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ABSTRACT

The decades of the 1530's and 1540's witnessed the founding of Hispanic colonial institutions, many of which with modifications continue today. Among the most lasting of these has been the Church. This is part of Juan de Zumarraga's (Mexico's first archbishop) legacy, not only the setting up of ecclesiastical administration but also the prelate's ministry among his people. Zumarraga's concerns were many and varied. Concern for the Indians' spiritual and material well-being prompted Zumarraga to establish schools and hospitals, introduce the first printing press, and collect a library. Equally significant and less known is his role of introducing and promoting European culture in early colonial Mexico. Spain and Portugal were a century ahead of other European colonial powers in bringing Western Christian civilization to the New World. Throughout the 1600's much of the present day United States Atlantic seaboard was a wilderness when compared to the developing cultural life in Central Mexico. This booklet's purpose is to provide the essential historical information for this head start through the study of the life of Zumarraga. Although its primary intent is as a teaching tool for elementary teachers, it can be profitable on the secondary level. A brief bibliography is included to provide the teacher with additional information and a listing of audiovisual materials. (Author/NQ)

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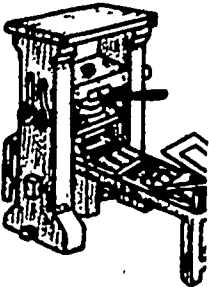


JUAN DE ZUMARRAGA FIRST BISHOP OF MEXICO

HUBERT J. MILLER

The Tinker Pamphlet Series
for

The Teaching of Mexican American Heritage



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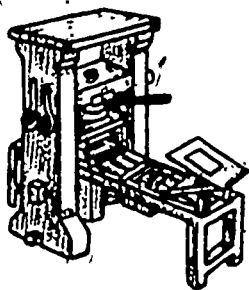
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HUBERT J. MILLER

The Tinker Pamphlet Series
for
The Teaching of Mexican American Heritage



To Doris

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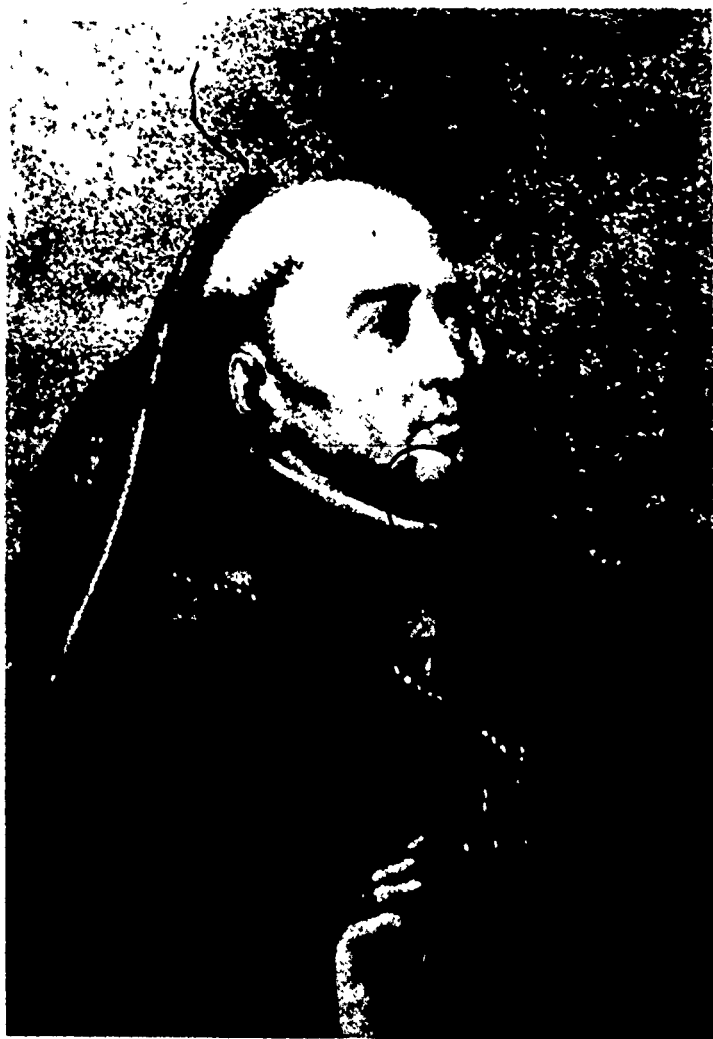


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GLOSSARY

Alcalde — Town mayor; also a governor over a district. Performed both administrative and judicial functions.

Audiencia — Highest court in the Kingdom of New Spain (Mexico); also took on certain administrative functions.

Cabildo — Municipal council; also an ecclesiastical council which aided a bishop in the administration of his diocese.

Cacique — Indian chief; also a local political boss.

Colegio — A primary or secondary school.

Conquistador — A leader in the Spanish conquest, exploration and colonization of the New World.

Corregidor — Royal official appointed to govern a province, which usually was highly populated with Indians.

Encomendero — The holder of an *encomienda*.

Encomienda — Grant of authority over Indians; carried obligation to Christianize and protect them as well as the right to collect tribute and demand Indian services.

Mestizo — The offspring of sexual relations between a Spaniard and an Indian; also a mixture of Hispanic and Indian cultures.

Oidor — Judge in the *audiencia*.

Royal and Supreme Council of the Indies — The highest administrative and judicial body, which aided the crown in the government of Spain's overseas possessions.

TO THE TEACHER

Early colonial Mexico offers many examples of men genuinely concerned with the good treatment of the Indians. Not least among this group is Bishop Juan de Zumárraga. Although a moderate in his approach in the defense of Indian rights when compared to Bishop Bartolomé de las Casas, he frequently proved to be just as effective as Las Casas, the Protector of the Indians. Equally significant and less known is his role of introducing and promoting European culture in early colonial Mexico. To him belongs the credit of introducing the first printing press, collecting a library, founding schools and establishing hospitals, just to mention a few. At the same time he was ever conscious of the need to preserve the Indian heritage.

The life of the first bishop of Mexico can be profitably used in treating the establishment of colonial institutions in the New World. The work of Zumárraga focuses on the beginning of these institutions in early Colonial Mexico. Spain and Portugal were a century ahead of other European colonial powers in bringing Western Christian civilization to the New World. Throughout the 1600's much of the present day United States Atlantic seaboard was a wilderness when compared to the developing cultural life in Central Mexico. It is the intent of the booklet to provide the essential historical information for this head start through the study of the life of Zumárraga.

At all times the teacher needs to remember that the booklet is a teaching tool and not a textbook. It is intended as a time saving device wherein can quickly be found the essentials of this all important figure in the history of our hemisphere. The

effectiveness of this tool, like all teaching tools, is dependent on the teacher's creative use of it in the classroom. Instructional content, grade level and intellectual ability of the pupils are all determining factors in selecting all or some of the materials to be utilized by the instructor. Although the author's primary intent is a teaching tool for elementary teachers, this does not exclude its profitable use on the secondary level.

The brief bibliography at the end of the booklet can provide the instructor with additional information where greater detail is desired. Unfortunately Zumárraga has received limited biographical attention. Joaquín García Icazbalceta, a late nineteenth century Mexican scholar has provided the most extensive biographical study plus publishing the prelate's writings. The work is in Spanish and not readily available. James A. Magner in his *Men of Mexico* devoted one chapter to our subject. More limited in scope but still offering significant information on the first bishop is Richard E. Greenleaf's *Zumárraga and the Mexican Inquisition 1536-1543*. A twentieth century Mexican scholar, Alberto María Carreño, has continued the pioneering efforts of García Icazbalceta by publishing writings of Zumárraga. A new and up-to-date biography is very much in order.

Of great value in studying the historical significance of the first bishop are a series of articles in *The Americas* in 1949, commemorating the death of the bishop in 1548. The list of contributors includes Carlos E. Castañeda, Alberto María Carreño, Lewis Hanke and James Magner. The articles provide valuable information on the bishop's work among the Indians, with special attention on his social, cultural, educational contributions and his role as the defender of the Indians. In addition Carreño and Castañeda authored two articles in the *Hispanic American Historical Review* treating the introduction of European culture and the printing press into Mexico.

There are a number of general works that can be utilized profitably. They are valuable in placing Zumárraga in the over-all religious development of Mexico in the sixteenth century. Among these accounts are Robert Ricard's *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*, Charles S. Braden's *Religious Aspects of the Conquest of Mexico* and Mariano Cueva's *Historia de la Iglesia en México*. A more readily available general account is Hubert Howe Bancroft's *History of Mexico 1521-1600*. Published in the 1880's, the interpretations are out dated and should be used with care. It does contain significant factual material on the period covered.

The audio-visual aids listed in the bibliography are of a general nature rather than a treatise of the life of Zumárraga. They can be of help in giving an overview of the period during which the first bishop labored in Mexico and the legacy he left. The aids can serve profitably as a springboard in providing students with a more graphic picture of the meeting of Hispanic and Indian cultures.

The author is greatly indebted to the Tinker Foundation in New York for making this teaching tool possible. Not only did the Foundation provide the time to do the booklet but it also has underwritten the costs of publication and distribution. The project hopefully in some small measure fulfills the aspirations of Dr. Edward Larocque Tinker, who was ever conscious of the need for building bridges between the peoples of the Latin and Anglo heritage. Further words of gratitude are in order for the student workers at Pan American University, whose typing facilitated the completion of the pamphlet. A special note of thanks goes to Dr. Porter Stratton, who was most generous in making accommodations that greatly aided the completion of the project. Appreciation is in order for Manuel López, colleague of mine, and Al Ramírez of Region One Education Service Center, whose suggestions were most helpful in preparing the manuscript for

the press. Last but not least special appreciation is in order for my wife, Doris, through whose patience, proofreading and typing many of the burdens of seeing the booklet to its completion were greatly relieved.

Pan American University
January, 1973

Hubert J. Miller

INTRODUCTION

The deeds and valor of the Spanish *conquistadores* have attracted most of the attention during the years of Spain's conquest of the Americas. Receiving less attention, and sometimes forgotten, are the Spanish pioneers who made the conquest permanent. Antonio de Mendoza, the first viceroy of Mexico or New Spain, as it was called during the colonial epoch, has merited one biography in English compared to several devoted to the life of Hernán Cortés. Even less attention has been focused on the life of Juan de Zumárraga, who organized and administered the Church on the heels of the conquest. To Antonio de Mendoza, the political administrator, and Juan de Zumárraga, the ecclesiastical administrator, must go a great portion of credit in initiating Hispanic colonial institutions in Mexico, whose legacies continue down to the present day.

In many respects Zumárraga can merit the title of the founder of the institutional Church in New Spain. Like Bartolomé de las Casas he saw the Church as a defender of the rights of the Indians in the face of the harsh consequences of the conquest. Unlike Las Casas, his approach was one of moderation. Historians may legitimately debate as to who was more successful. The writer finds both types a blessing to mankind. The agitator pricks society's conscience and prepares the way for the moderate to effect the desired reforms. It is in this spirit that the writer has undertaken the writing of the brief biographical account of the first bishop and archbishop of Mexico.

The purpose of the booklet is not so much an account of the life of Zumárraga as it is a study of the early Church in New Spain and initiation of cultural institutions that have

benefited the people of Mexico spiritually and materially down to the present day. Writers have recognized his religious leadership but of equal importance and less recognized has been his role in the promotion of culture, education and economic development during the first half of the sixteenth century. His pioneering deeds are part of the rich legacy of the Mexican and Mexican American people and the story of this heritage cannot be complete without Juan de Zumárraga.

EARLY LIFE

Little is known about the early life of the first bishop of Mexico. Even the date of his birth is in doubt. Reliable evidence places the time of his birth at the end of 1475 or the beginning of 1476 in Durango in the province of Vizcaya, Spain. He was the son of Juan López de Zumárraga and Teresa de Lares, both of whom were of noble lineage according to Albert María Carreño, a leading scholar on the life of the prelate. This point is disputed by Joaquín García Icazbalceta, a nineteenth century Zumárraga scholar, who describes the parents as being of humble origin.

It appears that he made his religious vows in the Franciscan Order shortly before 1514 in the monastery of La Concepción near Valladolid. Little is available about his educational background but he probably studied at the famous Franciscan monastery of Abrojo near Valladolid. Biographers offer no date for his ordination to the priesthood. After ordination he served as a religious superior of various Franciscan monasteries including the one of Abrojo. He also held the position of provincial or superior of the Franciscan province of La Concepción, one of the most important Franciscan provinces in the area of Valladolid. Again the biographers remain silent about his activities in these positions except for noting that he governed strictly but wisely. The fact that the Franciscan Order placed him in such high and responsible positions shortly after his entry into the Order indicates great

respect for his leadership ability.

It was during his term as superior in the monastery of Abrojo that he first attracted the attention of King Charles I. During Holy Week of 1527, or the spring of that year, the king made one of his frequent visits to that monastery. As was his custom he offered the monks alms. Zumárraga politely turned down the offer claiming that the followers of St. Francis should go out and beg for offerings. After much persuasion he accepted the king's donations on the condition that the money would be immediately given to the poor. The king apparently was surprised by the behavior of the superior, especially at a time when religious men and women lived lives of comfort and were not adverse to living off the royal bounty. It was shortly after this incident that Charles I placed him in charge of the Holy Office, which was charged with the duty of investigating and eradicating witchcraft in the district of Pamplona. The available records provide us with no knowledge regarding his activities in this position, except noting that he discharged his duties with good sense and justice. Undoubtedly the experience served him well for the same position he held after his arrival in New Spain.

The discharging of duties in the Holy Office is at odds with the spirit of humanism that some of the writers detect in Zumárraga. According to these writers the Franciscan, like many of his contemporaries, was influenced by the humanism of Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam. The humanism of Erasmus sought to deformalize and humanize Christian practices and Church administration. It was a call to return to the simple life of the early Christians and end the hypocrisy and superstition that accumulated in the Church during medieval times. At the same time the humanist reformers attempted to adapt institutions, especially the Church, to human needs. The humanist spirit in its stress on purification and reform sought to return to the simple and committed life of the early Christians.

The humanists of the sixteenth century were Renaissance men, who studied the classics of the Greeks and Romans. They saw man as capable of achieving great works. They were optimists who viewed man as inclined towards doing good. It was this humanistic spirit that Zumárraga and the missionary friars carried to the New World. For these friars the Indians were the raw material to create an ideal Christian community.

The optimism of the Renaissance humanists was tempered by the medieval legacy, which saw the sinfulness of man. This was in evidence in the behavior of Zumárraga as inquisitor of the Holy Office in Pamplona, Spain. This office had as its chief function to eradicate error and evil in man. During his initial years in Mexico he served in a similar post. Perhaps in the case of Zumárraga his conversion to humanism was never complete. As inquisitor he appeared more like the medieval monk but in his concern for developing a simple Christian life in the Franciscan order and later among the Indians he was a true follower of Erasmus. The Church of the Middle Ages and the new Christian humanism, although at times in conflict, were characteristic traits of the man destined to spend the remainder of his life in New Spain.

NOMINATED BISHOP OF MEXICO

The conquest of the Aztec people in 1521 made it imperative to set up an ecclesiastical structure to carry out the task of the conversion of the Indians and to preserve good order among the clergy and laity. In December of 1527 Charles I requested the pope to erect a diocese in the land of the Aztecs. At the same time the king urged the pontiff to appoint Zumárraga as the bishop of the diocese. Undoubtedly the appointee's work as a Franciscan superior and the eradicating of witchcraft in Pamplona weighed heavily in the monarch's consideration of candidates for the new diocese. Zumárraga's initial reaction to the nomination was not to accept the position but at the repeated urgings of the crown and the Franciscan religious

superiors he relented.

At the time of the nomination, relations between Charles I and the pope had broken because of the Spanish army's invasion and sack of Rome. The king had offered the nomination in accordance with the ecclesiastical powers he enjoyed under the *Patronato Real* (Royal Patronage). Through the papal bulls of 1501 and 1508 the Spanish crown had secured from the papacy wide reaching powers in ecclesiastical matters, such as the nomination of church officials, determination of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, collection of church revenues and the veto of papal bulls. These papal concessions placed the king in an intermediary position between the pope and the Spanish Church. The pontiff retained the right of confirming the royal nomination and issuing the order that the nominee be consecrated bishop. In the case of Zumárraga the papal confirmation was not immediately forthcoming due to the break in diplomatic relations between the Vatican and the crown. The urgent need of a church leader in Mexico prompted the king to send the Franciscan friar to Mexico without being consecrated bishop. His arrival in New Spain in December of 1528 as bishop-elect did not give him the prestige that he could have carried as a consecrated bishop.

The nomination to the bishopric of Mexico carried with it the title of Protector of the Indians. In carrying out his duties Zumárraga encountered serious opposition from colonial authorities and Spanish settlers, who exploited Indian labor. The Spaniards in Mexico did not hesitate to remind Zumárraga that he was merely a Franciscan friar and not a consecrated bishop. The bishop-elect faced the immediate and difficult task of setting up the Church in Mexico and his consecration as a bishop had to wait until 1533 after good relations between Spain and the papacy had been restored.

The erection of a diocese in central Mexico was not the first diocese in the present day country, of Mexico. As early as

January of 1519 the diocese, known as Santa María de los Remedios, had been erected in Yucatán. After the conquest of Mexico by Hernán Cortés, this diocesan seat was moved in 1526 to Tlaxcala and shortly thereafter to Puebla. The move to the land of the Tlaxcalan Indians was an obvious recognition of the invaluable aid these Indians had given Cortés in the conquest of the Aztecs. It also indicates the priority of doing missionary work among these Indians rather than concentrating on the less compliant Mayan Indians in the Yucatán peninsula. The retreat of the Mayas into the interior of the peninsula made a complete conquest impossible and missionary work extremely hazardous. The first bishop of the Yucatán-Tlaxcala-Puebla diocese was Julián Garcés, a member of the Dominican order. He had already taken up his episcopal residence in Tlaxcala when Bishop-elect Zumárraga arrived in New Spain in late 1528.

Both the dioceses of Garcés and Zumárraga were classified as suffragan dioceses of the archdiocese of Seville in Spain. This placed them in the church administrative structure as subordinate to the archbishop of Seville. Archdiocesan status was not granted to the diocese of Mexico until shortly before the death of Zumárraga in 1548.

INAUGURATION OF ECCLESIASTICAL GOVERNMENT

Zumárraga was in his early fifties when he took over his duties in Mexico. At an age when many men think of retiring, the bishop-elect was about to begin the most important undertaking in his life. It was a career beset with many difficulties. The political chaos that followed on the heels of the removal of Cortés as governor of New Spain was far from ended.

The *conquistador* of Mexico had been replaced by a series of interim governors, who in 1527 were replaced by the first *audiencia*. This body consisted of four *oidores* or judges and a

president, charged with the administration of the colony. The president of the *audiencia*, who also served as governor, was Nuño de Guzmán, who had arrived in New Spain with Zumárraga. He was a strong-willed administrator intent upon carrying out a personal vendetta against Cortés. Apart from the use of moral persuasion the bishop-elect could do little to end the political turmoil. The president and the *oidores* were quick to remind the religious leader that he had no right to interfere in political matters. Equally effective was the reminder that Zumárraga was merely a Franciscan friar and did not carry the full powers of a bishop.

The *audiencia's* failure to enforce the laws protecting the rights of the Indians permitted continued exploitation of Indian labor. As Protector of the Indians, Zumárraga felt obligated to raise his voice in protest. Since the powers of the Protector of the Indians were never specifically spelled out, it gave the bishop much latitude in interpreting his jurisdiction over the treatment of the Indians. Not only did he preach against the abuses of the *audiencia*, but he ordered investigations and the setting up of courts to hear Indian grievances. Nuño de Guzmán quickly challenged the bishop-elect's conduct, arguing that he was intruding in matters reserved for political authorities. He warned Spaniards and Indians not to take their complaints to the Franciscan friar.

Added to the growing split between the *audiencia* and the religious leader was the rivalry between the Franciscans and Dominicans. The former tended to support their colleague in the controversy whereas a substantial number of the Dominicans sided with the *audiencia*. Men with the best of intentions were found on either side. On the *audiencia* side there were many who believed that a too lenient policy towards the Indians could result in jeopardizing the weak control the Spaniards held over the native population. The *audiencia* supporters argued that rebellious Indians were a serious obstacle to the conversion of the native people.

The controversy between Zumárraga and Nuño de Guzmán was a replay of the traditional medieval power conflict between Church and state. In New Spain the battle had the added feature of being remote from the ultimate sources of power, the crown and the papacy, which could step in to arbitrate disputes. This offered the president the opportunity of acting in a very high handed manner. Few are the historians who defend this arbitrary rule. Equally few are the ones who defend the president's policy as serving the best interests of the Indians. Historical judgment is clearly in favor of Zumárraga.

The undefined duties and powers of the office of Protector of the Indians continued to be the main issue in the dispute. The practice of designating a bishop as protector of the weak such as orphans dated back to medieval times and was recognized by civil authorities. In the New World the office was first given to Bartolomé de Las Casas, bishop of Chiapas. It was a civil institution intended to defend the Indians against Spanish oppression, but neither in the case of Las Casas nor Zumárraga were duties of the office specifically stated prior to 1530. Unanswered questions regarding the office included the following. (1) Does the protector enjoy the powers of a civil judge? (2) Can the protector appoint officials to execute his commands? (3) Does the protector handle Indian grievances which frequently are civil matters?

The office of Protector and Defender of the Indians of Mexico was granted to Zumárraga on January 2, 1528. The royal instructions charged the bishop-elect with the duty of Christianizing the Indians and overseeing their good treatment. They also gave the protector the power to punish those guilty of maltreatment of the Indians. The *audiencia* and other officials were ordered to come to the aid of the protector in carrying out these duties. If this aid is not given, then the officials will be punished. In effect, the instructions made the protector a supreme judge and executor of all laws concerning

the conversion and good treatment of the Indians.

Zumárraga pushed for a showdown in the dispute when he heard Indian grievances regarding excessive tributes demanded by Spanish officials. The *audiencia* warned him not to meddle in these matters and threatened the Indians with hanging should they continue to go to the bishop-elect with their problems. At the same time the *oidores* ordered the forfeiting of all property of the Spaniards, who reported exploitation of Indian labor to the Franciscan monk. To obstruct the protectors's appointment of investigators to look into violation of Indian rights, the *audiencia* appointed its own officials to handle Indian complaints. Nuño de Guzmán warned Zumárraga that continued opposition to *audiencia* policy could cost him his life.

The conduct of the president and *oidores* caused much disgust in the Franciscan ranks, who saw the behavior as a serious obstacle in their work among the Indians. The dissatisfaction prompted some seriously to consider returning to Spain. Furthermore they were incensed by the verbal attacks of the *audiencia* directed at the Franciscans and circulation of malicious rumors discrediting individual friars. After a meeting with Zumárraga, the Franciscans decided to take stronger measures in defense of their good name. Fray Antonio de Ortiz was designated to preach a sermon in the cathedral church on Pentecost Sunday, May 18, 1529, defending the honor and the good name of the Franciscans. It was during the delivery of the sermon that a member of the *audiencia* present ordered the friar to be physically removed from the pulpit. Fr. Ortiz immediately issued an order of excommunication against the *oidor* and the persons who carried out the order. The *audiencia* retaliated by calling for the exile of the friar, who sought refuge in the sanctuary of the cathedral. Since it was against Church law for a secular authority to enter a sanctuary without ecclesiastical permission, the *oidores* decided to starve their enemy out. The

incident took place while Zumárraga was in nearby Huejotzingo. On hearing of the grave developments he quickly returned to Mexico City and lifted the excommunication ban against the public officials. He did require a light punishment for all those guilty in the attack on Fr. Ortíz. His presence and less drastic actions helped in restoring a calmer climate.

The removal of the excommunication ban did not resolve the dispute. The *audiencia* sent reports to the crown describing the bishop-elect as a man of bad temper, an enemy of peace and neglectful of his pastoral duties. At the same time Nuño de Guzmán had all mail censored so as to prevent unfavorable reports of his administration from reaching the royal court. After several unsuccessful attempts Zumárraga succeeded with the aid of a Spanish sailor in getting a secret report to the crown. The lengthy letter criticized the misrule of Nuño de Guzmán and the first *audiencia*. He noted that the clergy was powerless in the face of the growing political turmoil and insisted that a new *audiencia* should be appointed. In commenting on the Indian question he asked that the powers of the office of Protector of Indians be made more specific and thereby prevent conflicts between civil and religious authorities. He recommended that the protector should have the power to select *alcaldes* or judges to hear criminal and civil cases involving Indians. Lay inspectors should not be sent to safeguard the interests of the native population since they are tempted to use their positions for profit. Rather these tasks should be reserved for religious leaders.

Contrary to the position of Padre las Casas, the bishop-elect favored the forced labor of the Indians under the *repartimiento* and *encomienda*. The *repartimiento* and *encomienda* entitled Spanish colonists to have a designated number of Indians perform services for them. He felt that the Spaniards treated the Indians under such labor assignments more justly than under a free wage arrangement, which Las Casas favored. Forced labor, according to the report, assured the Spanish

settlers of a continuous and stable labor supply. Under a free wage arrangement, there was fear that the Indian workers might remain only for a short time and therefore make it more tempting to exploit the native population. He was critical of the continued practice of using the Indians as burden carriers. He condemned his fellow countrymen for taking advantage of Indian women and abusing traditional Indian hospitality.

Much in the report was certainly not new to the crown, who had listened and read many of Las Casas's condemnations of mistreatment of Indians. The report was shortly followed by royal edicts, outlawing the use of Indians as slaves and burden bearers and prohibiting the separation of Indian domestic servants from their household and children. At the same time the crown ordered the expulsion of vagabond Spaniards. The crown heeded Zumárraga's request of appointing a new *audiencia*, which was given the power to investigate the conduct of the first *audiencia*.

In August of 1530, the king issued instructions making the powers of the protector more specific. The instructions placed the office of protector under the *audiencia* and permitted the protector to appoint investigators with the approval of the *audiencia* to look into abuses against the Indians. The office was given jurisdiction over all cases of Indian mistreatment not exceeding fifty pesos in penalty or a ten day jail term. All other cases had to be taken to the *audiencia* for a hearing. The crown gave the protector and his investigators the power to initiate cases against *encomenderos*, *corregidores* (local governors) and royal judges, but reserved the right to pass sentence against the officials for the *audiencia*.

While Zumárraga's pleas received a favorable hearing at the court, his difficulties with the first *audiencia* mounted. A new conflict arose over jurisdiction in the trial of two clergymen. Both Zumárraga and Diego Delgadillo, an *oidor*, claimed jurisdiction. The latter even went to the extreme of attempting to do physical harm to the bishop-elect, who reacted by

placing Mexico City under interdict. This meant that no public religious services and the administration of the sacraments of the Church were allowed except in cases of dire emergencies. The feud was merely a symptom of the unresolved issue as to whether the secular power or the religious one had jurisdiction over the protection of the Indians.

When the news of the interdict reached the Council of the Indies, the highest advisory body in colonial matters to the crown, it censured Zumárraga for taking such drastic measures. It was after the controversy with Delgadillo in 1530 that the bishop-elect received orders to return to Spain. The order was brought on July 9, 1531, by Sebastián Ramírez de Fuenleal, president of the newly appointed *audiencia*. The recall of Zumárraga was interpreted by many as a punishment for the Church leader's abuse of power. One can certainly question the wisdom in his use of the interdict, but the bishop-elect was not power mad. He was conscientious, perhaps too much so, in carrying out his duties as Protector of the Indians. On the other hand, he felt that the duties seriously detracted from his higher duties as spiritual leader. As early as 1529 Zumárraga requested that he be relieved of the office of Protector of the Indians. The appeal was seconded by Sebastián Ramírez de Fuenleal, when he arrived as president of the second *audiencia*. The crown did not give the official approval to the request until September 29, 1534. The king insisted that although he no longer carried the responsibilities of the civil office, it was still the duty of Zumárraga, who had been consecrated bishop the previous year, to watch over the good treatment of the Indians. It was traditional for a bishop to guard the spiritual and material well-being of his flock.

The problems that the bishop-elect faced during the first four years of residency in New Spain would have tried the patience of any man. Apart from his struggle with the *audiencia* over the protection of the Indians, he faced the task of organizing an ecclesiastical administration suited to the

need of two merging and conflicting cultures. Jealousy and rivalry among the monastic orders frequently played into the hands of Zumárraga's enemies. He was in dire need of a diocesan clergy that could serve as a balance against the increasing prerogatives that had been granted or usurped by religious orders. The return to Spain in the spring of 1532 must have been a welcome relief for him. Fortunately for his subsequent role as spiritual head it resulted in his consecration as bishop. No longer could he be called a simple Franciscan friar.

ZUMARRAGA CONSECRATED BISHOP

The return to Spain involved more than his consecration as bishop. After all, there was no need to go to Spain for the consecration since Julián Garcés, bishop of Tlaxcala, could have consecrated him in Mexico. Apparently the main reason for his return was to answer the charges leveled against him by the first *audiencia*, especially those of Delgadillo. He was accused of forcibly freeing prisoners who had been incarcerated by the *audiencia*. Additional accusations included Zumárraga's preaching against the *audiencia*, making false statements, excommunicating *oidores* and exploiting the Indians. Available records are silent regarding the bishop-elect's defense against the charges. Obviously he must have presented a convincing story for his side since he was consecrated bishop shortly thereafter. The consecration took place on April 27, 1533, in the chapel of San Francisco in Valladolid. The consecrator was Bishop Diego de Rivera of Segovia. Although a bishop, he was still a missionary at heart. In the sermon following his consecration he remarked:

If in just wars, brave soldiers defy manifest danger of death and despise it to gain fame with posthumous glory, how much more reason have we to advance, in combat for the name and glory of Jesus Christ, to gain for certain not a brief and passing fame, but eternal rest and life without end ¹

¹ Cited in James Magner, *History of Mexico* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1942), p. 99.

The new bishop immediately made plans for continuing his work in Mexico. He directed a memorial to the Council of the Indies. He solicited its aid in having a papal representative in Mexico, so that Church problems could be more quickly resolved. Zumárraga realized from past experiences that dealing with Rome was very time consuming. He sought the Council's help in recruiting missionaries and women teachers. The latter he wanted to employ in the instruction of Indian girls. He urged the king's Council to provide him with an adequate food supply for his hospitals and orphanages. Particularly noteworthy in the memorial were the prelate's plans for a printing press, paper mill, choir books and library. He suggested that part of the tithes, taxes collected for the church, be spent on the latter projects. Not only was Zumárraga concerned about the spiritual welfare of his subjects but their cultural needs were given a high priority in his plans.

During the few remaining months in his native land he busied himself with recruiting missionaries to accompany him to Mexico. At the same time he interested married artisans and their families to go to New Spain so that they may serve as teachers of trades to the Indians. He also took along six women teachers for his schools devoted to the education of Indian girls. He made his departure in June of 1534 and arrived in Mexico the following October. On his second arrival in Mexico he was approaching his sixtieth birthday. The advanced years appear to have had little effect in slowing him down in his many and varied activities.

THE NEW BISHOP OF MEXICO

On his return, Zumárraga no longer carried the burdensome duties of the Office of Protector of the Indians. The loss of these duties did not make him less zealous in his work for the welfare of the Indians. In this he was greatly aided by a responsive *audiencia* under the leadership of

Fuenleal. As a result the new bishop was freed from numerous civil conflicts that plagued his administration as bishop-elect. He could now turn his attention to resolving the many problems that faced the young Mexican Church.

In his role as bishop he was convinced that he must seek both the spiritual and material well-being of his subjects. In a report to the civil authorities shortly after his arrival in Mexico in the fall of 1534, he pointed to the many advantages the young colony had to offer, namely, mineral resources, fertile lands and numerous Indians who possessed many skills and learned quickly. In spite of this, he found much poverty. The causes for this he attributed to inefficient and antiquated methods of agriculture, absence of industry other than mining, lack of technological training, especially in the weaving industry, few domesticated animals, lack of markets for native products, restrictions on exports and imports and the employment of Indians in mines rather than in agriculture. Accordingly he recommended to the crown that flax, linen and silk industries be initiated and artisans be imported from Spain to teach the Indians in the development of these industries. Similarly he urged the introduction of sheep and goats to provide clothing and food. In addition seeds and fruit trees should be imported to aid the growth of a diversified economy. He desired to end the use of Indian burden carriers by the importation of mules. He condemned the excessive desire to push mining and the Spanish settlers' failure to balance agricultural production with that of mining. The bishop warned that the mining greed will lead to draining the country's mineral resources. The report made it clear that it was the crown's duty to underwrite the investment for the new industries. Most radical for the time was the prelate's admonition that free trade be permitted for all the products sold in the colony or exported.

Few are the scholars today that would challenge Zumárraga's analysis or recommendations. In fact, his



A detailed historical map of New Spain during the sixteenth century. The map shows the geographical layout of the region, including major provinces such as Chihuahua, Coahuila, Durango, Zacatecas, San Luis Potosí, and Michoacán. It features a grid of latitude and longitude lines, with longitude marked from 112 to 92 and latitude from 20 to 30. The map is densely populated with labels for cities, towns, and rivers. The Gulf of Mexico is visible on the left side, and the Atlantic Ocean is on the right. The map is framed by a double-line border.

NEW SPAIN
during the
SIXTEENTH CENTURY



economic proposals were adopted with few alterations by Mexico after her independence from Spain in 1821. The report makes it clear that the bishop's concerns extended beyond spiritual matters.

During his term as bishop-elect, Zumárraga found little time to devote to ecclesiastical organization. His frequent conflicts with the first *audiencia*, the lack of papal approval regarding the erection of the new diocese of Mexico and an inadequate number of clergy forced him to forego the much needed work of setting up administrative agencies for his diocese. Almost all the clergy in Mexico at the time belonged to the Franciscan or Dominican orders. He lacked a diocesan clergy which would be directly subject to their bishop.

Added to this problem were the extensive powers and privileges granted by the pope to the Franciscans immediately after the defeat of the Aztecs. These powers were traditionally held by bishops and the diocesan clergy. Due to the lack of bishops and diocesan clergy during the days following the conquest, the pope saw fit in 1521 to grant extensive powers to religious orders, who were doing the first missionary work among the Indians. The concessions included the administration of the sacraments, absolving excommunicated persons, handling marriage cases, conferring of minor orders leading to the priesthood, consecrating altars and chalices and granting indulgences. Under ordinary circumstances, most of these functions were reserved for bishops. The arrival of the new bishop and the setting up of an ecclesiastical administration meant the end of these concessions. This was not seen favorably by many of the religious clergymen, who felt that the powers were necessary to carry on their mission activities.

It was also traditional ecclesiastical policy to have the diocesan or secular clergy take over the mission churches and convert them into parishes after the missionaries had completed their work of conversion. The early missionaries

had inaugurated an extensive church building program and they saw the arrival of the secular clergy as reaping the fruits of their labor. This led to frequent and acrimonious conflicts between the secular and religious clergy, especially after the time of the episcopacy of Zumárraga. The fact that the bishop was a Franciscan played a significant role in minimizing the conflict during this early period. Furthermore the small number of secular clergymen during the days of Zumárraga did not present a serious threat to the privileged position of the religious orders.

The immediate task at hand was the need for establishing an ecclesiastical *cabildo* that could serve as an advisory and administrative agency to the bishop in carrying out his pastoral duties. The *cabildo*, consisting of eight members including Zumárraga, began its official functions on March 1, 1536. The bishop complained that it was very difficult to appoint men to this body since there were few secular clergymen in the colony qualified for the position. He pleaded with the crown to take care that at all times good clergymen be sent to Mexico. He cited the model of religious order superiors who wisely selected their men to do missionary work. According to the bishop this is frequently not the case with the secular clergy who come to the New World seeking their own personal gains.

The successful work of the religious order men meant a growing Catholic population plus expanding the diocese over a wider geographical area. Difficulties of travel made it impossible for the bishop to do justice to all his spiritual subjects. The prelate's pleas for the establishment of new dioceses were favorably received by the crown and the pope. The diocese of Oaxaca was erected in June of 1535 and that of Valladolid (present day Morelia) in August of the following year. Bishop Zumárraga had the honor of consecrating Juan Lopez de Zarate bishop of Oaxaca and Vasco de Quiroga bishop of Valladolid. The latter had been a member of the

second *audiencia* and achieved great fame in setting up utopian Indian communities in his diocese. It also was a first for Zumárraga in that these were the first episcopal consecrations in the New World. In addition the bishop of Mexico had the distinction of consecrating Francisco Marroquín in 1537 the first bishop of Guatemala.

The consecration of Marroquín provided the opportunity for a meeting of the Mexican bishops in 1537. This was also the year for the convocation of the Council of Trent, which was the Catholic Church's answer to the rising tide of the Protestant Reformation. The Mexican bishops as all bishops throughout the world were expected to attend this council. The prelates in Mexico requested the king to intercede on their behalf and ask the pope to excuse them from this obligation. They felt that their presence was more needed in Mexico. In the request to the crown they included recommendations which came out of their meeting in 1537. The religious leaders reiterated the need for worthy clergymen to Christianize and educate the Indians. They requested that the faculties of the bishops be increased so that they would not always have to take religious questions to Rome. In the same vein the bishops suggested that a papal representative be sent to Mexico to handle appeal cases in religious matters. Diocesan boundaries needed to be made more specific so as to avoid overlapping of jurisdictions. The letter stressed the urgency for the construction of a cathedral in Mexico, equal to that of Seville in Spain. The bishops continued to complain about the failure of some religious members to accept episcopal authority. In a note of self-justification they pointed to the need of destroying pagan temples that Indians used for idolatrous worship. The crown was urged to pressure those in charge of *encomiendas* to bring their wives from Spain or those not married to marry wives in New Spain. Their final plea was the sending of Spanish laborers and artisans to teach the Indian trades.

The king replied to the recommendations on August 23,

1538. He instructed the viceroy to assist in the conversion of the Indians. To facilitate ecclesiastical administration the crown granted the prelates the power to fill certain vacant church positions. He advised caution in the destruction of Indian temples so as not to cause scandal and undue alarm among the native people. Apparently with an eye on the royal treasury he suggested that the rocks from the destroyed Indian temples be used in the construction of Christian churches. The letter left no doubt that all clergy are subject to episcopal authority and that the wayward clergymen are to be returned to Spain. The king concluded his remarks applauding the work of Zumarraga in founding a secondary school for the Indians.

The reference to the destruction of Indian temples and idols has aroused much criticism against Zumarraga on the part of historians, especially Walter Prescott in his *Conquest of Mexico*. Much of the destruction attributed to the first bishop was apparently done during the conquest of the Aztec capital prior to the arrival of the prelate. In fact there is evidence to show that the Tlaxcalan Indians, deadly enemies of the Aztecs, were mainly responsible for the destruction. Furthermore, Zumarraga was an admirer of the Indian culture and felt a need to preserve their cultural work, as he showed by having Indian manuscripts sent to Spain. On the other hand he was not adverse to destroying the Indian temples and idols whenever he felt the spiritual welfare of his Indian charges was at stake. Although he was a missionary first and an archeologist second, there is little evidence to support the charge of wholesale destruction of Indian cultural works.

In 1539 the prelates of Mexico, Oaxaca and Michoacan held another conference. The conference was mainly concerned with matters of Church discipline. Agreements were reached on the administration of baptism and marriage of Indians. The prelates accepted the idea of conferring minor orders on worthy Indians and *mestizos* to assist their pastors, especially

as interpreters. Ordination of Indians and *mestizos* to the priesthood was rejected. The bishops felt that the faith among the native people was still too weak to entrust them with positions of leadership. The decision had unfortunate long range consequences in that the church in Mexico continued to be a Spanish Church. According to Robert Ricard in *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico* the roots of the Catholic faith would have been much deeper had a native clergy been developed. The prelates asserted their episcopal authority in insisting that no new churches or monasteries may be constructed without episcopal approval. Their intent was to halt the building of numerous small churches and oratories, which they considered excessive. The prelates directed that Indian dances and fiestas not be allowed inside churches and the Indian custom of *volador* be prohibited. The *volador* involved Indians swinging around a high pole by means of a rope. The bishops considered it too dangerous a sport. The final admonition of the prelates was for religious authorities not to punish the Indians physically but rather to coerce them lightly to mend their ways and be peacefully converted.

The missionaries enjoyed a number of advantages in their conversion of the Aztecs. Christianity did not require human sacrifices as the Aztec deities did. The common Indian and those captured in war were frequently the sacrificial victims. Furthermore the Aztec belief in a future life was more for the upper class and for warriors who died in defense of their country. It offered little hope for the common man. The Christian stress on the equality of man before God appealed to the lower classes. Not only did the missionary bring spiritual consolation but he also introduced useful arts and crafts and medical benefits that improved the physical well-being of the new converts. Finally many writers see the reported apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe in 1531 as very instrumental in carrying on the successful mission work among the Indians.

The story of the apparition began on December 9, 1531, with Juan Diego, an Indian boy, who was on the way to Mexico City to hear Mass and receive instruction. On crossing the hill of Tepeyac on the outskirts of the city he heard sweet music and beheld the figure of a beautiful woman. The woman identified herself as the Virgin Mary and asked that a shrine in her honor be built on the hill. Juan took the message to Zumárraga, then still bishop-elect. Zumárraga heard the story with skepticism. On his return to the hill of Tepeyacac the Indian boy was again admonished by the lady to repeat the request to the religious leader. On hearing the repeated request Zumárraga insisted on some proof for what had taken place. Two days later the Indian boy was on his way to the city to visit his dying uncle. He attempted to avoid the place of the apparition but again the lady appeared. She assured him that his uncle was already cured and ordered him to climb the hill and gather roses. Having gathered the roses he gave them to the woman. She returned them with the instruction that he should bring them to the bishop-elect at once. On meeting Zumárraga he opened his mantle to present him the roses. Both were amazed to see painted on the boy's mantle the figure of the apparition. Zumárraga accepted this and the cure of the uncle as proof of the Indian's story. He placed the picture in his church and the following year he solemnly transferred it to the newly constructed shrine on the hill of Tepeyac. The humble shrine gave way to the imposing Basilica of Guadalupe in 1709. The devotion to the Lady of Guadalupe became a religious tradition for all Mexicans. Appropriately, the physical features of the portrait show the lady to be neither Spanish nor Indian but *mestizo*.

Some of the missionaries at the time remained skeptical since they feared the growing devotion to the lady among the Indians would lead to a revival of Indian pagan practices. The skepticism has also been shared by some historians, such as Joaquín García Icazbalceta, Zumárraga's leading biographer.

In fact, the biographer makes no reference to the incident in his work on the bishop. Despite the skepticism few are the writers who do not attribute much of the success in the conversion of the Aztec people to the Lady of Guadalupe devotion.

The rapidly growing number of converts frequently created church discipline problems. In order to baptize the large number of Indians the Franciscan missionaries many times omitted ceremonies that traditionally accompanied the conferring of a sacrament. This raised the question of validity. The pope's answer was the sacrament was administered in good faith and therefore valid. This became less of a problem with the arrival of more missionaries.

A more complex problem was the marriage question. The problem stemmed from the Aztec's practice of polygamy, especially among the upper class. To Christianize an Aztec marriage the missionary had to determine which one of the wives was the legitimate one. One rule employed was to follow the Indian custom which designated one as the real wife and others, concubines. Another rule, more in keeping with Christian tradition, was to consider the first wife as the true wife. Although this was a serious problem during the early period of Christianization, it became less in the second and succeeding generations, when the practices of polygamy gradually disappeared.

The conversion of the Indians required enormous financial resources. Missionary letters to religious superiors and political authorities are filled with requests for funds to carry on conversion activities. The Church relied on its own resources, financial support from religious societies, private endowments, the royal treasury, and donations of the faithful including the Indians in terms of money and work. One main source of income was the tithing system. This was a tax on the crown's subjects which required them to give the tenth part of their produce to the Church. The tax was collected by crown

officials who retained two-ninths to cover the costs of collection. Although it provided a valuable source of income, it carried with it economic control of the Church by the crown. According to Bishop Zumárraga, this control was not detrimental to the Church under Charles I, whom he claimed acted in the best interests of the Church. He praised the king for his zealous work in aiding the construction of new churches, selection of worthy prelates, and in general furthering the conversion of Indians. Tithe income was inadequate for the church's needs and thus the king had to draw on royal resources to provide for the necessities in the work of Christianization. The Mexican Church of Zumárraga's time was a poor church. The wealthy Mexican Church is a subsequent colonial phenomenon and even this popular conception does not reflect reality outside the prosperous metropolitan areas. The churches and church holdings in the smaller communities reflected the poverty of the area. The churches in these communities were frequently the most substantial buildings, where construction was mainly due to the hard work of the Indians and missionaries.

ZUMARRAGA AND THE INQUISITION

A year after Zumárraga's episcopal consecration Archbishop Alvaro Manrique of Seville appointed him apostolic inquisitor of New Spain on June 27, 1535. The inquisition tribunal or court began its official functions in June of the following year. The bishop served as its head until 1543.

The purpose of the inquisition was to preserve the purity and supremacy of the Catholic faith against heretics. It had the power to combat and discipline those who undermined the faith. Its jurisdiction extended over Christians and non-Christians alike.

The Christian origin of the institution dates back to Old Testament times, when the Jews condemned and punished

those that worshipped false gods. The institution was also used by the Romans prior to the time of Constantine in the fourth century. In the case of the Romans the Christians were the victims. As Christianity achieved ascendancy in the Roman empire, the Christian became the inquisitor. During the medieval period it was widespread throughout Europe, including England. The Christian inquisition, although under the jurisdiction of the pope and the bishops, gradually came under the control of the state. A medieval ruler demanded religious and political loyalty for the good order of his domain. This was especially the case in Spain during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, who expelled Jews and Moslems if they did not accept Christianity. It was a reversal of Spanish medieval policy which tolerated the religious observances of these people. In fact, Spain had the reputation of being among the more tolerant countries during medieval times.

The use of torture to obtain a confession was not unique to the Spaniards. It was employed by the ancient Greeks and Romans. It was also used in medieval judicial trials under jurisdiction of the state in spite of the Church's efforts to stop the practices. Despite the admonition of progressive Church leaders, the use of torture continued in both state and ecclesiastical trials.

Zumárraga saw his appointment as inquisitor in keeping with the traditional duty of a bishop namely to safeguard the faith of his subjects. He was fully aware that the newly converted Indians were prone to lapse into their pagan religious practices. Yet severity must be tempered with mercy since the new converts lacked full understanding of the new religion. It was imperative for the prelate to guard against the bad examples the Spanish might set and thus lead the native people astray. Bad behavior on the part of the Spaniards was a greater concern to the inquisitor than the lapses of faith among the Indians. Of the 152 inquisition cases handled by Zumárraga, 133 involved Spaniards and nineteen were against

the Indians. Only one case involved the death penalty. The trials most frequently dealt with persons accused of blasphemy, sorcery, superstition and bigamy. Less frequent were trials of persons charged with heretical beliefs. Mariano Cuevas, the Mexican Church historian, concluded that the first bishop of Mexico conducted all the inquisition trials in a most judicious manner. Yet some of the prelate's critics found the bishop at times too zealous in guarding the faith and morality. They pointed to his destruction of Indian temples and idols and the trial and execution of the Indian Don Carlos.

Don Carlos Ometochtzin was an Aztec chief from Texcoco on the outskirts of Mexico City. According to the testimony of witnesses he took his people to a mountain dedicated to the Aztec deity, Tlaloc, the god of rain. According to the witnesses he harbored idols in his home and was living in concubinage. The list of charges was extended to include the chief's urging his people not to attend religious instruction classes and to rise in rebellion against the Spanish masters. Don Carlos was tried before Zumárraga in 1539. The accused admitted living in concubinage but denied the other charges of the witnesses. Apart from his wife the chief enjoyed few friendly witnesses. Perhaps there was a conspiracy among the Indians of Texcoco who saw this as an opportune moment for removing him. Without friendly witnesses the evidence proved damaging. The inquisition found him guilty and delivered him to the civil authorities to be burned at the stake on November 30, 1539. Shortly before his execution Don Carlos admitted his guilt but deathbed confessions are questionable.

The role of Zumárraga in the proceedings is difficult to interpret. In his treatment of the Indians the bishop had shown a very humane attitude. Did he feel that the extreme punishment of the Indian leader was necessary to warn the newly converted Indians not to fall back into their pagan ways? The Spanish political and religious authorities felt that the prelate had not demonstrated good judgment in the

matter. The authorities questioned the wisdom of trying newly converted Indians before the inquisition since their faith was still too weak. The dissatisfaction with the bishop's role as inquisitor eventually led to his removal from the office of apostolic inquisitor in 1544.

The trial and execution of Don Carlos raised the question whether the Indians should bear the same responsibility as the Spaniards in matters of religious orthodoxy and morality. The apparent answer of the Spanish political and religious authorities in this case was a negative one. Within a short time it became the official policy not to subject the Indians to the inquisition. The new converts were considered weak children in matters of faith and morals and thus should not be expected to bear the same responsibility as the Spaniards whose Christian tradition dated back to Roman times.

CONTROVERSY OVER THE NEW LAWS

Bishops Bartolomé de las Casas and Zumárraga were outspoken defenders of the rights of Indians. Their sermons in New Spain and appeals to the crown expressed concern over the Spanish settlers' mistreatment of the native people. Where the former was a vocal protagonist for human rights before the royal court, the latter confined his efforts to New Spain. The style of Zumárraga was quiet and patient, seeking gradual reforms within the established political and economic order. In contrast Las Casas lacked Zumárraga's patience. In loud and righteous denunciations he fought the cause of the Indians all the way to the king. He was not inclined to compromise even if this meant radical changes in the political and economic structure. Although of different temperaments, both had the best interests of the Indians at heart.

The use of Indian forced labor under the *encomienda* system had drawn the condemnation of Las Casas since the early days following the conquest. For him this was a disguised form of Indian slavery. Zumárraga failed to see the institution in the

black and white terms of Las Casas. For the bishop of Mexico the *encomienda* had its redeeming features. A conscientious *encomendero*, the person entitled to forced Indian labor, had the obligation to provide for the physical and spiritual welfare of the Indians. In fact, Zumárraga saw the institution as indispensable to the Christianization of the Indians. In the defense of the institution he had the support not only of the *encomenderos* but also of many members in religious orders, including the Dominican order, to which, Las Casas belonged. Although Zumárraga saw much positive good in the *encomienda*, he did not remain quiet when *encomenderos* and Spanish settlers in general exploited Indian laborers.

The debate over the *encomienda* reached its climax in 1542, with a victory for Las Casas. It was in that year that Charles I issued the New Laws, calling for the gradual abolition of the institution. The crown appointed Francisco Tello de Sandoval to go to New Spain to see that the New Laws were enforced. Word of the laws in New Spain aroused immediate opposition among the Spanish inhabitants. For them it meant the end of their livelihood. The *encomenderos* saw the royal action as one of ingratitude, since the *encomiendas* had originally been granted by the crown as a reward for their services in the conquest of New Spain. They were fully aware that the real culprit was Las Casas who had told his story well before the crown. It was up to them now to put pressure on the crown to repeal the obnoxious laws.

The arrival of Tello de Sandoval in 1544 increased the voices of protest against the crown's action. Some Spanish settlers had already returned to Spain in disgust, while others voiced disobedience to the laws. Zumarraga admonished his fellow countrymen to remain calm. With the aid of the viceroy, Antonio de Mendoza, Zumarraga urged Tello de Sandoval to suspend the laws until further clarification could be had. Having obtained the suspension, the bishop urged the crown not to terminate the *encomienda*. He argued that a properly

administered *encomienda* could be socially and economically beneficial to Indians and Spaniards alike. The bishop advised the crown to issue protective ordinances against the abuses of the holders of *encomiendas*. He was successful in obtaining a reduction in the tribute paid by the Indians to *encomenderos*. He also secured the exemption of *encomienda* Indians from mine work and heavy work on sugar plantations. Again he reiterated his request that more beasts of burden be introduced so as to eliminate the use of Indians as burden carriers. Of greater importance was the fact that the bishop in his role as mediator between the crown and his subjects in New Spain averted a mass departure of Spanish settlers, perhaps even a possible insurrection.

Although the New Laws had been suspended, the issue was far from resolved. The arrival of Las Casas to attend a meeting of bishops in Mexico City in 1546 caused further unrest among the Spanish settlers. The ideas of the defender of the Indians were evident in the deliberations of the prelates. The bishops reiterated the Las Casas position that all people have a natural right to govern themselves and hold property. In the same vein they argued that forced conversions may not be used to justify a conquest. Neither can the conquest be justified on the grounds that Spain had received title to the New World from Pope Alexander VI in 1493. According to the bishops the so-called papal donation granted only the obligation to seek peaceful conversions, not to enrich the Spanish Empire and thereby deprive the Indians of their natural rights. The king along with the *encomenderos* carried the grave responsibility of giving financial support to missionary efforts among the native population. The thinking of the bishops raised serious questions about the Spaniards' presence in the New World. In fact, the only justification for Spanish presence in the New World appeared to be that of the missionaries seeking the peaceful conversion of the Indians.

The majority of the bishops were realists. They knew full

well that the Spaniards were not about to pull up stakes and leave. It is significant that there was not outright condemnation of the *encomienda*. Zumárraga shares much of the credit in having the bishops adopt a moderate stance in the Indian question, even though it carried radical implications for Spain's title to the New World. The potential turmoil that could have resulted from the bishops' conference and the actions of Las Casas did not materialize. It was shortly after the conference that word arrived of the crown's revoking the controversial provisions of the New Laws. In essence it meant the continuation of the *encomienda* but with specific safeguards to defend the rights of the Indians. It was a victory for Zumárraga, who had advocated the same approach when Tello de Sandoval arrived in 1544 to enforce the New Laws.

PROMOTER OF CULTURE

Zumárraga presents an enviable record in his work for the Christianization of the Indians. His gradual and moderate style are characteristic of his struggle for economic and social justice for his spiritual subjects. In fact, a convincing case can be made that Zumárraga in the long run may have been more effective than his counterpart, Las Casas. The contribution of the first bishop of Mexico in these areas tells only part of the story. His work in the promotion of the cultural life of the colony is equally important. The fruits of his work in the enrichment of the cultural life were for the benefit of the Spaniards and Indians alike. The cultural legacy of the first bishop of Mexico remains not only the proud heritage of Mexico but it is part of the New World heritage.

Zumárraga's zeal in seeking the conversion of the Indians permits no doubt. Neither can one question his desire to bring the best of the Spanish culture to the Indians without destroying the desirable aspects of the native heritage. Whereas many Spanish settlers in the New World saw the Indians as culturally and racially inferior, Zumárraga saw

them as poor and ignorant but still as human beings. Some of the Spanish subjects found it difficult to understand how their bishop could associate so closely with the "bad smelling Indians", whom they called "dirty dogs." The prelate's retort must have caused some soul searching among the Spanish citizenry.

You Spaniards, are the ones who give out an evil smell according to my way of thinking, and you are the ones who are repulsive and disgusting to me, because you seek only vain frivolities and because you lead soft lives just as though you were not christians. These poor Indians have a heavenly smell to me, they comfort me and give me health, for they exemplify for me that harshness of life and penitence which I must espouse if I am to be saved.²

The bishop cherished no doubts about the Indians' ability to learn European culture. All that was needed for the task were teachers, books, and schools.

To Pedro de Gante, a Franciscan lay brother, goes the credit for founding the first Indian elementary school. Founded in Texcoco near the old Aztec capital, it opened its doors in 1523, two years after the fall of Tenochtitlán. Two years later Fray Martín de Valencia established a similar institution in Mexico city. These pioneering efforts served as the foundation stone for Zumarraga's educational institutions. His initial efforts in 1535 resulted in the founding of nine Christian doctrine centers, called *doctrinas*, in the vicinity of Mexico City. Although primarily devoted to the teaching of religion, the centers provided instruction in the Three R's, fine arts and music.

In 1536 with the aid of the viceroy Antonio de Mendoza and Sebastian Ramirez de Fuenleal, bishop of Santo Domingo, Zumarraga opened the Colegio de Santa Cruz in Tlatelolco, a secondary school for the sons of Indian *caciques*. This was done with the full authorization of King Charles I. The prelate

² Cited in Lewis Hanke, "The Contributions of Bishop Juan de Zumarraga to Mexican Culture," *The Americas*, 1 (January, 1949), 279.

intended the best for his new students by selecting a highly competent faculty, who were graduates from European universities, masters of several languages and students of antiquity. The most famous member of the faculty was Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, who became an authority on the ancient Aztecs.

The institution had its official inauguration on January 6, 1536. The initial enrollment was sixty students. Zumárraga had dreamed of having three hundred students, but limited royal and private support did not permit more students. The facilities were inadequate to handle sixty students. In order to have as widespread an educational impact in central Mexico as possible, the bishop recruited two to three students from each of the important towns. For the same reason he recruited the sons of the Indian aristocracy.

Life in the school was very much patterned after that of a Franciscan community. The boys wore a garb that resembled a cassock. They were required to perform regular religious exercises. Hours of work and study were rigidly adhered to. The students took their meals in common and slept in a dormitory. It was in reality a miniature Franciscan monastery.

In the beginning the school was under the direction of the Franciscans, who also did most of the teaching. The curriculum included reading, writing, music, Latin, rhetoric, logic, philosophy and Indian medicine. The Indians proved to be exceptional Latin scholars. Jerónimo López, an advisor of the viceroy and no friend of the school, feared that the advanced instruction would lead the Indians into heresy. López along with other critics of the institution envied the mastery of the Latin tongue by the Indians, especially when they discovered the students were putting to shame some of the Spanish priests in the knowledge of Latin.

If the bishop desired any further evidence for the success of his venture, he needed to point only to his graduates. Among

the illustrious graduates appeared the name of Antonio Valeriano, who excelled in translating Latin works into the Nahuatl (Aztec) tongue. Valeriano's scholarship provides evidence that the school was more than the teaching of the traditional classical curriculum. It was becoming a center for Mexican studies, where the students not only benefited from their European instruction but gave knowledge of their people to their teachers. Valeriano's activities and Sahagún's work in developing an alphabet for the Aztec tongue and his history on the Aztec people are only some of the examples of the scholarly productivity in the institution.

Shortly before the death of Zumárraga the Franciscans attempted a daring innovation by placing the school under the direction of the alumni of the school. Obviously the Franciscans had no doubt about the quality of their product. Unfortunately the experiment, lasting for twenty years, did not prove successful. Poor management and the ever present problem of limited financial backing caused the Franciscans to resume direction of the institution. Conditions did not improve greatly, especially when the enrollment was practically decimated by an epidemic in 1576. The school continued to languish until the beginning of the nineteenth century. The decline of the *colegio* was related to the rise of other schools, which provided educational opportunities to Indians and Spaniards alike. The Colegio de Santa Cruz became the foundation stone for advanced education in Mexico.

The bishop's educational concerns also involved the education of Indian girls. In 1530 he was successful in obtaining six Spanish nuns to initiate the venture. More nuns arrived five years later. At the same time he recruited lay women teachers in 1534 to aid the nuns in their work. By 1534 eight Indian girls' schools had been founded in the diocese. The institutions were not primary schools in the fullest sense of the word. Reading and writing did not receive top priority. Rather major emphasis was on the learning of religion and

practical occupations such as sewing, embroidery and all household tasks. The desire of the prelate was to provide a wholesome Christian atmosphere for the young girls, who were accepted at the age of five or six and kept until the age of twelve. Many of the girls came from families where such an atmosphere was lacking. Hopefully at the age of twelve the girls would be ready to marry the Indian boys who were attending the Franciscan schools.

The schools for girls were a temporary measure, lasting only ten years. As the conversion of the Indians progressed, much Christian indoctrination was provided in the home. The lack of an adequate number of nuns and lay women teachers also contributed to ending the venture. It was a noble beginning but the means were inadequate to do the job.

Zumarraga, like all good educators, knew that books are indispensable means in the promotion of culture. His introduction of the printing press began in 1533 at the time of his consecration as bishop. He was aided in his efforts by Antonio de Mendoza. Mendoza had recently been appointed viceroy of New Spain but did not come to New Spain until 1535. The year after his return to the Mexican diocese in 1534, the bishop had a printing press set up. The first published work in 1535 was a work on religious doctrine, entitled *Escala Espiritual*. It is the first known printed work in the New World. In 1539 Juan Cromberger, a printer in Seville, Spain, took over the Mexican press and made it a branch of his printing house in Spain. He furnished equipment, salaries and transportation costs to aid the printing firm. Fittingly the printing operation was located opposite the residence of the bishop. It is estimated that throughout the colonial period 12,000 works were published including scientific, literary, religious and legal publications. The humble beginning of printing in 1534 became one of the bishop's greatest contributions in the promotion of culture during the three hundred years of Mexican colonial history.

The printing press served as the indispensable means for the conversion of the Indians. Many of the works treated doctrines that were deemed essential in instructing the Indians. The aforementioned *Escala Espiritual* is one example. Another brief doctrinal work in Spanish and the Mexican language carries the publication date of 1539, although there is evidence that the first edition of this work may have been printed prior to *Escala Espiritual*. These early works were followed by a series of religious works, many of which the bishop had printed at his own expense. Frequently he was the author and editor of the published works.

The humanism of Erasmus is very much in evidence in a number of these doctrinal works. Zumárraga agreed with the Dutch humanist that the gospel should be translated into the vernacular tongue. In the spirit of Erasmus, the prelate insisted that Christ's teachings should be kept simple and not complicated by theological treatises. In a doctrinal work printed in 1546 there is no mention of the Virgin, purgatory or indulgences. He feared that these doctrines could be confusing to the Indians and lead to idolatrous practices. Rather his stress was on obedience to the law of God, knowledge of sin and redemption by God. It was a call for the return to the basic precepts of Christianity in the apostolic age. The Indian, uncorrupted by European society, could serve as the raw material with which to build a Christian utopia in the New World. The English humanist, Thomas More, in his *Utopia* provided the model. Zumárraga along with Vasco de Quiroga, bishop of Michoacán, desired to make the Christian utopia a reality.

The printing press served not only the needs for Christian instruction, but it also provided for the diffusion of knowledge in secular matters. One example of his interest in this area is a published work on the silk industry, authored by Alonso de Figuerola. The intent of the work was to instruct the Indians in the development of silk industry.

In the bishop's constant desire to seek the promotion of knowledge one may not overlook the tireless efforts of the prelate in writing letters, reports and instructions. The topics treated in these communications include the plans to introduce more beasts of burden, the founding of schools, the development of agriculture and the establishing of a hospital.

Prior to the start of the first printing press Zumárraga brought with him from Spain a collection of books which became the nucleus for the first European library in the New World. Not only did his library include works on religion that were to serve the needs of the missionaries, but, legal, political and scientific works were part of the collection. It was his desire to gather the most valuable books of his time that were useful to him and his colleagues in the diffusion of culture in New Spain.

The prelate left no stone unturned in his promotion of cultural pursuits. He was quick to recognize the cultural tastes and needs of the Aztec aristocracy. In particular he noted the Aztec people's interest in music. With the use of choirbooks imported from Spain and Indian percussion and wind instruments he laid the foundation for a cathedral choir. He provided the organ and school teacher to supervise the training of the choir. The fact that the Indians loved music not only aided the development of the musical arts but it also served as another means for attracting the native people to Christianity.

A little known fact of the prelate's career was his effort to establish a university. He had a conference in 1533 with the king regarding this matter. This was followed by a formal petition dated 1537:

It seems that there is no Christian place where a university is so much needed, where all faculties, sciences and theology might be taught (as here) If his majesty, notwithstanding the existence of so many universities and learned men in Spain, has erected a university in Granada to aid the Moors recently converted, with how much greater reason should be established in this land (Mexico), where there are so

many converts. In comparison, Granada is nothing—and here there is no university nor doctrine. Therefore the Bishop begs his majesty to create and establish in this great city of Mexico a university where all faculties regularly constituted in other universities be taught, particularly arts and theology.

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He went on to suggest the means to support the teachers and maintenance of the buildings. He thought that the tax income of one or two villages in Mexico would provide adequate support for this purpose. The crown corresponded with Viceroy Mendoza regarding Zumárraga's petition. The records provide no answer as to what the viceroy's reaction was. The viceroy did support the bishop's repeated request in 1542. Other pressing duties may well have caused the viceroy to consider the push for a university a low priority item. For the bishop it was a high priority even though the answer to his petition did not arrive until 1551—three years after his death. When the university in 1551 became the first university in the New World to open its doors, it served as one of the most important vehicles for the spread of culture in colonial New Spain. Among its honored list of founders the name of the Franciscan bishop must rank at the top.

PROMOTER OF SOCIAL WELFARE

The life of the first bishop offers innumerable examples of his concern for the physical well-being of his Christian charges. Already noted are efforts in introducing agricultural products to enrich the Indian agrarian economy and dietary provisions. He pleaded for the introduction of beasts of burden to alleviate the physical hardships of Indian workers. To promote the silk industry he desired to bring Moorish silk specialists to New Spain to teach the Indians the cultivation of the mulberry bush and the manufacture of silk. To these efforts must be added his work on behalf of the good health of the Indians.

³ Alberto Maria Carreno, "Don Fray Juan de Zumarraga Pioneer of European Culture in America," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 11 (July 1949), 66.

Epidemics were a common lot in New Spain. The Spaniards brought diseases to the New World which decimated Indian communities by the thousands. One such epidemic took place in 1545. According to Joaquín García Icazbalceta, the biographer of Zumárraga, the pestilence caused the deaths of 800,000 Indians. The bishop rendered all the aid he could to combat the deadly disease.

As early as 1535 the prelate founded the hospital of Amor de Dios to combat epidemics and bring needed medical services to his people. The hospital received royal and Church funds for its upkeep. The institution was staffed with a surgeon, apothecary, barber and chaplain. To expand medical care the bishop started three infirmaries and the hospital of San Cosme y San Domián. In order to accommodate the sick and weary travelers after the crossing of the Atlantic, he had a hospital built at the port of Vera Cruz. Obviously the hospitals and infirmaries were inadequate to meet the needs of the people especially during the time of an epidemic. Zumárraga had done all he could with the limited resources. The Aztec people had medical facilities prior to the conquest of their empire. These suffered destruction during the fury of the conquest. It remained for Zumárraga to reestablish medical facilities whereby European and Indian medical knowledge and practices were made available to the people.

FINAL YEARS

Despite the fact that the bishop was approaching his seventieth birthday, he continued his active life. In 1546 in a meeting with religious leaders he made plans for the publication of more books on religious instructions. These so-called *Doctrinas* were printed the following year. In 1548, the year of his death, he confirmed 400,000 Indians in forty days.

His meritorious service received due recognition in Rome. Due to the growing Christian community in New Spain, Pope Paul III on February 11, 1546, designated the diocese of

Mexico as an archdiocese which comprised the suffragan dioceses of Oaxaca, Michoacán, Tlaxcala (Puebla), Chiapas and Guatemala. The effect of the papal action was that the archdiocese of Mexico was now completely independent of the archdiocese of Seville, Spain.

The pope followed this action by naming Zumárraga the archbishop on July 8, 1547. The humble Franciscan's first reaction was to reject the honor, but his close friends urged him to accept the position and continue his work as leader of the Mexican Church. The first bishop of Mexico City was now the first archbishop of Mexico.

The waning months of his life were spent in administering to the spiritual needs of his Indians in the city and outlying areas of the archdiocese. By May of 1548 he realized that his poor health no longer would permit the hectic pace. His health deteriorated rapidly and on June 3, 1548, a lifetime work that seemed limitless came to an end. His dying wish was to be buried with his Franciscan brethren. His friends did not honor the wish. Rightly they judged that the archbishop belonged to the people and for this reason they buried him in the church cathedral in Mexico City.

At a time when many European archbishops lived lives of luxury, the Mexican archbishop died with few possessions to his name. The few items of furniture in his household he willed to charity. The remaining items he ordered to be left to his servants who had served him faithfully. The most valuable possession was his library, which he gave to the Franciscan monastery. As a man of his time, he also had a few Indian and Negro slaves. These he ordered to be freed. The remainder of his property was sold to cover the debts he had incurred in administering the diocese. The office of bishop never caused him to lose sight of the Franciscan ideal of poverty and charity. He preached and lived the life of a Christian humanist.

CONCLUSION

The decades of the 1530's and 1540's witnessed the founding of Hispanic colonial institutions, many of which with modifications continue to the present day. Among the most lasting of these institutions has been the Church. This is part of the legacy of the first archbishop of Mexico, not only the setting up of ecclesiastical administration but also the prelate's ministry among his people. He was a pastoral bishop in the fullest sense of the word.

The concerns of Zumárraga were many and varied. Like his contemporary, Bishop Las Casas, he was a defender of the Indians. Although moderate in his approach when compared to Las Casas, his work in defense of Indian rights appears to have been equally effective. Concern for the Indians' spiritual and material well-being prompted the prelate to establish schools, a printing press and hospitals. Rightly historians have credited him with being one of the prime movers in bringing western European culture to early colonial Mexico. Well could Carlos Castañeda write that:

In his own way, Bishop Zumárraga also defended the Indians against abuse and injustice throughout his long life of devotion to the creation of a new society. His was the gentler path of the inspired teacher who attempted to mold not the mind of youth alone, but the mind and soul of a new race, sponsoring the founding of schools, the establishment of hospitals, the introduction of the first printing press, the purchase of books, the acquisition of choirbooks, the intellectual and moral education of Indian and Spaniard alike, planting deep in their souls those basic teachings of Christianity on which our modern western civilization is founded, that the two races might be fused in their common culture, their common ideals, their common faith.⁴

The Franciscan bishop played no small role in the fusing of the Hispanic and Indian cultures. His life work proved to be prophetic in that it contributed to the creation of a new race and culture — namely *La Raza*. The Mexican American people are the proud heirs of this legacy.

⁴Carlos E. Castañeda, "Fray Juan de Zumarraga and Indian Policy in New Spain," *The Americas*, V (January, 1949), 309.

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