

## SACRAMENTS AND THE STATE: LESSONS FROM THE MEXICAN *REFORMA*

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*The Mexican Reforma is often considered a classic example of the power struggles that occurred between church and state throughout the nineteenth century. However, since in this case both sides claimed to be Catholic, the most important battles in Mexico were actually intra ecclesiam. Ultimately, it was a fight over access to the sacraments that drove Mexico into civil war, transforming both the Church and society in the process. The current debate in the United States over allowing public figures who violate Church teaching to receive Holy Communion should be considered within the context of the Mexican experience.*

The Mexican *Reforma* (1855-1861) was not, as the name suggests, an actual reformation of the Church in Mexico. Rather it was a systematic suppression of Mexico's Catholic culture and identity. However, if we are to believe the insistent rhetoric of those who initiated this project, this was not the outcome that was originally planned. It is true that liberals wanted to implement a progressive agenda, which might have required the silencing of reactionary views and voices within the Church. Nevertheless, embracing a Catholic identity without demanding doctrinal content, most liberals saw no reason why a chastened Church could not continue to play some role, aesthetic or otherwise, in the modern Mexican state.

This desire to empty Catholicism of its "outdated" dogmatic content clashed with another new religious reality: a re-energized ultramontane Catholicism willing to require doctrinal assent as the *sine qua non* of participation in the sacramental life of the Church.<sup>1</sup> Thus the sacraments, once the social bond of all Mexicans, became the battleground for liberal and conservative ideas. Ultimately, although liberals lost the battle to redefine the character of the Church, they were victorious in remaking the Mexican state. From these commanding heights they worked to discredit and marginalize their erstwhile religion, a process known in Mexican history as the *Reforma*.

Today, the Catholic community in the United States faces a culture war of its own. Currently, this conflict is exemplified by the scandal of Catholic politicians who support legislation promoting abortion rights.<sup>2</sup> Since the "right to life" is central to the Church's moral teaching, some U.S. bishops have insisted that such high-profile dissidents should not be permitted to receive the Eucharist.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, a number of pro-choice politicians did receive Holy Communion at events surrounding Pope Benedict XVI's visit to the United States in 2008, a spectacle that confused and troubled many observers.<sup>4</sup> However, in spite of repeated explanations of the Church's position, at this point the hierarchy seems reluctant to act decisively. Although Catholic politicians remain intensely jealous of their religious identity, most seem unwilling to submit to any ecclesiastical discipline.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the bishops recognize that the ensuing media battle is one that they cannot win, and realize that the political consequences for the Church might be serious indeed.<sup>6</sup> The Mexican *Reforma* is one example of what may happen when the Church uses its spiritual authority to confront the power of the modern state. At the same time, in spite of the high price that Mexicans paid for their religious fidelity in the nineteenth century, at least some of those left behind in the Church after the liberal defection saw the victory as their own.

While church-state struggles were common throughout the nineteenth century, the process of the *Reforma* was unique in one regard. Unlike Europe, where nationalism rested primarily on secular foundations, Mexican identity, born in the crucible of the Spanish conquest and refined in the recent war with Anglo-Protestant America, was still identical with membership in the Catholic Church. After Mexico's humiliating defeat in its 1846-48 war with the United States, liberals became even more determined to modernize the country and "place it at one leap to the level of more advanced nations."<sup>7</sup> But when the forces of reform seized power in 1855, its leaders still insisted on their Catholic credentials and expected the blessing of the Church on their program. Whether politically cynical or religiously sincere, at this point even those personally hostile to Christianity were unwilling to commit social suicide by exposing these sentiments publicly. In fact, although a few radicals predicted that religion would eventually "wither away" in the face of progress, more confident liberals actually hoped that the enormous influence of the Church could be harnessed for their progressive aims.

In retrospect, the idea of combining the liberal platform with Catholicism seems hopelessly naïve. Perhaps only a blind faith in progress in every sphere of life, understood as inevitable and unidirectional change, can explain the liberal determination to remain in a Church whose structure and history they excoriated. At the same time, the contingency inherent in liberalism's rejection of teleology also entailed a denial of all truth claims, including the doctrinal certitudes of Christianity. As in other parts of Europe and America during the nineteenth century, this tendency primarily manifested itself in a

pervasive anti-clericalism.<sup>8</sup> At its heart, Mexican anti-clericalism was simply a crude rejection of the teaching authority of the Church, but it was always cloaked as a concerned campaign against institutional corruption. For decades, liberal Catholics had depicted their priests as greedy, ignorant, and immoral, their lavish lifestyle contrasting starkly with the poverty of the masses they controlled.<sup>9</sup> Priests were routinely accused of seducing young girls in the confessional as well as deceiving the gullible from the pulpit. In contrast to the self-seeking clergy and their fanatical minions, liberals claimed to be the real Christians because they were dedicated to a future-church without superstition and privilege, a true “temple of charity, the distinctive symbol of Christianity.” Thus even after a particularly vicious anti-clerical tirade, one radical could unselfconsciously declare, “My banner is of the people, and on it are written these holy words: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”<sup>10</sup>

Although no official action was taken against these internal critics, the ecclesiastical leadership and their conservative supporters were clear about the nature of this enemy within. Numerous pastoral letters, sermons, and pamphlets were published defending the clergy and the truth claims of the Church. For example, a letter by the bishop of Guadalajara clearly stated that “if one of those [who attacks the Church] claims to be a Christian, praising Jesus Christ on the one hand but on the other presenting [Christianity] as a merely philosophical human doctrine, respond to him that he is not a Christian and that he is not in Christ’s Church.”<sup>11</sup> This same point of view was reflected in a series of anonymous pamphlets that appeared in 1855 entitled *Dialogues between Martin and Juan Diego*. In these fictional conversations, Martin represented the self-styled man of reason, seeking to harmonize his faith with “the spirit of the century.” Juan Diego, the Catholic Everyman, however, disagrees. “Don’t go around telling the simple people that you and your comrades are Christians,” Juan Diego warns, because faith in Christ necessarily includes faith in His Church, “the congregation of the faithful, ruled by Christ and by His vicar, the Pope.”<sup>12</sup> But as *La Cruz*, the most influential Catholic journal of the period, explained, “This class of adversary is more difficult to combat because they are inside the house; they pretend to profess Catholicism and they present themselves as only desiring a return to [the purity of] the primitive Church.”<sup>13</sup>

When liberals overthrew the Santa Anna dictatorship in 1855, they immediately set about implementing their anticlerical plan. First, the clergy and military were not only deprived of their traditional *fueros*, but priests also lost the right to vote or stand for political office.<sup>14</sup> Next, the few remaining Jesuits in the country were expelled, and restrictions

were placed on all future candidates for religious life.<sup>15</sup> Then, also within the first year of the new regime, a law was passed to liquidate ecclesiastical property, which undermined the Church's entire fiscal regime.<sup>16</sup> Although these moves were condemned by the conservative press and the clergy, liberals denied that they were intended to harm the Church. Instead, in defense of these reforms, President Ignacio Comonfort claimed that "the greatest progress, the most important social improvements, can be realized without violating what is truly sacred or immutable in the religion of our fathers."<sup>17</sup> However not all Mexicans were reassured by the President's promise. In Guadalajara, at the beginning of the liberal campaign, concerned citizens had already posted signs in their windows reading, "Wake up Mexicans! Our religion is being lost!"<sup>18</sup>

Although the government ignored the bishops' complaints, and condemnations of the new laws were ignored by the government, the church leadership still hesitated to take any decisive action that might exacerbate the situation. In 1857, however, this changed with the promulgation of a new Mexican constitution. Although Catholic religious symbols, a crucifix and copy of the Gospels, were utilized at the promulgation of the new charter, the document itself, for the first time in the nation's history, no longer identified Mexico as a Catholic country. Furthermore, not only was the anticlerical legislation from the previous year incorporated into the new constitution, but in Article 123 the state was also given the right to intervene in matters of religious worship and external ecclesiastical discipline.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps even more critically, the document had been condemned in advance by Pope Pius IX, who had been informed of its contents by the exiled Bishop of Puebla.<sup>20</sup>

Although the new constitution completely altered the role of the Church in Mexican society, at first the clergy opted for only a symbolic protest. Under direction from the bishops, they ignored the government's request that all church bells be tolled on March 11 to commemorate the new constitution. Instead, across the country, convents and churches remained dark and silent on that momentous day, although in a few places frustrated liberals broke open the belfries or scaled the steeples to ring the bells themselves.<sup>21</sup> The symbolic impact of this boycott, the Church's refusal to celebrate its uncertain future under the new regime, can be measured by the government's swift response. Although it was customary for elected officials to take an oath to the prevailing constitution, on March 17 it decreed that henceforth all federal, state and local employees of any kind, including members of the armed forces, would have to take a public oath. Some observers

suggested that the government's main intent was to eliminate conservatives from the machinery of the state, making easier the implementation of future reforms. However the timing of the measure suggests that it was also meant to punish the Church by forcing Catholics to take a public stand against the pretensions of the hierarchy.

Unexpectedly, the Archbishop of Mexico City also drew a line in the sand and responded by forbidding Catholics to take the oath, adding that anyone who did so would be refused absolution unless he made a public retraction first.<sup>22</sup> Since confession always preceded the Eucharist in the nineteenth century, this effectively banned those who supported the new constitution, meaning all liberals, from receiving Holy Communion. Although the Mexican masses were not directly affected by this fateful decision, the middle class, who relied almost entirely on government employment, was devastated.

In the nonjuring crisis that followed, Mexican society became irreversibly polarized. Shocked by the unexpected backbone of the bishops, at first the government attempted to censor the episcopal letters forbidding the oath and some priests who dared to announce it were fined for disturbing the peace.<sup>23</sup> This was followed by dramatic scenes of protest, as hundreds of government employees, judges, schoolteachers, postal clerks, and the like walked away from their jobs rather than disobey the Church.<sup>24</sup> Some military officers resigned their commissions and even a few local mayors and magistrates left office. In one small town, the entire citizenry went into hiding when officials arrived to administer the oath. In other places, violence erupted, which the liberal press always attributed to clerical agitation. In Lagos (Jalisco) crowds chanted "death to impious" and in Charcas (San Luis Potosí) those taking the oath were pelted with stones. In more than one case government troops fired into hostile crowds, and dozens of people were reported killed.<sup>25</sup>

For even non-ideological Mexicans, the stakes in this church-state standoff were incredibly high, since the oath pitted spiritual against material, not just political, considerations. Some families were economically ruined by the breadwinner's decision, and others were cruelly divided over the issue.<sup>26</sup> One sign of this internal conflict was the number of retractions that were reported in the months that followed. For example, as Holy Week and the time for fulfilling the non-negotiable Easter Duty approached, formal retractions began to appear in the many newspapers.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, some who had taken the oath made hasty retractions when they found themselves gravely ill and desirous of receiving the sacraments of the Church. Their health being recovered, however, these same individuals might claim that their retractions were

invalid in order to return to their jobs. In a few notorious cases, bridegrooms publicly invalidated their oath in order to get married and then retracted their retraction as soon as the wedding ceremony was over.<sup>28</sup> A few couples did not even bother with this pretense. In Zacatecas, for instance, Abraham González and his fiancée simply cornered their parish priest in his bed early one morning and announced, in the presence of two witnesses, their intention to be wed. Similar “clandestine marriages” were also reported in Guanajuato and Colima.<sup>29</sup>

The interpersonal complications caused by this oath-retraction-oath cycle are apparent in a humorous story that circulated in Mexico at this time. It was said that a military officer, who happened to be betrothed to a certain virtuous young lady, had enthusiastically taken the oath when it was offered him. But when his intended found out what he had done, she immediately called off the engagement. The enamored officer, naturally, repented of his folly and promised her on his knees that he would publicly retract the oath, which he did straightaway, although it cost him his commission in the army. But when he reported this fact to his fiancée, he discovered that even this desperate act could not restore him to her good graces. “What you have done with the Constitution, you might do with me one day,” she rejoined. At that point, the disconsolate soldier hastened back to his commanding officer and, after relating his tale of woe, offered to repeat the oath as many times as necessary in order to salvage his career. But his chief only replied gravely that he too was unwilling to accept a two-faced man, who might betray his country in the same way that he had betrayed his own conscience.<sup>30</sup>

The reference to conscience in this cautionary tale clearly reflects the moral crisis that divided the hearts of many ordinary Mexicans at this time. In particular, military dispatches from two disaffected regions highlight the personal aspect of the political situation. For example, after the army occupied Huamantla (Tlaxcala), the commander discovered a population profoundly torn by conflicting loyalties. “They complained to me about the Constitution and the supreme government,” he reported, “but they also spoke to me about their souls and consciences.” “The affliction of these individuals is so great that it is not uncommon for them to break into tears,” he wrote.<sup>31</sup> Another liberal officer found a similar crisis of conscience in Naolinco (Veracruz), where he “encountered the people of this town submerged in the most profound discontent.” His analysis was that the people “struggle with the agitation produced in their peaceful souls by their natural inclination to obey the government, on the one hand, and the dishonest suggestions [of their clergy] on the other.”<sup>32</sup>

Naturally, politicians resented the hierarchy's interference with their reform program, and liberal presses published dozens of erudite legal and theological treatises proving that the pope and the bishops had overstepped their bounds and that excluding professed liberals from the sacraments was both unlawful and unchristian.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, some liberals, deprived of the consolation (or legitimation) provided by the sacraments, took matters into their own hands. For example, civic officials traditionally played a minor role in the Holy Thursday rituals in the Metropolitan Cathedral in Mexico City. So when the liberal governor was excluded from the sanctuary in 1857, he responded by arresting the entire cathedral chapter for sedition.<sup>34</sup> On September 8, the patronal feast of the State of Nueva Leon, the Bishop of Monterrey was arrested and exiled for a similar case of *lèse majesté*. When other priests in the diocese went into hiding, local officials seized control of their parishes, in some cases even leading the recitation of the rosary and preaching extemporaneous sermons when the people arrived for Mass. As the liberal governor explained, "the temporal power can and even must intervene in all those ecclesiastical acts that affect the social order." This duty, he added, extended "even to the spiritual order when unfortunately morals are corrupted and ideas are introduced that are repugnant to our holy religion."<sup>35</sup> In another high profile case, the governor of Puebla himself led the mob that broke into a Carmelite monastery and performed their own funeral in its consecrated graveyard for an unrepentant military officer who had been denied burial by the clergy.<sup>36</sup>

Ultimately, in the struggle for Mexican hearts and minds, liberals were driven to violate many of their own cherished political ideals. In fact, the oath controversy had all but eliminated conservative Catholics from political life, leaving only convinced anticlericals in charge of developing local policy. From their point of view, the sinister power of the clergy might justify a loose interpretation of "freedom of religion," but freedom of the press also disappeared as conservative newspapers were fined or closed for criticizing government policies. Freedom of speech also suffered when government officials began to monitor sermons and routinely arrested antagonistic preachers. Eventually, any priest who denied absolution on account of the oath or who refused to bury notorious liberals could find himself outside the law.<sup>37</sup> One priest in Mexico City was arrested at 4 o'clock in the morning for having denied the sacraments to one of President Comonfort's nephews who refused to abjure the oath.<sup>38</sup> In many states, liberal governors were awarded extraordinary powers to arrest, imprison, and exile dissidents without trial, a faculty that was used to exile twenty-five uncooperative clerics in Guanajuato. In Guerrero, priests suddenly

found themselves subject to the federal oath, and those who refused were also summarily deported from the state.<sup>39</sup>

In spite of these measures, the short-lived liberal government collapsed in December 1857, plunging Mexico into a three-year civil war. The so-called War of the *Reforma* has been described as the bloodiest conflict in Mexico since the sixteenth century.<sup>40</sup> Like the Spanish Conquest, it also dramatically changed the character of the Mexican nation. For liberals, the clerical and conservative opposition to their progressive reforms had exposed the incorrigible nature of traditional Catholicism. Now, facing military opposition, they abandoned their dream of a compliant church and discarded their Catholic pretensions once and for all. Whereas the constitutional reforms of 1857 had been fairly moderate by nineteenth-century standards, liberals now implemented much more rigorous legislation in any territory that fell under their control. All remaining Church property was confiscated and religious orders were dissolved. Divorce was introduced and marriage was redefined as only a secular contract. Catholic schools and Catholic hospitals were secularized, and all public displays of Catholic belief were restricted by law. When liberals finally triumphed in 1861, Benito Juárez, “Mexico’s Lincoln,” exiled the remaining bishops from the country and made all these measures the permanent law of the land.<sup>41</sup> Additional hostile legislation would be added in the years that followed, culminating in the even more overt persecutions of the 1920s.

When measuring the timidity of U.S. bishops, it is perhaps important to recall the social chaos and violence that followed the nonjuring crisis in Mexico, not to mention the unenviable condition of the Church that survived. When the *Reforma* began, not even the most radical anticlerical could have anticipated such a rapid and complete secularization of Mexican society. Nor had liberals foreseen their final, messy divorce from the Catholic Church. In the end, however, the commitment of progressive Catholics to the imagined future promised by liberalism trumped their attachment to the faith of their fathers, now seen as hopelessly wedded to the past. Unable to redefine the ideological boundaries of the Church, when the smoke cleared they surrendered their cherished Catholic credentials and settled into new statist identities. But although they might miss some of the comforts of religion, they could console themselves with one thought. By remaining within the Church until the last minute, they had at least helped to weaken its defenses against the secular state. And now that the religious hardliners were marginalized, the social progress and economic prosperity of Mexico, they believed, was guaranteed.

## Notes

1. Recent historiography of the church-state conflicts of the nineteenth century rejects the older narrative of an enlightened modern state confronting an outdated religious establishment. Instead, the struggle is now recognized as two forms of modernity competing for public space. In particular, the Catholic Church was experiencing a period of revival and dynamic growth during this period. See: Raymond Grew, "Liberty and the Catholic Church in Nineteenth-Century Europe," in *Freedom and Religion in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Richard Hemstadter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 196-232 and Austen Ivereigh, ed., *The Politics of Religion in an Age of Revival: Studies in Nineteenth-Century Europe and Latin America* (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2000).
2. For an analysis of related issues in the context of the 2008 presidential election, see Andrew Essig, "Faithful Citizenship" in *Catholic Social Science Review*, 15 (2010), pp. 237 – 251.
3. On November 24, 2002, the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith addressed this issue in its "Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life." In response, in January 2003 Bishop William Weigand of Sacramento called on California Governor Gray Davis to renounce his pro-choice position or stop receiving Holy Communion. Later that year, Bishop Raymond Burke issued a similar warning to Catholic lawmakers in his diocese of La Crosse, Wisconsin. The nomination of pro-choice Democrat John Kerry, a Catholic, as presidential candidate in 2004 further increased public debate over this issue. In that year, Bishop Joseph Galante of Camden, New Jersey announced that he would not give Communion to Governor James McGreevy, a divorced and remarried Catholic who also supported abortion rights. Coadjutor Bishop Thomas Wenski of Orlando, who compared pro-choice Catholic politicians to Pontius Pilate, also asked them to refrain from receiving the Eucharist. On April 28, 2008, Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City asked Governor Kathleen Sebelius to stop receiving Communion because of her active support for legalized abortion.
4. Robert Novak, "For Pro-Choice Politicians, a Pass with the Pope," *The Washington Post*, April 28, 2008. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and Senators John Kerry, Edward Kennedy and Christopher Dodd publicly received the Eucharist at the papal Mass in Washington, D.C.; former New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani did so at the papal Mass in New York. In the wake of this controversy, Cardinal Edward Egan of New York issued a statement regretting the fact that Giuliani had ignored his clear

admonitions on the subject. Archbishop Donald Wuerl of Washington, D.C. reiterated the reasons for denying the Eucharist to public figures who dissent from Church teachings, but declared that the bishop of each politician's home diocese was responsible for their sacramental behavior while in the nation's capital.

5. In April, 2004, Cardinal Arinze, prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, in presenting the new Vatican instruction, "Redemptionis Sacramentum," explained that politicians who support abortion should not receive the Eucharist. Soon after, Bishop Michael Sheridan of Colorado Springs and Archbishop John Vlazny of Portland, Oregon applied the same principle to Catholics who voted for dissident politicians. In response, forty-eight Congressional Democrats signed a letter of protest to Cardinal Theodore McCarrick of Washington, D.C. on May 16, 2004. Laura Goodstein, "Democrats Criticize Denial of Communion by Bishops," *New York Times*, May 20, 2004. A few days later the Cardinal told an Italian journalist that although the president of the episcopal conference, Wilton Gregory, had formed a task force to study the matter, U.S. bishops were unlikely to enforce any ban. At the same time, Bishop Thomas Olmsted of Phoenix and Bishop Gerald Kicanas of Tucson announced that they would use persuasion to educate politicians, but would not refuse them Communion. In this context, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, then prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, sent McCarrick a memorandum ("Worthiness to Receive Holy Communion") to help guide the deliberations of the upcoming meeting of the USCCB. The Bishop's Conference finally issued its "Statement of Responsibility of Catholics in Public Life" on March 6, 2006. Its release at this time was a response to the provocative "Statement of Principles" signed by fifty-five Catholic House Democrats on February 28, 2006, itself a reaction to the bishops' opposition to pro-abortion politicians appearing on Catholic campuses. "Catholic Democrats Release Statement of Principles," [http://www.democrats.org/a/2006/03/catholic\\_democr.php](http://www.democrats.org/a/2006/03/catholic_democr.php) (accessed September 6, 2010).

6. In August 2008, Archbishop Charles Chaput of Denver criticized the positions of Democratic vice presidential nominee, Senator Joseph Biden, and asked him to refrain from receiving the Eucharist while attending the Democratic National Convention in Denver (August 25 – 28). This led NBC to invite Speaker Pelosi and Senator Biden to defend pro-abortion Catholic politicians on its Sunday program, "Meet the Press" (August 24 and September 7). The heterodox comments made in both interviews provoked a storm of official statements by bishops around the country, and led to a series of heated exchanges between

- Pelosi and Archbishop George Niederauer of San Francisco, her local ordinary. A media frenzy also surrounded the denial of Holy Communion to Rep. Patrick Kennedy by Bishop Thomas Tobin of Providence, Rhode Island. Abby Goodnough, "Rep. Kennedy and Bishop in Bitter Rift on Abortion," *New York Times*, November 11, 2009.
7. "Reformas necesarias. Introducción," *El Monitor Republicano*, October 17 and 21, 1855.
  8. Nineteenth-century liberalism promoted an ideal of hyper-rational and skeptical masculinity that probably contributed to the growth of anticlericalism among young males. Jean Meyer suggests that part of the appeal of Masonry in Mexico was that it was entirely a "masculine affair." Jean Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion: The Mexican People Between Church and State, 1926-1929*, trans. Richard Southern (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 28.
  9. One memorable image had the priests "dancing the fandango in the midst of their [illegitimate] children." "El poder teocrático," *La Revolución*, October 8 to 28, 1855.
  10. Miguel Cruz Aedo, *Discurso pronunciado en el salon principal del instituto del estado, el 17 de Setiembre de 1855, aniversario de las víctimas de la patria, por el C. Miguel Cruz-Aedo, miembro el la sociedad literaria, "La Esperanza"* (Guadalajara: 1855, Tipografía del Gobierno), 19 pp.
  11. Pedro Espinosa y Dávalos, *Quinta carta pastoral que el Illmo. Señor obispo de Guadalajara, dirige a sus diocesanos* (Guadalajara: Tip. de Rodríguez, 1855), 10pp.
  12. *Diálogo entre Martin y Juan Diego* (Mexico: Tipografía de V. Segura Argüelles, 1855), 13 pp.
  13. "Esposición," *La Cruz*, November 1, 1856, 3-11.
  14. *Fueros* were the traditional laws pertaining to the First and Second Estate, including exemption from civil trial ("benefit of clergy"). The "Law on the Administration of Justice" (*Ley Juárez*) passed on November 23, 1855 eliminated all special tribunals, transferring civil cases involving the clergy to secular courts. The *convocatoria* issued on October 16, 1855 excluded males under eighteen, felons, vagrants, and the clergy from all aspects of the political process.
  15. On April 26, 1856, Congress voted to withdraw legal recognition of religious vows. On June 5 it voted to expel the Jesuits and close their remaining college. The "Law of Civil Registry," passed on January 27, 1857, not only put vital statistics in the hands of the state, but included articles regulating entrance and departure from religious orders. For example, although the Council of Trent set 16 as the minimum age for entering religious life, the new law excluded females under 25.

Elaborate measures were also introduced to ensure that women did not enter or remain in the convent against their will.

16. The *Ley Lerdo*, issued on June 25, 1856, made it illegal for any ecclesiastical or civil corporation to own real estate. Although the vast holdings of the Church were the chief target of the new legislation, convents, churches, clerical residences, and buildings used for educational or charitable purposes were exempted from its provisions. At this point the designated properties were not confiscated but sold at auction with the proceeds returned to the original owners.

17. This discourse is quoted in José María Vigil, *La Reforma*, ed. Vicente Riva Palacio, vol. 5 of *México a través de los siglos* (Barcelona: Espasa y Compañía, 1888), 121-22.

18. “Remitidos,” *La Revolución*, October 10, 1855, 6.

19. Article 123 states: “It pertains only to the federal power to exercise the intervention in religious worship and external discipline that the laws designate.” Article 5 guaranteeing freedom of speech and Article 6 promising free education were also considered a threat, since it was expected that they would be used against the Church. In the face of massive public opposition, Article 15, which would have allowed public worship by non-Catholic religions, was omitted from the final draft.

20. For opposing government confiscation of property in his diocese, the Bishop of Puebla was arrested and exiled without trial in May, 1856. The so-called “Secret Allocution” was a discourse on the religious situation in Mexico delivered by Pope Pius IX in a closed consistory on December 15, 1856. The text may be found in J. Pérez Lugo [Joaquín Ramírez Cabañas], *La cuestión religiosa de México* (Mexico: Publicaciones del Centro Cultural “Cuauhtemoc,” 1926), 318-21.

21. See “Noticias nacionales,” *La Cruz*, April 23, 1857, 616; Ignacio Alvarez, *Revolución de la Reforma*, vol. 6 of *Estudios sobre la historia general de México* (Zacatecas: Imp. Economica de Timoteo Macias, 1877), 143; Ignacio Aguilar y Marocho, *La familia enferma*, (Mexico: 1860; reprint, Mexico: Editorial Jus, 1960), 49-51.

22. Circulars to this effect was issued on March 12 and 18, 1857. See Luis Pérez Verdía, *Historia particular del estado de Jalisco desde los primeros tiempos de que hay noticias, hasta nuestros días*, vol. 2 (Guadalajara: Tip. de la Escuela de Artes y Oficios del Estado, 1910), 323-24

23. See “Cuestion del juramento,” *La Cruz*, June 25, 1857, 229.

24. According to the French ambassador, Alexis de Gabriac, “a large number of general officials and their subordinates, as well as upper-level functionaries and others have refused.” In Lilia Díaz López, *Versión francesa de México: Informes diplomáticos* (1853-1858), vol. 1

(Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1963), 406-07. See also *Agustín Rivera y Sanromán, Anales Mexicanos: La Reforma y el Segundo Imperio* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1994), 20 and Niceto de Zamacois, *Historia de Méjico, desde sus tiempos mas remotos hasta nuestros dias...* (Mexico: J.F. Parres y Compania, 1880), 512-523.

25. Antonio Pompa y Pompa, ed., *Colección de documentos inéditos o muy raros relativos a la Reforma en México*, vol. 1 (Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Historia, 1957), 20-87.

26. See “Noticias nacionales,” *La Cruz*, April 23, 1857, 616.

27. The standard formula for the retraction was as follows: “I, \_\_\_\_\_, wanting to live and die in the bosom of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church into which I have had the good fortune to be born, retract everything I voluntarily or involuntarily did or said against the truths and precepts of the Church, and especially I retract the solemn promise I made to uphold the Constitution and the Reform Laws...and it is my desire from now on, as I do now, to do everything in my power to repair the scandal I have caused and to strive to my maximum effort and with absolute and complete submission to divine and ecclesiastical laws never to part again, either with words or actions, from the doctrines taught by the Church.” Quoted in Richard Sinkin, *The Mexican Reforma, 1855-1876: A Study in Liberal Nation-Building* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1979), 134n.

28. See “Retractaciones,” *La Cruz*, August 20, 1857, 519. This article also stated that liberal newspapers like *La Trait d’Union* rejoiced in reports of false retractions “since such individuals make a mockery of the clergy.” The editors of *La Cruz*, however, countered that such sacrilege only highlighted the basic immorality of the enemies of the Church.

29. The details of these episodes are recorded in Rivera, 29n. Because Fr. Rivera was a prosecutor in the ecclesiastical tribunal of Guadalajara, he had first-hand knowledge of such cases.

30. The anonymous priest who recorded this story in 1857 noted that he had heard references to this “amusing case” but could not guarantee its accuracy. However, given the circumstances of the day, he added, he could vouch for its probability or “verisimilitude.” Un Jalisciense (pseud.), *Tendencias de la demagogia Mexjicana, manifestados por sus propios hechos* (Guadalajara: Tipografía de Rodríguez, 1857), 26n.

31. Like most liberals, General Nicolas de la Portilla attributed this problem to a false consciousness, “for by ignorance or deceit they have been made to believe that their religious beliefs are attacked in [the Constitution].” Pompa y Pompa, 70-87.

32. *Pompa y Pompa*, 67-69.
33. For example, [Manuel Baranda], *Apuntamientos sobre derecho público eclesiástico* (Mexico: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1857), 76 pp. and Manuel T. Alvires, *Reflexiones sobre los decretos episcopales que prohíben el juramento constitucional* (Mexico: Tip. de N. Chávez y Cía., 1857), 22 pp. Alvires argued that the canonical penalties were illicit because they punished an “artificial sin” not listed in the Decalogue.
34. The most detailed account of these events is contained in José Ramón Malo, *Diario de sucesos notables*, vol. 2 (Mexico: Editorial Patria, 1948), 485.
35. The details of this story, including a summary of articles from Monterrey newspapers and transcriptions of official documents relating to the case, may be found in “Asuntos eclesiásticos en Nuevo León y Coahuila” and “Sucesos de Coahuila y Nuevo León,” *La Cruz*, October 1 and 8, 1857, 18-27 and 41-47.
36. See Malo, 493; Aguilar y Marocho, 54; Zamacois, 635-38 and Vigil, 242.
37. See Ignacio Aguilar y Marocho, 52 and “Asuntos eclesiásticos en Oajaca” *La Cruz*, August 13, 1857, 501. After the sacraments were denied to a dying man in Jalapa (Zacatecas), the liberal newspaper *El Herald* solemnly declared that, “the priest should not be allowed to continue his ministry.” *La Cruz* analyzed the details of this case in “El Señor Presbitero D. José María Mora,” *La Cruz*, June 25, 1857, 224.
38. Fr. Carrillo, the priest in question, was exiled for his “crime.” Malo, 491 and Francisco Vera, “Destierro de un sacerdote,” *La Cruz*, July 30, 1857, 408.
39. See Zamacois, 639-40.
40. During this struggle, “Mexicans killed each other with a ferocity unseen since the days of the Conquest; the violence reached all sectors of the Republic and washed over all classes of society.” Sinkin, 32.
41. Juárez declared freedom of worship on December 4, 1860, but simultaneously outlawed any Catholic religious ceremonies outside the walls of churches. Henceforth, even the ringing of church bells required police permission. These laws, and those which followed, remained in effect until the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1979.