says it was the Augustinian Provincial who was the object of violence.

Vasco de Quiroga opened his first letter of July 21, 1559, with a disparaging remark about Alonso de la Vera Cruz.

So great is the blindness of some who think they know something and who studied a little bit at Salamanca, that it appears to them that they are doing well and fulfilling their duty to the diocesan bishop and to his authority by deceiving him, cheating him and pulling the wool over his eyes ³⁵²).

This can only refer to Fray Alonso because Diego de Chavez, who entered the Augustinian Order in Mexico, is not known to have studied at Salamanca. Quiroga went on to speak of the unheard-of boldness and scandal of those friars who, a long time after the Bishop had appointed his parish priest to Tlazazalca, had the audacity to enter the village and build a church again against the will of the Bishop. And this after the promise made in writing by the commissary-provincial Miguel de Alvarado in the presence of Quiroga. We do not know what that promise was, but it probably was a pledge to forego any previous rights to Tlazazalco. Vera Cruz, however, wrote in the margin at this point: « It was not done with the consent of the Provincial », that is, himself ³⁵³). Diego de Chavez, continued Quiroga, had no right to declare Cristóbal Cola excommunicated and he himself fell under excommunication for publicly denouncing the legitimate pastor. Furthermore, Cola was not guilty of violence against the prior; he simply gave a « necessary peaceful warning » to the prior who had caused the trouble when he entered the house of the parish priest. Chavez, therefore, must remain excommunicated until he preaches his retraction before the souls in his care. But, of course, he did not really have souls in his care, added Quiroga, because, as Gerson said, the religious are outside the hierarchical state ³⁵⁴). Here Vera Cruz commented, seemingly with his tongue in his cheek: « It is ridiculous to assert that we are outside the hierarchy, since it is no harm to be out of that one of which Gerson speaks, as long

³⁵²) « Es tanta la ceguedad de algunos que piensan que saben algo y estudiaron poco en Salamanca, que les parece que es bien y que cumplen con lo que deben al prelado diocesano y á su auctoridad engañándole, untándole el caso y quebrarle el ojo... ».

³⁵³) « No se hizo con consentimiento del provincial ».

³⁵⁴) Jean de Charlier de Gerson (1363-1429) was a famous Chancellor of the University of Paris. He was a Gallicanist and, hence, an excessive defender of the Hierarchy.

as we are not outside the celestial hierarchy » ³⁵⁵). A little further on, the Bishop declared Diego de Chavez unworthy to preach, and he brought in the example of the scandal caused by Martin Luther. Again Vera Cruz wrote in his comment, this time in the first person: « Here he indicates that I preach errors of faith and that we are schismatics » ³⁵⁶). Quiroga closed his letter saying sadly that he had hoped for better things, but his hopes were vain ³⁵⁷).

The Augustinians, secure in what they considered their evident rights, paid no attention to the Bishop's orders. If they answered his letter, they probably simply stated their privileges as indicated in the marginal notes of Vera Cruz. Quiroga, at any rate, sent a second letter on August 6, 1559. It was even longer and more verbose than the first, and covered much the same ground. Alonso de la Vera Cruz also commented on the second manuscript, specifying some privilege or other for every canon or decree cited by Vasco de Quiroga. At the end of the manuscript Diego de Chavez has added an autographed reply to the Bishop's charges in which he stated that the religious had their faculties directly from the Holy See through their own superiors, and were therefore independent of the episcopal authority ³⁵⁸).

Bishop Quiroga ended his second letter with the avowal that he did not wish to continue a war with the Augustinians and thus lose time and energy in the work needed for the salvation of souls. But, unfortunately, the affair did not end there. In most cases these disputes never went beyond the pen and ink stage, but in this case the final result was open violence. Passion and party spirit had so mastered both sides that, in the following year, physical conflict broke out and the Augustinian monastery was burned. A half dozen of the friars were lucky to get away with their lives ³⁵⁹). In con-

³⁵⁵) « Ridiculum est quod estamos fuera de la hierarchia como sea de la de Jerson no es inconveniente (sic) no estando fuera de la celestial ».

³⁵⁶) « Aqui da a entender que predico errores in fide y que somos sesmaticos ».

³⁵⁷) There follows a note by the notary apostolic Juan de Benavides that he had delivered the letter to Diego de Chavez and that the latter had read it in his presence and that of Canon Jerónimo Rodríguez. July 22, 1559.

³⁵⁸) FE 325, fol. 231.

³⁵⁹) CUEVAS, *Documentos inéditos*, p. 261. Letter of Luis de Anguis to Philip II, Feb. 20, 1561, from Mexico. The violence went even further according to Anguis: « ... hoy día me certifican que hay desafíos entre ellos, llevando el negocio como si fuera entre soldados ».

sequence of this violence, the Augustinians brought suit against Vasco de Quiroga and his clergy ³⁶⁰). The conclusion of the whole affair was the already mentioned royal order of 1562, in which Philip II instructed the Viceroy and Audiencia to protect the interests of the Augustinians against the Bishop of Michoacán.

Such was the sad and scandalous ending of the earlier friendship between Vasco de Quiroga and Alonso de la Vera Cruz and his fellow-missionaries. It is not easy to determine upon which party the greater blame falls. The biographer of Bishop Quiroga would place the blame upon the Augustinians for abusing the earlier friendship and good will of the Bishop ³⁶¹). Certainly Diego de Chavez, in declaring publicly the excommunication of the parish priest, acted beyond his authority, committed a grave scandal, and perhaps a flagrant injustice as well. He and his fellow Augustinians displayed an inexcusable intransigence throughout. But, on the other hand, Vasco de Quiroga can hardly be cleared of all blame. First of all, the evidence is biased in his favor since most of the information comes from his own letters. And he cannot be excused for ignoring the express order of the King in favor of the religious, given in 1557. He also displayed ill will in dragging such a person as Martin Luther into the question. Furthermore, Luis de Anguis, Provisor of the cathedral of Mexico City, wrote in a report to Philip II that the incident would not have occurred at all, if the Bishop of Michoacán had not been absent from his see, and if he had shown less rigidity in his dealings with the friars ³⁶²). This opinion of Anguis deserves consideration since he himself was a member of the secular clergy, and in other matters he showed himself no special friend of the Augustinians ³⁶³). Taking the picture as a whole, it appears that it was more the Bishop who had abused the friendship of the religious, and not the other way around.

Going back a little in our narrative, we find that the year 1555 was especially significant in the conflict between the Hierarchy and the religious orders. In that year the first provincial synod of the

³⁶⁰) RICARD, *La « conquête spirituelle »*, p. 294 and note 5. He cites *A. G. I.*, Justicia, 45-5-55/11. 1560.

³⁶¹) LEÓN, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-69.

³⁶²) CUEVAS, *Documentos inéditos*, p. 255. Mexico, Feb. 20, 1561. The source is *A. G. I.*, 60-2-17 l.

³⁶³) *Ibid.* See his comments on the extravagance in the building of San Agustín.

archbishopric of Mexico City was called by Archbishop Montúfar ³⁶⁴). In this meeting the bishops surveyed their situation and issued some new legislation, much of which was opposed to the privileges of the friars. The religious, of course, took immediate steps in opposition to the move made by the bishops. In the years following, a great flow of correspondence crossed and re-crossed the Atlantic as each party presented its case to the royal government. The bishops were eventually upheld when in 1564, Pope Pius IV issued the Bull *In Principis Apostolorum Sede*, revoking the privileges enjoyed by the religious in the New World which were not in conformity with the decrees of the Council of Trent ³⁶⁵). The friars, however, viewing this as the destruction of their missions, worked hard to convince the King and the Holy See of their point of view. Their efforts were rewarded when Pius V issued the *Exponi nobis nuper* in 1567, restoring the previous privileges ³⁶⁶). In the next chapter we shall see the important part played by Alonso de la Vera Cruz in obtaining this Brief.

For the present we shall consider briefly the position taken by the bishops in 1555, and the corresponding reaction on the part of the religious. There were several points of conflict created by the synod of 1555 ³⁶⁷). The bishops declared that all matrimonial cases were reserved to themselves and therefore the religious had no power to judge such cases, that permission of the Ordinary was necessary for the building of a monastery, and that the religious could be dispossessed and replaced by secular priests in those foundations where said permission had not been obtained. We have already seen what was the reaction to the two latter points, and how in some cases violence resulted. The rights of the religious in this matter were upheld in the already-mentioned royal orders in

³⁶⁴) There were five sees in Mexico in this period: Mexico City, Michoacán, Tlaxcala-Puebla, Oaxaca and New Galicia. Only the first three were represented in the synod of 1555.

³⁶⁵) *Bullarium Romanum*, VII (1862), 277-279. Feb. 17, 1564.

³⁶⁶) *Ibid.*, pp. 558-560. March 24, 1567.

³⁶⁷) BASALENQUE, *op. cit.*, I, 322-323. GRIJALVA, *op. cit.*, Edad II, chap. xvi, p. 87.

Archbishop Montúfar sent a report on the synod to the Emperor Charles V, Nov. 1, 1555. *CDI Ist.*, III, 520-530.

The Bishops sent notice to the Provincials about matrimony cases on Oct. 29, 1555. A. G. I., Mexico 280.

1557 and 1562 ³⁶⁸). In regard to the matrimonial cases, the opposition of the religious was equally determined. They maintained that the position taken by the bishops was not only contrary to the papal privileges, but it was also impractical. The bishops and their staffs could not possibly handle the numerous cases arising among the new Christians, especially because of the custom of polygamy. Furthermore, it was frequently impossible, because of the distance separating some of the missions from the episcopal seat, to refer all the cases to the bishop. There was in addition a question of extra burden on the Indians, if they had to pay the fees entailed in conducting formal tribunals ³⁶⁹). In the next chapter, dealing with the writings of Vera Cruz, we shall see what exactly were the privileges claimed by the religious in regard to matrimonial cases.

In a word, the friars felt that the efforts of the bishops would make their mission work impossible. Because of the still primitive condition of the Church in Mexico, it was necessary for the religious to maintain their privileges, and they contended that it was up to the Holy See to decide when and how the missionaries' privileges were to be curtailed ³⁷⁰). They were defended by a royal order sent to the bishops in 1557, commanding the bishops not to upset the previous method of procedure, especially in regard to the matrimonial cases ³⁷¹). Such royal orders, however, never permanently settled these disputes. With each new order new appeals followed, and each party did its best to win the King over to its opinion.

The struggle went on in spite of efforts on the part of Philip II to find a satisfactory solution. When Alonso de la Vera Cruz became Vicar-Provincial for the second time in 1557, relations with the Hierarchy were becoming worse. In the beginning of the following year the major superiors of the three religious orders sent a joint letter to King Philip to complain of the opposition and abuse suffe-

³⁶⁸) The rights of the religious were further upheld in another royal order of 1557, March 30, which forbade the bishops to place clerics in the same pueblos where the religious were established. PUGA, *op. cit.*, fols. 193-193v.

There were also some contentions among the three religious orders themselves in regard to the right to found monasteries in certain pueblos. Cf. the royal order of Aug. 18, 1556. PUGA, *op. cit.*, fol. 193.

³⁶⁹) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.*, Edad II, chap. xvi, pp. 90-91.

³⁷⁰) *Ibid.*

³⁷¹) PUGA, *op. cit.*, fols. 193v-194. March 30, 1557, from Valladolid.

red by them at the hands of the bishops ³⁷²). They promised to send a report of their grievances along with a list of suggestions, and said that they would be forced to abandon their work if no remedy were forthcoming. It is significant that this letter, signed by all three Provincials, Augustinian, Franciscan and Dominican, was written by Vera Cruz. It illustrates a fact that will become more evident later on, namely, that Fray Alonso was at this period the chief spokesman, and one of the principal leaders, of the religious. His knowledge of theology and canon law, and his experience as major superior, made him a natural leader for all the friars in Mexico. One of the chief sources for the study of these disputes is a large batch of manuscripts found in the National Library of Paris ³⁷³). They were originally in the hands of Vera Cruz, and most of them deal with these conflicts. His possession of these manuscripts bears witness to his interest in the question, and to his position of leadership, for many of the papers concern not only the Augustinians, but the other orders as well.

In accordance with their promise to send a report and list of suggestions, the three major superiors submitted a document to be presented by Hortuño de Ibarra, an auditor of the royal exchequer ³⁷⁴). It contained items to be submitted to the Pope, the King and Council of the Indies, and the Inquisitor General. From the Pope they sought an express renewal and confirmation of their privileges for the administration of the Sacraments without faculties from the bishops. The many disputes with the Hierarchy were beginning to take a toll on the consciences of the religious, and some of them began to have doubts about the validity of their faculties when the bishops denied them the right to exercise their papal privileges. Of the King the friars requested an immediate settle-

³⁷²) A. G. I., Mexico 281. Jan. 30, 1558. Signed by Alonso de la Vera Cruz, Francisco de Toral, O. F. M., and Domingo de S. María, O. P.

³⁷³) Cf. the description given above in the introductory chapter on the sources.

³⁷⁴) FE 325, fols. 267-267v. It is undated but the year was probably 1559, since it is signed by Alonso de la Vera Cruz, Pedro de la Peña and Francisco de Toral, who were Provincials at that time.

Pedro de la Peña, O. P., came to Mexico in 1550 and was elected Provincial in 1559. He became Bishop of Quito in 1563 and died in Lima, March 7, 1583. Cf. GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Biografías*, IV, 429.

Francisco de Toral, O. F. M., came to Mexico in 1542, was Provincial in 1559, and became Bishop of Yucatan in 1562. He died in Mexico City in April, 1571. Cf. *Ibid.*, 431-433.

ment of the vexing dispute over tithes. They also asked that the secular clergy be carefully examined by the Viceroy to be certain that they know the Indian tongues and lead lives befitting the clerical state. They suggested further a system of pensions for the Spaniards who were serving in the colonies, but at the same time opposed the increasing of tributes on the Indians. In those pueblos where the friars have monasteries, the episcopal visitation should be made, they said, by the bishop in person and he should not be allowed to impose levies on the Indians. The proposal made to the Inquisitor General was an interesting one. The friars requested an inquiry into the orthodoxy of the teaching of Juan de Zumárraga, first Bishop of Mexico City, who had died in 1548. Their purpose, however, was not to condemn him, but to clear his good name and honorable reputation of certain charges rumored against him.

The above report is typical of many similar papers sent by the friars to Spain in the course of these disputes. Another one was sent a year or so later in which much of the same material was repeated verbatim ³⁷⁵). In a letter sent by the same three provincials to Philip II, March 7, 1560, they complained especially against the Bishops of Mexico and Michoacán, saying that the latter had sent denunciatory reports about the religious and that great harm was being done to the Church ³⁷⁶). The provincials declared that the situation was becoming so serious that many discouraged religious were returning to Spain where they could serve God and the Crown freely. They suggested that the King have Hortuño de Ibarra declare under oath whether or not the religious were causing the trouble. If so, let the King punish them. If not, let him command the bishops to respect the papal privileges.

Shortly afterward the major superiors of the three orders submitted a petition to the Viceroy Luis de Velasco ³⁷⁷). They had heard that the Viceroy inclined toward the opinion of the bishops; they requested, therefore, a declaration by the Audiencia as to

³⁷⁵) FE 325, fols. 259-259v, and fols. 303-304. The first of these is written in the hand of Vera Cruz, perhaps drafted by him. The second contains additions at the end written in his hand.

³⁷⁶) *Cartas de Indias*, pp. 144-146.

³⁷⁷) FE 325, fol. 325. It is signed by Francisco de Bustamante, Commissary General of the Franciscans; Pedro de la Peña, O. P., and Agustín de Coruña, O. S. A. There is no date, but it was probably written in 1561, for Agustín de Coruña became Vicar-Provincial in 1560.

whether or not the friars were to continue in their work. Another report was drawn up by the same three superiors at about the same time ³⁷⁸). It contained a long protestation of their loyalty and service to God and the King; they outlined what the friars had done for the good of the Church and the Spanish colonization, and complained that they were being rewarded with calumny, misrepresentation and obstructionism. Some had even been excommunicated by the bishops. The statement closed with a plea for better appreciation of their work, especially on the part of the Viceroy and Audiencia.

Despite all the letters, reports and statements sent to the various authorities, the religious began to fear that they were fighting a losing battle. They were apprehensive of the representation employed by the bishops at the royal court, and of the effects of the legislation and reforms of the Council of Trent on their work. The missionaries decided, therefore, to send a more effective committee to Spain, to deal with the King and with the Holy See, in an effort to obtain a guarantee of their privileges in the mission lands. After a meeting of all the religious on Jan. 29, 1562, the head superiors of all three orders were commissioned to go to Spain ³⁷⁹). They were the Franciscan Commissary General Francisco de Bustamante, the Dominican Provincial Pedro de la Peña, and the Augustinian Vicar-Provincial Agustín de Coruña ³⁸⁰). With them went Alonso de la Vera Cruz. The reason for this going, says Grijalva, was to act as advisor and assistant to the major superiors, but in the next chapter we shall see that there was more than that behind it ³⁸¹).

Thus far we have concentrated mainly on the grievances and

³⁷⁸) FE 325, fols. 244-244v. It contains the names of the same three as above, note 377.

³⁷⁹) BIA, II, 158. Santiago Vela cites a record of this meeting, held on Jan. 29, 1562, given in the MS of Sicardo 4349 of the Archivo Nacional, Madrid. Many religious signed this report directed to the Pope. Among the twelve Augustinians are Agustín de Coruña and Alonso de la Vera Cruz.

³⁸⁰) *Ibid.* Francisco de Bustamante came to Mexico in 1542, already advanced in age. He was twice Provincial and twice Commissary General, the second time in 1561. He died shortly after his arrival in Madrid, 1562. Cf. GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Biografías*, IV, 451-452.

On Pedro de la Peña, cf. *supra*, note 374.

On Agustín de Coruña, cf. chap. ii, note 50.

³⁸¹) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.*, Edad II, chap. xviii. Grijalva here mistakenly wrote 1561, in place of 1562. He corrects this in other places.

complaints of the religious. The bishops, however, as has already been indicated, were not silent. They were just as anxious as the friars to convey their side of the struggle to the King, and they too sent a great volume of letters and reports to the royal court and the Council of the Indies. A particularly serious indictment was penned in 1556 by Archbishop Montúfar, in which he outlined the various charges leveled against the friars ³⁸²). We shall examine his report in conjunction with another similar indictment written nearly ten years later, in 1565 ³⁸³). This second report was written by Valderrama, a royal visitator sent by Philip II to inspect and report upon the colony in Mexico. His charges against the religious are much the same as those of Montúfar, so it will be convenient to examine them together. First of all, however, it is well to recall that basically the conflict between the Hierarchy and the religious orders was one of jurisdiction; it was a clash between the extraordinary and temporary mission setup and the ordinary and permanent diocesan organization. The many extraneous matters brought in by both sides were only convenient arguments employed by each party to strengthen his position. One can expect to find plenty of exaggeration and prejudice. Furthermore, in the case of Valderrama, Cuevas points out that he had an axe to grind. He had come to Mexico with the hope of being able to increase the royal tributes and thus win the favor of the King ³⁸⁴). But he found the religious taking the part of the Indians and opposing the increase in tribute. He was therefore somewhat embittered against the friars; in his report to the King he displayed his displeasure.

Archbishop Montúfar, in the beginning of his report, complained of the inadequacy of the religious to meet the needs of the missions. He spoke of cases where two or three friars in a monastery had the care of more than 100,000 souls scattered over distances of one hundred miles or more and only visited once or twice in the year. While it is not entirely impossible that such a situation did exist in some of the more remote places, it is hard to see how it was any fault of the religious. They were doing their best to cover the immense territory, and we have seen in the second chapter that

³⁸²) *CDI Ist.*, IV, 491-530. Montúfar to the Council of the Indies, May 5, 1556.

³⁸³) FE 325, fols. 224-225. It is undated, but CUEVAS, *Historia de la Iglesia*, II, 180-194, says it was written in 1565.

³⁸⁴) CUEVAS, *loc. cit.*

the growth and extension of the Augustinian missions alone was little short of phenomenal. In order to protect themselves against this charge of inadequacy, the major superiors of the three orders wrote to the King in 1559 to report the number of houses and men they had in Mexico at that time³⁸⁵). The Dominicans claimed 210 friars in 40 houses ; the Franciscans, 380 in 80 houses ; and the Augustinians, 212 in 40 houses. Besides the Mexican missions, they were providing men for the missions in Florida and, a little latter, the Far East. Actually, however, Montúfar's criticism was not so much directed against the religious as it was intended to show the need for collecting tithes to provide funds for the training of more secular clergy. He would have liked also to have the religious relinquish their foundations in the centers of population to the secular clergy, and devote themselves entirely to the remoter areas. But that was easier said than done ; we have already spoken of the difficulties involved in the attempts to force the religious to hand over their monasteries and churches.

In connection with this criticism of the inadequacy of the religious, Montúfar complained that, with the lack of priests to care for them, the Indians were forced to carry their sick to the monasteries in order to obtain the last Sacraments. Furthermore, added the Archbishop, the friars often refused to go and hear the confessions of the sick nearby, claiming that it interfered with their monastic life. Valderrama also made this charge against the religious. This comes as something of a shock and demands some investigation, for if the charge is true, the friars were hardly worthy of the name missionaries. Cuevas feels that the religious were at fault to some degree on this point³⁸⁶). He points out that they defended themselves by saying that they could not leave the village where the monastery was located to go and hear the confessions of the sick in another place, because greater harm would be done by abandoning the place where they were established. Cuevas remarks that the argument is not very convincing. Another and equally weak argument was the contention of the friars that they had not the same obligation in such matters as the pastor of a parish. Since their missions were not parishes, said they, their obligation of service

³⁸⁵) *Cartas de Indias*, pp. 141-143. Tlaxcala, May 1, 1559. Signed by Domingo de Santa María, O. P., Francisco de Toral, O. F. M., and Alonso de la Vera Cruz.

³⁸⁶) CUEVAS, *Historia de la Iglesia*, II, 182.

was one of charity, not justice. But, on the other hand, there were some real difficulties in this question, and it is easy to understand that frequently it was simply impossible to answer all the sick calls. Montúfar himself indirectly bore witness to this fact when he wrote to complain of the shortage of priests and said that in some cases, where there was work enough for twenty or thirty, there were only two friars on hand, one of whom stayed at the monastery while the other went about to visit the villages ³⁸⁷). In such a situation it would have been clearly impossible to answer all the appeals for help. Furthermore, we know for a fact that allowance was usually made for service to the sick. At the Augustinian monastery and school of San Pablo in Mexico City, for example, where the religious life and discipline was of the strictest, the only reason allowed for anyone to go out at night was to minister to the sick ³⁸⁸). The monastery doors were locked at eight o'clock and only those friars going to administer the Sacraments could get permission to go out.

Another charge made by both Montúfar and Valderrama was that the religious were jealous of one another, one order would not allow another to come and work in its district. Each chose the best location available and put up monasteries every one and a half to three miles. While there was some truth to this charge of contentions among the orders ³⁸⁹), we have seen in studying the foundations made by Alonso de la Vera Cruz that the friars did not always choose the best places for their monasteries. They went to the poorer and remoter areas as well as to the richer and more populous districts.

Archbishop Montúfar complained further that many of the Indians were poorly instructed, ignorant, and subject to vices and relapse into paganism. Here again, the natural shortcomings and occasional failures of the missions cannot be fairly blamed on the religious. The Archbishop's purpose here, as before, was to show the need for collecting tithes with which, he claimed, seminaries could be built and an adequate supply of clergy maintained. The friars strongly opposed the tithes, and for that Montúfar held them blameworthy.

³⁸⁷) Montúfar to the Council of the Indies, Dec. 15, 1554. Cf. RICARD, *Etudes et documents*, p. 84.

³⁸⁸) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.*, Edad III, chap. xxxii, pp. 154-155, no. 14.

³⁸⁹) *Supra*, note 368.

Alonso de Montúfar then proceeded to speak of three chief abuses of the religious against the Indians. The first abuse concerned the « *cajas de comunidad* », a system of community pooling whereby the Indians of a village contributed certain goods into a common store to be used for common needs and expenses. The complaint was that the friars kept exclusive control over these stores and used them for themselves and for popular carousals at festive times. The system was not new ; similar arrangements had been made before the coming of the missionaries, but the friars had assumed control because they found that the administration of the stores was not always fair and honest. They, however, put themselves in danger of suspicion, and certain cases of abuse did exist, but on the whole they administered the stores for the best interests of the Indians ³⁹⁰). It might have been more prudent to let the Indians themselves maintain some measure of control.

The second abuse mentioned by Montúfar was the fact that the Indians were continually becoming involved in minor litigations and coming in droves to Mexico City to spend their meagher resources on court fees, lawyers, interpreters, and so forth. It is difficult to understand just how the religious were to be held responsible for this ; it was rather an abuse of the civil administration. In fact, the religious themselves, on a number of occasions, complained about the same thing ³⁹¹). They castigated the civil officials and merchants who too readily accepted the Indian's money for public services, or sold them inferior wines which induced drunkenness, laziness and sickness.

In connection with this matter, there was a complaint made by Valderrama that the religious were interfering in civil affairs where they had no business. In most instances, however, where the religious intruded in temporal affairs their objective was the protection of the Indians. Many times letters and reports were sent to the King to urge the correction of abuses, or to plead a favor for some official who had given good service to the Crown and colonies ³⁹²).

³⁹⁰) RICARD, *La « conquête spirituelle »*, pp. 177-180.

³⁹¹) Cf., for example, A. G. I., Mexico 280. A letter of Francisco de Bustamante, Pedro de la Peña and Alonso de la Vera Cruz to the King. Mexico, July 26, 1561.

³⁹²) *Ibid.* and GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Nueva colección de documentos*, II, 248-250.

In one instance of such interference in secular affairs an Augustinian, Alonso de Soria, went to the extent of preaching against slavery in the cathedral church of Mexico City; he was put out of the pulpit ³⁹³). There is one case, however, where Valderrama's charge of interference was justified. He said that the religious should not keep prisons or castigate the Indians. Where that was true, certainly the friars were going beyond both their calling and their responsibility. The administration of justice and the infliction of penalties was solely the responsibility of the civil power.

The third of the three abuses listed by Montúfar charged the religious with extravagance in the building, ornamentation and maintenance of their churches and monasteries. Both the Archbishop and Valderrama devoted much space to their criticisms in this matter. Before considering some of the individual charges, we might recall the general opinion of Mariano Cuevas, the most outstanding church historian in Mexico. He believes that the monastic buildings of the sixteenth century in Mexico, grandiose though they were, were less than what one might expect for so large and wealthy a land, and even the best of them cannot compare with the grand monastic structures of Spain in the same period ³⁹⁴). While this no doubt is true, however, one must take cognizance of the fact that Mexico was then a primitive land, and perhaps the friars did not show as much restraint as would have been desired. The land was wealthy, but the people were not. Even though the transplanting of Spanish civilization and culture went on very rapidly and successfully, and the religious were keeping pace with the general trend, the fact is that the Indians had to bear the greater part of the burden, and it was a heavy burden.

Some of the charges made against the religious, however, are certainly exaggerated. Montúfar, for example, said that the Indians were forced to labor on construction, and without receiving so much as a piece of bread in payment. That is hardly credible; a salary was paid, even though a very small one, as in the case of San Agustín in Mexico City. And Valderrama complained that the religious were letting the Indians bear most of the cost of building.

A letter of Fran. de Bustamante, Pedro de la Peña and Agustín de Coruña to the King. Mexico, circa 1561.

³⁹³) MENDIETA, *op. cit.*, p. 367.

³⁹⁴) CUEVAS, *Historia de la Iglesia*, II, 186-187.

instead of applying the rule specified by the King, that is, that one-third of the cost was to come from the royal treasury, one-third from the encomendero of the place, and one-third from the Indian village. But the religious, by not insisting on that system of payments, were actually sparing the natives extra burdens³⁹⁵). Ultimately, all the money came from the Indians anyhow, and if the friars had insisted upon a specified quota from the encomendero and royal officials, their demands would have been met by simply increasing the tributes. Montúfar especially cited the Augustinians for extravagances in the small town of Epazoyuca. He said they put the whole burden of expenses on the Indians when they had in Mexico City a monastery whose income was greater than that of the whole Archdiocese. Certainly this statement about the income of San Agustín in Mexico City is grossly exaggerated. We have already discussed this point earlier in this chapter when we spoke of finances and the holding of property. But what is more important here, Montúfar neglected to take into account the fact that the Augustinians contributed very considerably to the prosperity of Epazoyuca. If they extracted a high contribution from the village, it was largely the fruit of their own labors in increasing productivity by means of the management of irrigation and agriculture³⁹⁶).

Both the Archbishop and Valderrama also leveled the charge of extravagance in regard to the employment of the Indians in choirs, orchestras and other services in the churches. This was not a fair complaint because, far from abusing the natives, the religious were thus contributing to their culture and civilization. Such services were freely rendered as a part of the worship of God and participation in the religious and cultural life of the villages.

Another criticism made by Valderrama was that the friars had no business collecting alms when they should have sought their needs from the royal treasury. Actually, however, the allotment given by the King was very small indeed, and we have seen in the case of San Agustín what a slow and sometimes fruitless process

³⁹⁵) *Ibid.*

³⁹⁶) PAMPHILUS, *Chronica ordinis fratrum eremitarum S. Augustini* (Rome, 1581), fol. 115v. He says of Epazoyuco, « oppidum salubre et gratum, propter irriguam aquae copiam, quam elegantī industria, miraque solertia ex intimis terrae cavernis per inaccessa montium abrupta eidem populo, cum antea esset sterilis, adduxit Antonius de Aguilar, vir incredibili multarum rerum cognitione insignis ».

it was to obtain extra funds and assistance. A case in point was the order of the Viceroy Gaston de Peralta, Marqués de Falces, sent to the Augustinians on Feb. 1, 1567³⁹⁷). He accused them of collecting a tribute to which they had no right. It appears that the Augustinians from Chinolticpac went on occasional visits to Guazalingo where they received a payment of one hundred gold pesos a year in return for their services. Guazalingo was held in encomienda by one Gabriel de Aguilera who must have made a complaint to the mayor of Meztitlan, who, in turn, reported to the Viceroy. The mayor pointed out that the Augustinians had plenty of income in their monasteries at both Chinolticpac and Meztitlan and should not have collected anything extra at Guazalingo. The Viceroy, therefore, ordered them to stop taking the hundred pesos, and, furthermore, he said they were to pay for any food given to them by the Indians of Guazalingo.

Juan de la Peña, who, incidently, was a student of Alonso de la Vera Cruz, and who had been Prior of Meztitlan, wrote in reply to the Viceroy's order on July 10th of the same year³⁹⁸). His letter was both long and indignant as he presented the other side of the case. After a verbose four page introduction extolling the work of the friars, he got down to the case in point. To begin with, said Juan de la Peña, the report sent to the Viceroy was false. For years the Augustinians had been going to Guazalingo without receiving anything. Four or five years previous to his writing, the Archbishop of Mexico City had ordered the encomendero of Guazalingo to pay one hundred pesos a year to assist the friars who visited there. But the payment had never been made in full. In view of the encomendero's failure to meet his just and grave obligation, the religious had requested the sum directly from the Indians. As for the command that the friars pay for their food in Guazalingo, Juan de la Peña thought it was most unfair, even ridiculous. He pointed out that the Indians always and everywhere were hosts to the missionaries, even if they were just passing through. If the conditions laid down by the Viceroy were to be observed, said Fray Juan,

³⁹⁷) FE 325, fols. 354-358. Statement of Juan de la Peña sent to the Viceroy Gaston de Peralta. Meztitlan, July 10, 1567. The order of the Viceroy is found on fol. 356. Mexico, Feb. 1, 1567.

³⁹⁸) *Ibid.* On Juan de la Peña cf. *BIA*, VI, 242. He wrote an epigram for Vera Cruz' *Dialectica resolutio*, fol. 1v of 1554 edition.

no religious would ever go to Guazalingo because it was a rugged, hot, mountainous place, and full of mosquitos.

Juan de la Peña then took up the statement that the religious had adequate sustenance in their places of residence. He said that the allotment given to the friars was little more than a pittance, barely enough to sustain them. The officials of the royal government received a salary of two pesos a day, while a friar, whose work was many times harder and more important, was given one hundred pesos for a whole year. In summary, he requested the Viceroy to revise his order so that no one could interfere with the collection of alms, and in the future to deal with the religious in « more modest language ».

From this brief review of the principal charges made against the missionaries it can be fairly concluded that, while the religious frequently were subject to human failings, on the whole they gave a very good account of themselves. The complaints made by their opponents, although they had some foundation in fact, were exaggerated out of all proportion to the reality. Where we have had a chance to consider the defense made by the friars to various specific charges, their reasoning and explanations have appeared adequate. The complaints, as was remarked before, were really only convenient arguments employed to bolster the ultimate objective of the critic, and therefore, they cannot be considered as having great importance in themselves. We have seen earlier in this chapter that even Archbishop Montúfar found occasion to praise the work of the religious orders and admitted that the bishops could not possibly get along without them ³⁹⁹). The same can be said of Valderrama. In spite of all his acrimonious charges, he too acknowledged that the friars had done all that was possible and that the good status of religion in the New World was due to their efforts ⁴⁰⁰).

Summing up this whole question of the disputes between the Hierarchy and the religious orders, it is difficult to see just how a peaceful solution might have been arrived at. Looking back over the various factors mentioned in this chapter, one sees that the problem had very many complications. García Icazbalceta has pointed out that there were two basic failures which aggravated

³⁹⁹) *Supra*, note 343.

⁴⁰⁰) CUEVAS, *Historia de la Iglesia*, II, 192.

the situation ⁴⁰¹). One was the esprit de corps of each camp, a thing good in itself, but often giving rise to prejudice and excess ; the other was the failure to recognize the fact that circumstances change and no institution should exist after it has ceased to serve the purpose for which it was created. The first of these two factors obviously played an important part in the problem. But the second one was more than just a failure, it was the very heart of the problem. How was it possible to decide when the extraordinary system of privileges enjoyed by the religious had ceased to serve its purpose ? In the centers of population the regular diocesan organization was easily established, but in many of the outlying districts the Church still existed in a primitive mission situation. As long as the whole problem of ecclesiastical organization was looked upon as being one piece, there could be no solution. It was necessary to find some line of demarkation between the two extremities, but neither side was willing to limit its sphere of authority. Of the two, Hierarchy and religious orders, probably the greater blame is due to the religious, because they should have recognized that they must give way to the episcopal authority, and the sooner they had been willing to work out an understanding, the better it would have been for all concerned.

Arthur ENNIS, O. S. A.

(To be continued).

⁴⁰¹) GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Nueva colección de documentos*, II, xlix-l.