

Bates College

SCARAB

All Faculty Scholarship

Departments and Programs

3-21-2016

The globalization of reform

Karen Melvin

Bates College, kmelvin@bates.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scarab.bates.edu/faculty_publications

Recommended Citation

Melvin, Karen. "The Globalization of Reform." *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation*, Edited by Alexandra Bamji, et al., Taylor & Francis Group, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315613574-32>

This Book Chapter is brought to you for free and open access by the Departments and Programs at SCARAB. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Faculty Scholarship by an authorized administrator of SCARAB. For more information, please contact batesscarab@bates.edu.

Chapter 24

The Globalization of Reform

Karen Melvin

The Franciscan missionaries entered the town barefoot, carrying a large cross and an image of Christ crucified. They prayed the rosary and sang religious songs on the way to the church where they declared to the gathering crowd that they were there as ambassadors of Christ, ready to help people become good Christians. More people gathered at the church, brought by messengers who ran through the streets, ringing bells and shouting, 'To the mission! To the mission!' They and the missionaries then set out on formal procession through the town, walking in silence. They stopped occasionally for the friars to explain to new listeners why they had come, and then resumed their hushed journey. Back at the church, prayers and a blessing concluded the ceremony.¹ This carefully choreographed opening of a mission was one of many such events organized throughout the early modern world. This one, however, does not fit neatly into how most scholarship classifies missions. It was not run by Europeans seeking to introduce the Gospel to non-Christian people outside Europe. Nor was it one of the 'popular missions' that took place throughout Europe and which sought to make people better Catholics. Instead, this description comes from a popular mission outside Europe, one directed to an already Christianized audience and one sharing with its

¹ Description based on Isidro Félix de Espinosa, *Crónica de los Colegios de Propaganda Fide de la Nueva España* (Washington D.C., 1964); several dozen *certificaciones de misiones* that can be found in the Archivo Histórico de la Provincia del Santo Evangelio de México (AHPSEM), cajas 208 and 210; and 'Formulario de Missionar, que hizo y dictó N.V.P. Fr. Antonio de Margil de Jesús' Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin, Antonio Margil de Jesús Collection, G168.

European counterparts the post-Tridentine goal of creating a better-educated and more pious population.

In this chapter, I examine some of these popular missions as they took place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and especially as run by Franciscans in New Spain, in order to explore the nature of Catholic reform within a geographic context that extends beyond Europe. I seek to bring together two prominent strands of scholarship on early modern Catholicism by connecting discussions of reform more closely with discussions of globalization. Popular missions make a compelling case for putting these historiographical strands in more sustained contact because, even though these missions took place across a wide geographic range and were run by members of different orders, many of their goals and methods were rooted in shared ideas and concerns. So when Capuchins, Observant Franciscans, or Jesuits (among others) set out on popular missions in Italy, France, Central Europe, Spain, New Spain and elsewhere, they were engaging in similar activities. Louis Châtellier, in his history of these missions, explained that he chose to cover a wide area of Europe ‘because it seemed to me hard to understand the history of Catholicism after the Council of Trent...without situating this history in a sufficiently extensive setting’.² Pushing these geographical boundaries even further helps demonstrate that Catholicism in Europe and in areas outside Europe should not be seen as two inherently distinct forms, one established and one evangelical. Reformed Catholicism was not limited to European soil.

Reform and Globalization

The early modern Catholic Church was one of the world’s first global organizations, but most of its institutions – parishes, sees, cathedral chapters, and seminaries – were rooted in localities and

² Louis Châtellier, *The Religion of the Poor: Rural Missions in Europe and the Formation of Modern Catholicism, c. 1500-c. 1800* (Cambridge, 1997), p. xii.

had few, if any, direct connections to other parts of the globe. The foundation of mendicant orders in the thirteenth century had created a new organizational model where workers were mobile and where work across wide territories was linked. This model was followed by many of the new orders created during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, most notably the Jesuits. In the ensuing centuries, as Europeans extended the boundaries of their world, these orders were often among the first to arrive in the new lands. These global projects have received more attention in recent years as scholars such as John O'Malley and Robert Bireley have made convincing cases for including Catholicism's extension around the globe as one of the defining features of the early modern era. Most scholarship on this global church has focused on missions and missionaries, especially Jesuits but also Franciscans, who set out to bring the inhabitants of Africa, Asia, and the Americas into the Christian fold. Missions were clearly a crucial step in the globalization of Catholicism. At the same time, they were but the first step. What about after these initial missionary phases? What happened when places established their own ecclesiastical structures and hierarchies with bishops, cathedral chapters, and colleges? When European missionaries were supplanted by priests who were working where they had been born and trained? These sorts of transformations did not take place or take place at the same rate everywhere, but by the end of the sixteenth century, at least two places in the Americas, New Spain and Peru, had their own well-established churches. American-born priests staffed hundreds of parishes; mendicant friars worked not only in missions but in their traditional location, cities, where they served people of all races and social standings; Inquisition tribunals sought to police the behaviours of non-Indian populations; confraternities sponsored fiestas throughout the year; local shrines and miraculous images populated the landscape. These were not missionary enterprises but fully-fledged parts of

the Spanish Church. The globalization of Catholicism was not, therefore, always synonymous with evangelical missions.

Yet this split between Christian Europe and a non-Christian rest of the world has dominated much of the scholarship on Catholicism in the early modern era, and it has tended to ask different sorts of questions about each. On the one hand, studies of Catholicism in early modern Europe often focus on the nature of reform, what it meant, and how it was implemented. What was the role of Trent, the papacy, or religious orders in spearheading reform? Was reform the ‘incongruous mixture of official compulsion and popular religious enthusiasm’ that Sara Nalle found in Cuenca? The renewal of more traditional Catholicism that Marc Forster found in Speyer?³ On the other hand, when places outside Europe appear in the historiography of early modern Catholicism, they typically appear as part of the story of how Catholicism became a global religion and focus on non-Christians’ encounters with Christianity. Missions play a starring role in these works, and as Tara Alberts’s chapter in this volume shows, recent scholarship has sought to understand the nature of exchanges among missionaries of different orders, differences within orders, and especially to the roles of the laity in shaping missionary experiences. One consequence of this bifurcated historiography is that places outside Europe are often treated as having few connections to Europe aside from missions. For example, Robert Bireley’s *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700*, which is organized thematically around topics including education, new

³ Sara T. Nalle, *God in la Mancha: Religious Reform and the People of Cuenca, 1500-1650* (Baltimore, 1992), p. 209; Marc R. Forster, *The Counter-Reformation in the Villages: Religion and Reform in the Bishopric of Speyer, 1560-1720* (Ithaca, 1992).

orders, and lay piety in Europe, excludes Catholicism outside Europe from these chapters and instead parcels it into a separate chapter on evangelization.⁴

One area where scholars have begun to break down these divisions is in works on Catholicism's interactions with people of other religions. R. Po-Chia Hsia, the editor of the 2007 volume of *The Cambridge History of Christianity* covering the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, explained one of the volume's goals was to situate 'the history of Christianity in the larger world context; to this end I have solicited contributions that illuminate the relationship between Christian Europe and the non-Christian world, between Christian missions and Judaism, Native American religions, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism'.⁵ He therefore included a section, 'Christianity and Other Faiths', with individual chapters on Christianity's encounters with each of these religions, whether in or outside Europe. Although *The Cambridge History of Christianity* does not include a conclusion to make connections between these chapters explicit, others have drawn more direct connections between what was happening throughout the world, especially through missions. Luke Clossey's study of Jesuit missions in China, Germany, and Mexico deemphasized the central role of Rome, instead stressing the importance of lateral connections among missions and shared beliefs about salvation. Two recent dissertations by Steven Turley and Ryan Crewe examined Franciscan missionary projects in Spain and New Spain as connected rather than separate entities, demonstrating (in the former case) how American missionary programmes transformed Franciscan spirituality in Europe and (in the latter) how a new generation of missionary thought rooted in the

⁴ Robert Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation* (Washington D.C., 1999).

⁵ R. Po-Chia Hsia, ed. *Reform and Expansion 1500-1660*, Vol. 6, *The Cambridge History of Christianity* (Cambridge, 2007), p. xv.

Reconquista rather than religious pluralism shaped the Mexican missionary enterprise.⁶ Perhaps the most explicit attempts to rethink this divide have come from Simon Ditchfield, who has sought to reconfigure the ‘Eurocentric cultural geography of Christian expansion’ and its misidentification of Europeans with Christians and non-Europeans with non-Christians; not all Europeans were Christians and some non-Europeans were Christians, even before the voyages of discovery. Rather than thinking of missions as part of a centre-periphery model, he argues that we should consider them as local adaptations, whether or not that locality was in Europe: ‘the making of Roman Catholicism as this planet’s first world religion was the direct consequence of degree to which its European forms were owned and adapted to local needs by the indigenous peoples of Asia, America, Africa and (not forgetting) parts of Europe itself’.⁷

Although Europe has entered dialogues on globalization, the non-European world seldom appears in more conceptual works about the nature of reformed Catholicism. For example, that same volume of *The Cambridge History of Christianity* includes a section ‘Catholic Renewal’ whose four chapters cover Trent and Tridentine reform, new religious orders, female sanctity, and liturgy and the cult of saints; but only the chapter on the cult of saints includes happenings outside Europe. What would happen if these areas were written into such topics? If questions about reform were reconsidered using a model of a global church that was not exclusively a missionary church? The Americas have histories and historiographies that could easily be incorporated into discussions

⁶ Luke Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions* (Cambridge, 2008); Ryan Dominic Crewe, ‘Building a Visible Church: The Mexican Missionary Enterprise in the Early Spanish Atlantic, 1521-1600’ (Ph.D Dissertation, Yale University, 2009); Steven Turley, ‘Franciscan Missions and Eremetic Spirituality in New Spain, 1524-1599’ (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2009).

⁷ Simon Ditchfield, ‘Decentering the Catholic Reformation: Papacy and Peoples in the Early Modern World’, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 101 (2010): 186-208 (187, 207).

of reformed Catholicism. For example, discussions of Tridentine reform might include Archbishop of Mexico Pedro Moya de Contreras and the Third Provincial Council in New Spain (1585) in the local implementation of Trent's decrees.⁸ Discussions of new religious orders might include two hospital orders, the Order of San Hippolytus and the Bethlehemites, founded in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century New Spain. Discussions of female sanctity might include Saint Rose of Lima (1586-1617), Catarina de San Juan (*la china poblana*, 1582–1637), or other women presented as role models in American hagiography.⁹ Discussions of what reformed Catholicism looked like in its many local contexts could draw on studies that have been accomplished on the Archbishopric of Mexico, Bishopric of Guadalajara, and Bishopric of Michoacán.¹⁰ Discussions of church structures could include institutions in the Americas, such as confraternities, Inquisition tribunals, and female convents.¹¹ Discussions of popular piety could include the place of processions, charity, shrines, and the cult of saints in the Americas.¹²

⁸ Simon Ditchfield's forthcoming article 'Carlo Borromeo in the construction of Roman Catholicism as a world religion' discusses Peru's Third Provincial Council (1582-83) within a framework that considers reform in a global context.

⁹ Stafford Poole, *Pedro Moya de Contreras: Catholic Reform and Royal Power in New Spain, 1571-1591* (Berkeley, 1987); Kathleen Ann Myers, *Neither Saints Nor Sinners: Writing the Lives of Women in Spanish America* (Oxford, 1993).

¹⁰ William B. Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred: Priests and Parishioners in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (Stanford, 1999); D.A. Brading, *Church and State in Bourbon Mexico* (Cambridge, 2002).

¹¹ Kathryn Burns, *Colonial Habits: Convents and the Spiritual Economy of Cuzco, Peru* (Durham, N.C., 1999); Solange Alberro, *Inquisición y Sociedad En México, 1571-1700* (Mexico City, 1998); Asunción Lavrin, *Brides of Christ: Conventual Life in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, 2008); Nicole von Germeten, *Black Blood Brothers: Confraternities and Social Mobility for Afro-Mexicans* (Gainesville, 2006).

¹² Brian Larkin, *The Very Nature of God: Baroque Catholicism and Religious Reform in Bourbon Mexico City* (Albuquerque, 2010); Martin Nesvig, ed. *Local Religion in Colonial Mexico* (Albuquerque, 2006); Juan Pescador, *Crossing Borders With the Santo Niño de Atocha* (Albuquerque, 2009); William B. Taylor, *Shrines and Miraculous Images: Religious Life in Mexico Before the Reforma* (Albuquerque, 2010).

In order to demonstrate the possibility of weaving localities outside Europe more tightly into histories of early modern Catholicism, the following sections offer the example of popular missions. Rather than attempt a detailed study, I rely on the case of Franciscan missions in New Spain and seek to place them in global context by comparing their timing and goals as well as the events of the missions themselves to what was happening with popular missions in early modern Europe.

Popular Missions in Global and Regional Contexts

The pageantry that opened this chapter was conducted by Observant Franciscans from their order's missionary college in Querétaro, one of New Spain's most important cities. The college was the first of twenty-nine such Franciscan colleges founded in Spanish territories between 1683 and the early nineteenth century.¹³ Seventeen of these were located in the Americas, including six in the viceroyalty of New Spain. Collectively, these colleges sponsored thousands of missions and were one of the Franciscans' most successful projects in late colonial Mexico. The colleges also existed as part of a global missionary impulse that began in the seventeenth century and continued, along regional patterns, into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

New Spain's Franciscan colleges had the dual role of ministering to Christians and the still unconverted. According to one description, their purpose was to '[propagate] the faith, to instruct the ignorant in the obligations of the Religion, to convert sinners to penitence, and to keep them

¹³ Félix Saiz Díez, *Los Colegios de Propaganda Fide en Hispanoamérica*, pp. 32-33, 63-72, cited in David Rex Galindo,

'Propaganda Fide: Training Franciscan Missionaries in New Spain' (Ph.D. Dissertation, Southern Methodist University, 2010).

In addition to Querétaro, American colleges were founded in Guatemala (1700), Zacatecas (1704), Pachuca, (1732), Mexico City (1733), Popayán (1753), Tarija (1755), Cali (1756), Chillán (1756), Ocopa (1757), San Lorenzo (1784), Panamá (1785), Píritu (1787), Moquegua (1795), Tarata (1796), Orizaba (1799), and Zapopan (1812).

fervent in their spirit of devotion'.¹⁴ Or, as New Spain's Fourth Provincial Council (1771) summarized it, to convert souls and to restore others to grace.¹⁵ Colleges therefore organized two types of missions: the chains of settlements on the northern frontier (what is now northern Mexico, California, Texas, and New Mexico) whose primary purpose was to bring people to the faith; and the itinerant popular missions in the towns and cities of central New Spain whose primary purpose was to make people better Catholics. Missionaries from these colleges, explained one parish priest, would bring salvation to the entire realm, 'in some parts catechizing, in others converting to the faith, in others uprooting vices and planting virtues, and in all preaching to Most Holy Law of God and of His Church'.¹⁶ Organizing missions according to a Catholic and non-Catholic division was not something unique to the Americas, however. Missionaries working in areas of Europe where Protestantism had made inroads made similar distinctions. For example, a Jesuit missionary working in Poitiers, France described the two arms of his work: convincing people misled by 'the new religion' to abandon their errors and supporting 'old Catholics in their piety'.¹⁷

Most of what has been written about Franciscans in New Spain has focused on their efforts to evangelize Indian populations, and not without reason given the order's prominent role in this work. The order was the first to establish a permanent presence there, arriving in 1524 with instructions from their minister general to 'hurry down now' to the active life of converting Indian populations.¹⁸ Over the next few decades, Franciscans (along with Dominicans and Augustinians who arrived a few years later) set up hundreds of temporary *doctrinas de indios*, temporary

¹⁴ Centro de Estudios de Historia de México Carso, Fondo LXXXVIII, 'Carta de Manuel Antonio Barragan, August 4, 1806'.

¹⁵ Luisa Zahino Peñafort, *El Cardenal Lorenzana y el IV Concilio Provincial Mexicano* (Mexico City, 1999), p. 289.

¹⁶ Archivo General de las Indias (AGI) México, 2742, ff. 18-19.

¹⁷ Châtellier, p. 17.

¹⁸ Kenneth Mills and William B. Taylor, eds, *Colonial Spanish America: A Documentary History* (Wilmington, DE, 1998), p. 49.

parishes in Indian towns that were meant to be turned over to diocesan clergy once Indians were Christianized. In these doctrinas, most of which Franciscans kept until the mid-eighteenth century, friars held special privileges to administer sacraments such as marriage and baptism. Later, Franciscans added missions on the northern frontiers and, by the early eighteenth century, administered many of them through their colleges. But Franciscans did not limit their work to evangelizing in Indian towns and northern missions. In fact, over the next three centuries, Franciscans and their mendicant counterparts also carved out a place at the heart of urban society, where they ministered not just to Indians but to people of all races and social standings. Friars from these urban houses, without the additional privileges of doctrinas, focused on traditional mendicant activities, such as preaching, offering confession, celebrating masses, and praying so that, in some ways, their work had more in common with that of their counterparts in Europe than that of their counterparts in doctrinas.¹⁹

One consequence of scholars' disproportionate attention to the evangelical aspects of the Franciscan enterprise has been a tendency to see the creation of missionary colleges as the result of local initiatives and circumstances. Some historians have argued that the colleges emerged as part of a revitalization of the order's 'missionary spirit' in New Spain during the second half of the seventeenth century.²⁰ The known first effort to found a missionary college in the 1660s when friars sought to transform the first college in the Americas, the College of Tlatelolco, which was now largely in ruins. Yet nothing came of this or any other project until the foundation of the College

¹⁹ Karen Melvin, *Building Colonial Cities of God: Mendicant Orders and Urban Culture in New Spain* (Stanford, 2012).

²⁰ Following Lino Gómez Canedo, 'Renovación cristiana en la Nueva España del siglo XVII', in Lino Gómez Canedo, ed., *Evangelización, cultura y promoción social: ensayos y estudios críticos sobre la contribución franciscana a los orígenes cristianos de México, siglos XVI-XVIII* (Mexico City, 1993), pp. 416-441.

of the Propagation of the Faith of Santa Cruz of Querétaro in 1683. Its foundation is usually connected to the energies of its founder, Fr. Antonio Llinás, and to the Pueblo Revolt that took place in New Mexico in 1680. After Indians killed hundreds of Spaniards and forced thousands more to evacuate the administrative centre of Santa Fe, the Spanish Crown acted to prevent the spread of revolts and to re-establish control by approving Franciscan plans for the college. But the Pueblo Revolt and concerns about northern missions were not the only reasons behind the foundation. Fr. Antonio went to Spain to make a case for the college in 1679, before the revolt. Although the revolt undoubtedly weighed heavily in the crown's decision to grant the foundation, the impetus came from elsewhere. In fact, Llinás's petition to the Council of Indies touted colleges as both 'centres of popular apostolic missions for Christianized populations and as bases of penetration to the territories still populated by infidels'.²¹ In addition, the balance of work between these two initiatives during the college's first years weighed heavily toward popular missions, and it did not send its first group of missionaries to the northern frontier until five years after its founding.²²

To understand how and why the colleges came about requires seeing them as a result of both local circumstances and as part of a broader missionary movement taking place throughout the Catholic world. New Spain's Franciscans may have 'revitalized' their missionary efforts, but they were not the only ones to do so. Many of the orders founded during the sixteenth century put missions at the centre of their work, including the Capuchins and Jesuits, who became the most

²¹ 'Memorial de Antonio Llinás al Real y Supremo Consejo de Indias', AGI, México, leg 310, f.2 cited in Antonio Picazo Muntaner, 'El Ideario de Fray Antoni Llinás, OFM, para la creación del primer colegio de Propaganda Fide de América' in *Archivo Ibero-Americano* 60 (2000): 437–446 (437).

²² 'Libro de patentes, elecciones y visitas, no 2 ff. 160-171' cited Espinosa, p. 180.

active missionaries in early modern Europe. In 1610, Pope Paul V had directed orders to establish missionary colleges, and in 1622 a new Roman congregation, de Propaganda Fide, began to coordinate missionary activities throughout the world. The missionary work of the early period took off in a ‘stupendous’ way after the end of the Thirty Years War (1648), according to Châtellier.²³ The Jesuits also ran popular missions in New Spain, and the chronology of their missionary programmes is similar to that of the Franciscans’. Jesuit popular missions began in the early seventeenth century as informal events. In one of the earliest accounts, Jesuit students travelled to a nearby mining town each week of Lent to encourage people to make their Lenten confessions. By the mid- to late-seventeenth century, the popular mission had become ‘a fully-fledged institution’, formalized and run by fathers.²⁴ These missions were regular events, often lasting months and visiting multiple towns and cities. The work of New Spain’s Franciscan missionary colleges, conducted over the course of a long eighteenth century that stretched from the 1680s until the early nineteenth century, thus followed a similar trajectory to New Spain’s Jesuits and coincided with the great age of European missions.

Popular missions continued to expand into the eighteenth century, both in Europe and New Spain. William Callahan, called the missionary movement ‘the most vigorous spiritual effort of the eighteenth-century church’.²⁵ Châtellier labelled the first half of the eighteenth century ‘the golden age of the mission in Europe’ citing intensified Jesuit missions in Italy, Spain, France,

²³ Châtellier, p. 37.

²⁴ J. Michelle Molina, ‘Visions of God, Visions of Empire: Jesuit Spirituality and Colonial Governmentality in New Spain, 1571-1767’ (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2004), pp. 109-111.

²⁵ William J. Callahan, ‘The Spanish Church’, in William J. Callahan and David Higgs, eds, *Church and Society in Catholic Europe of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1979), 43, quoted in Charles C. Noel, ‘Missionary Preachers in Spain: Teaching Social Virtue in the Eighteenth Century’ in *The American Historical Review* 90/4 (1985): 866-892 (868).

Germany, and Central and Northern Europe. The sheer number of missions as well as the ‘systematic character’ of the enterprise, he concluded, ‘indicated that this was an action resolved upon for the Catholic world as a whole’.²⁶ Just as European missions were at their apogee, however, came the first signs of serious opposition to them. During the second half of the century, Enlightened prelates came to see missionaries’ methods as suspect and sought to curtail or at least transform missions into more tame forms. David Gentilcore found a similar trend in Italy, where members of intellectual and ecclesiastical circles offered new criticisms Jesuit missions, including one churchman who cited cases of women going mad during missions and who chastised the missionaries for not ‘pay[ing] attention to the great wrong they commit to God’.²⁷

The fate of the mission in the second half of the eighteenth century may well entail a series of regional stories, however. In contrast to the decline in missions described by Châtellier and Gentilcore, the Spain Charles Noel depicted ‘hummed with travelling missionaries’. After the Capuchin Diego José de Cádiz came to Murcia in 1787, one official from the Cartagena cathedral celebrated the results:

Never had such a commotion been witnessed in Murcia. From towns twelve and fifteen leagues distant the number of persons who came with only this purpose was very great.... And they totalled 29,540. In the processions of the rosary many were barefoot, chanting and singing with music the Ave Maria and the Santísima Trinidad recommended by Father Cadiz. In some processions there were 252 torches and 392 wax candles, and generally the animated light of a devout and Christian dedication shone among all who were there.²⁸

²⁶ Châtellier, pp. 60-69; quotes pp. 79, 89.

²⁷ David Gentilcore, *From Bishop to Witch: The System of the Sacred in Early Modern Terra D’Otranto* (Manchester, 1992), pp. 72-73.

²⁸ Noel, pp. 869, 875-76.

The Americas also saw an expansion of missions that continued through the second half of the eighteenth century up until the disruptions of the wars that led to Independence in the early nineteenth century. Not only did the pace of missionary activity continue to be brisk, but of the Franciscans' 17 missionary colleges in the Americas, 12 were founded after 1750. Missions also continued to draw large crowds, such as in Minas de Zimapán, where according to the parish priest, so many people attended that they spilled out of the church and filled the cemetery, leaving people to climb onto its walls in order to hear the preachers.²⁹ Similarly, the number of people who crowded into the Franciscans' main Mexico City church during missions was so great that sacristans had to prepare many additional forms so everyone could take communion.³⁰

What might account for differences in the regional histories of popular missions? Declining interest among the laity does not seem to have been a key reason. Châtellier found that even after their decline, they retained their popularity, concluding that they might have been 'the favourite form chosen by the people in which to experience their religion'.³¹ Nor do the differences seem the result of the mere existence of 'Enlightened' ideas among high-level churchmen, since these could be found even in regions where missions continued to flourish. In New Spain, a number of reformist churchmen disparaged the sorts of baroque religious practices that were central to popular missions. Baroque practice, focused on 'outward gesture and ritual observance', sought to inspire through emotion, not just instruct. Many of its rituals were physical, using the body as a link to Christ and his sufferings; many of its rituals were communal, connecting the faithful to

²⁹ Archivo Histórico de la Provincia del Santo Evangelio de México (AHPSEM), caja 210, 'Certificación from Real y Minas de Zimapán, July 24, 1749'.

³⁰ AHPSEM, caja 12, 'Directorio para el gobierno de la Sacristia del Convento de N.S.P.S. Francisco de Mexico', f. 15v.

³¹ Châtellier, p. 88.

each other as well as to God.³² Beginning in the 1760s, reformist churchmen sought to remake New Spain's religious culture, replacing what they viewed as overly extravagant and emotional baroque practices with more a more sedate, rational, and interior piety. The difference with Europe was that their beliefs did not transfer into open hostility toward missions. Parish priests continued actively to campaign to bring missionaries to their churches and reformist bishops continued to give licences for missions – sometimes even advocating for missions.

Reformers of both church and state in New Spain commonly cited the need to improve people's behaviours and create better Catholics, and some clearly saw popular missions as an effective way of addressing their concerns. According to one of the most prominent reformist churchmen, Archbishop of Mexico Francisco de Lorenzana (1766–1772), disciplining an undisciplined population required getting them to 'attend Mass, frequent the Sacraments, and live as Christians' – the very behaviours missions were designed to encourage.³³ For these reasons, in 1784 Bishop of Oaxaca José Gergorio Alonso de Ortigosa requested a mission to address problems of 'lewdness, scant observance of holy days, children's poor upbringing, envy, gossip, scandal, usury and iniquitous contracts, and failure to pay tithes'.³⁴ For many reformist state officials, a better disciplined population would be a more productive population and could help make the colony more profitable. Missions could help make this possible by fixing individuals and their bad habits. As one early-nineteenth-century viceroy declared:

One cannot doubt that the Colleges *de propaganda fide* have done very important services for the Church and state in this realm, their exact discipline and the zeal with which their members fulfil the obligations of their institute having in all times won respect and esteem rarely seen in all classes of

³² Larkin, ,pp. 4-7.

³³ Silvia Arrom, *Containing the Poor: The Mexico City Poor House, 1774-1871* (Durham, NC, 2000), p. 20.

³⁴ Cited in Rex Galindo, 'Propaganda Fide' p. 240.

peoples; but in no epoch are propagators of good principles and healthy morals more necessary than in the present because of the unfortunate corruption of customs that have made such rapid inroads in all parts.³⁵

To the Mission!

Popular missions around the globe shared a number of features. They frequently worked toward the same goals, employed similar techniques, and almost always relied upon spectacle to draw in and inspire audiences. There was, of course, plenty of room for variation: how long missions lasted, the devotions they promoted, the saints they invoked, the styles used by their preachers, the daily schedule of events. For the most part, though, these differences were more a function of an order's institute, an individual missionary's style, or current trends than they were a function of whether a mission took place in Europe or the Americas.³⁶ This section compares what some Franciscan missions in New Spain and some Jesuit missions in Italy looked like and sought to accomplish.

The mission was intended as an extraordinary event, an interruption in the routine cycles of parish life, and most places hosted missions infrequently. For example, even in the Franciscans colleges' home cities in New Spain, missions were not an annual event. The city Pachuca hosted five missions in the twenty-four years prior to 1792, and Mexico City hosted one every third year. Outside these few cities, people saw missions even less frequently, and the 1733 royal order that approved the establishment of the San Fernando missionary college in Mexico City noted that

³⁵ AGI México, 2742.

³⁶ An order's institute was its particular way of proceeding and the ends to which it was devoted. As an eighteenth-century dictionary defined it, institute was the 'establishment, rule, particular form and method of life with firmness and immobility of estate, as is that of the Religions'. *Diccionario de autoridades* (Madrid, 1964).

fifteen or twenty years could pass between missions to a town.³⁷ These gaps only added to the allure of missions so when missionaries arrived barefoot and carrying crosses or entered in dramatic a night-time procession where everyone carried lanterns, they were building on growing anticipation.³⁸ For the next eight days at least (Jesuit missions in Italy and Franciscan missions in New Spain usually lasted eight days in smaller towns and up to a couple of months in large cities), daily life took on a special character, especially since missionaries employed a great deal of theatre in order to fulfil their goal of getting people to reform their customs.³⁹

Jesuit missionaries in Italy and Franciscan missionaries in New Spain employed programmes that mixed time in the confessional, preaching, catechizing, processions, and penitential exercises. As an example of a Jesuit programme in Italy, consider the missions of Father Paolo Segneri, one of Europe's most famous preachers who made 540 missions in Italy between 1665 and 1692.⁴⁰ He followed a deliberate schedule, typically beginning his programme on a Monday and building toward a spectacular end on Sunday. The first five days followed similar structures, beginning with lessons, prayers and a procession to an outdoor location with a specially-erected platform from which he offered a sermon. Each sermon's theme was taken from *The Spiritual Exercises*: responding to God's call, the price of the soul, sin, forgiveness, the eternity of hell-fire. That afternoon, back in the main church, he gave a talk and celebrated Mass. Wednesday through Friday nights featured striking penitential processions, what one his protégés called a

³⁷ The royal *cédula* dated October 15, 1733, is quoted in Espinosa, p. 831. AHPSEM, caja 210, caja 12, 'Libro para el gobierno de la Sachristia del Convento de N.S.P.S. San Francisco de Mexico' (1787), f. 15v.

³⁸ Noel, 873; Gentilcore, 68.

³⁹ Châtellier, 42; Gentilcore, 68; Melvin, pp. 157-58.

⁴⁰ Unless otherwise noted, the following is taken from Châtellier, pp. 40-43, and Jennifer D. Selwyn, *A Paradise Inhabited By Devils: The Jesuits' Civilizing Mission in Early Modern Naples* (Aldershot, and Rome., 2004)..

‘sure-fire method to convert even the most hard-hearted sinner’. Father Segneri gave specific instructions to ensure these processions had their desired effect: ‘I expect everyone in penitential dress; there should be neither men nor women who are not wearing a crown of thorns on their heads, and ropes hanging from the neck....[C]arry the chains by dragging them with your feet...[and] make your crosses so that you can carry them on your shoulders’.⁴¹ Afterwards, men returned to the church where many of them, led by Segneri, flogged themselves. All of these sermons, talks, and group rituals led up to the weekend’s events. Saturday was reserved for confessions and Sunday for one last magnificent procession, Mass, and – at last – communion. A final sermon on the subject of perseverance ended the mission. Certainly the ‘Segnerian method’ was not the only approach used by Jesuit missionaries, but early morning lessons, evening sermons, processions, penitential events for men, and special time set aside for confession were standard parts of the Jesuit mission.⁴²

Franciscan missionaries were supposed to celebrate Mass early each day so they could spend their full mornings in the confessional and then return to this work again after lunch. Details of the missionaries’ confessional schedules appear in priests’ reports on missions in their parishes, such as in Cuernavaca where friars rose at 4:00 a.m., said Mass, breakfasted, and then worked in the confessional until noon and again from 3:00 p.m. until evening exercises.⁴³ At night missionaries and the laity processed through the streets, praying the rosary, singing, and stopping

⁴¹ Jennifer D. Selwyn, “‘Schools of Mortification’: Theatricality and the role of penitential practice in the Jesuits’ popular missions’ in Katharine Jackson Lualdi, and Anne T. Thayer (eds) *Penitence in the Age of Reformations* (Aldershot., 2000), p. 210.

⁴² Gentilcore , 68.

⁴³ AHPSEM, caja 210 ‘Certificación de Don Martin José Verdugo de la Rocha, 25 March 1799’.

for the priests to give brief talks – all ‘so that people would come to the Mission’.⁴⁴ Back at the church they taught and explained doctrine, offered silent prayers, and gave a clear and brief sermon that, according to a popular guide for missionaries, lasted less than an hour so people would not leave. Missions came to a close with a Mass for the souls in purgatory and a procession of penitence that, based on the comments of parish priests, provided some of the mission’s most inspirational moments. Even though missionaries may have remained in town for some days after the procession, it was the mission’s final public event, and it was intended, missionaries explained to their listeners, ‘as a sign of our true repentance’.⁴⁵ The faithful processed in groups – men, women, and children – each accompanied by an image or cross. They wound their way through the town’s main streets, the silence broken only by the priests’ singing and pleas for God’s mercy. Participants prayed the rosary, meditated on Christ’s sufferings, and sought to imitate his humility. They carried crosses, wore crowns of thorns, rubbed ashes on their faces, and walked barefoot. They came to a stop to hear a sermon of ‘spiritual prescriptions,’ such as dangers of sin, the pains of hell, and the mercy of God. They were reminded that all they accomplished during the mission would be of no avail if they did not maintain good habits.

In both types of missions – Italian Jesuit and American Franciscan – confession was crucial to missions’ success. It cleansed the soul of sin, helping people avoid the eternal pains of hell, and was the penultimate step to communion and reconciling people with God. Its importance can be seen in the special day devoted to it in the Segnerian mission and the hours Franciscans scheduled in the confessional. The happy ending of an exemplary confession also figured, in remarkably similar ways, in the marvellous occurrences recounted by authors of the orders. Writing in the late-

⁴⁴ ‘Formulario de Missionar’, f. 10v.

⁴⁵ ‘Formulario de Missionar’, f. 14v.

seventeenth century, the Italian Jesuit Francesco de Geronimo, told of a man who needed to confess but kept putting it off. One night the Virgin Mary appeared to him in a dream and asked him why he had not confessed, ‘What are you doing? Why don’t you confess? I command you to go first thing tomorrow morning and confess’. Twice she appeared and twice he continued to procrastinate. Finally, on the third night, she warned him to confess immediately with Father Geronimo or lose her protection.⁴⁶ A Franciscan version comes from a seventeenth-century history of the missionary college at Quéretaro. An elderly man devoted to San Antonio de Padua had never confessed some ‘ugly and lascivious’ sins from his youth. One night during a mission, San Antonio appeared to the man in a dream, pointing to the altar from which the missionaries were working. The man gave the dream little credence and did not attend the mission. The next night San Antonio reappeared, again without result. The third night, the saint not only admonished the old man but gave him three knocks on the head with the cord from his Franciscan habit. The man woke with a headache but finally attended the mission, where he found a missionary with whom ‘he confessed very slowly and with many tears of contrition’.⁴⁷

Despite the importance of a good confession to both types of missions, the sacrament held different places in the missions’ structure – a central event of each day or an event worthy of its own day – reflecting each order’s approach to the sacrament. For Franciscans, the goal of confession was to achieve a comprehensive list of all sins. Confessors were therefore to ask each penitent about possible sins they might have committed, gearing questions toward their particular status, such as whether they were married or single, a notary or a peanut salesman, a wealthy

⁴⁶ Selwyn, ‘Schools of Mortification’, pp. 212-13.

⁴⁷ Espinosa, pp. 198, 203.

landowner or his poor servant.⁴⁸ For Jesuits, confession required preparation, in this case several days of talks and sermons based on the Jesuit practice of *The Spiritual Exercises*. It was not just an opportunity to obtain forgiveness for sins but a chance to reflect on one's life and reform and improve it. The role of the priest was not simply to help penitents itemize a list of sins but to help them construct a narrative of 'spiritual selfhood'. Sin, in this system, was no longer just 'an isolated act or a broken rule'. The narrative gave people 'a much more powerful and dynamic internal format' for understanding, and therefore avoiding, sin.⁴⁹

In order to get people to the point where they could make good confessions and receive the Eucharist, missionaries had to get the attention of the laity. Sermons were one of their favourite mediums to share their messages and so they employed a range of theatrical devices, such as images, lights, flame, props, dramatic storytelling, and the power of their voices. Father Segneri was famous for closing his missions with a sermon that included five other priests on stage, four with props – a skull, a whip, a rope, and a crown of thorns – who would step forward at set points in the sermon. When speaking of the inevitability of death, Father Segneri would tell the priest with the skull, 'Dear brother, give me the mirror'.⁵⁰ A guide for Franciscan missionaries suggested an equally dramatic way to make people viscerally understand the need for good confessions. The preacher was to take an image and hold it over a lit candle. 'What spectacle could be so horrendous as this?' he should ask his audience. 'Look at it on top of a dragon breathing fire over the entire body and senses – what anguish! And without consolation! How ugly!' The preacher then turned his attention to the victim of the flame. 'Who are you? Tell me, burning disgrace of hell, are you

⁴⁸ Melvin, pp. 125-133.

⁴⁹ Molina, pp. 115-128 (116).

⁵⁰ Châtellier, pp. 43-44.

that woman who confessed with a missionary?’ Acknowledging that it was indeed she, the missionary asked, ‘So why are you condemned?’ ‘I am condemned’ she replied, ‘for having committed a dishonest sin, and even though I confessed the rest of my sins, this one I never confessed out of shame’. How long had she been in the flames of hell? More than a hundred thousand years. How much longer would she have to wait there? An eternity of eternities.⁵¹

Just how dramatic a sermon was, whether or not a preacher burned playing cards or forbidden books, whether or not he whipped himself, or asked his audience to do so, too, depended on the individual missionary. Some Jesuits objected to what they saw as Father Segneri’s over-the-top methods, preferring gentler speech or emphasis on God’s mercy.⁵² Franciscans also had different ideas about the most effect way to sermonize. Fr. Antonio de Jesús y Ganancia was remembered as someone who ‘rarely preached of Justice and hell, everything was singing and shouting the goodness of God, his blessings, mercies, and devotion.... He seldom used the chains, torches, lit *hachas* (a large torch with multiple wicks), and paintings of the condemned commonly used by missionaries’.⁵³ It is difficult to know how these different approaches balanced out among missionaries of different orders or at different times. Did, for example, the influence of reformist churchmen push missionaries away from Father Segneri’s methods and more toward Fr. Antonio de Jesús y Ganancia’s? If so, did the timing of the shifts vary by location? Whatever the case, a similar range of styles could be found on both sides of the Atlantic.

⁵¹ ‘Formulario de Missionar’, f. 12.

⁵² Châtellier, 44.

⁵³ Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Colección Federico Gómez de Orozco, legajo 98, ‘Vida Ejemplar del Religiosos y Apostolico Varon Fr Antonio de Jesus y Ganancia (1768)’

Jesuit missionaries in southern Italy liked to make comparisons between their work and that of their brethren working among the ‘barbaric neophytes’ of the Americas, and some fathers even referred to their field as ‘our Indies’.⁵⁴ Modern scholars have continued to connect Catholicism in Europe to evangelizing missions beyond, but other types of connections can also be made, as I hope the suggestive case of popular missions demonstrates. These missions gathered speed as part of the same seventeenth-century wave of missionizing, sought to achieve many of the same things, and employed many of the same techniques. At the same time, American missions were not simply a replication of their European counterparts. For whatever reasons, popular missions in the Americas seemed to continue and continue to be successful longer than missions in much of Europe. Such differences can be instructive, offering a reminder that even though reform took place across the world, its implementations were ultimately local. Considering the Americas or other places beyond Europe as inherently different highlights their exceptionalism at the expense of how much these places shared. Considering them as localities that shared many of the same structures and that were influenced by many of the same trends within a truly global enterprise offers opportunities to re-contextualize discussions of the nature of reform and globalization.

Select Bibliography

Bireley, Robert, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999).

Brading, D.A., *Church and State in Bourbon Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁵⁴ Selwyn, *A Paradise Inhabited By Devils*, especially chapter three.

- Brescia, Michael M., 'Liturgical Expressions of Episcopal Power: Juan de Palafox y Mendoza and Tridentine Reform in Colonial Mexico', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 90:3 (2004): 497-518.
- Châtellier, Louis, *The Religion of the Poor: Rural Missions in Europe and the Formation of Modern Catholicism, c. 1500-c.1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- Chowning, Margaret, 'Convent Reform, Catholic Reform, and Bourbon Reform in Eighteenth-Century New Spain: The View From the Nunnery', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 85/1 (2005): 1-37.
- Clossey, Luke, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
- Ditchfield, Simon, 'Decentering the Catholic Reformation: Papacy and Peoples in the Early Modern World', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 101 (2010): 186-208.
- Ditchfield, Simon, 'San Carlo Borromeo in the Construction of Roman Catholicism as a World Religion', *Studia Borromaica*, 25 (2011): 3-23.
- Forster, Marc, *The Counter-Reformation in the Villages: Religion and Reform in the Bishopric of Speyer, 1560-1720* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).
- Gentilcore, David, *From Bishop to Witch: The System of the Sacred in Early Modern Terra D'Otranto* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).
- Harline, Craig, and Eddy Put, *A Bishop's Tale: Mathias Hovius Among His Flock in Seventeenth-Century Flanders* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002).
- Hsia, R. Po-chia, *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540-1770* (2 edn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- R. Po-Chia Hsia (ed.), *Reform and Expansion 1500–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

Press, 2007).

Kamen, Henry., *The Phoenix and the Flame: Catalonia and the Counter Reformation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

Larkin, Brian, *The Very Nature of God: Baroque Catholicism and Religious Reform in Bourbon Mexico City* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2010).

Melvin, Karen, *Building Colonial Cities of God: Mendicant Orders and Urban Culture in New Spain* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).

Molina, Michelle, 'Visions of God, Visions of Empire: Jesuit Spirituality and Colonial Governmentality in New Spain, 1571--1767', Ph.D. (2004).

Nalle, Sara, *God in la Mancha : Religious Reform and the People of Cuenca, 1500-1650* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

Noel, Charles C., 'Missionary Preachers in Spain: Teaching Social Virtue in the Eighteenth Century', *The American Historical Review*, 90:4 (1985): 866-892.

O'Malley, John W., *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

Poole, Stafford, *Pedro Moya de Contreras: Catholic Reform and Royal Power in New Spain, 1571-1591* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987).

Selwyn, Jennifer D., *A Paradise Inhabited By Devils: The Jesuits' Civilizing Mission in Early Modern Naples* (Aldershot and Rome: Ashgate and Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2004).

Taylor, William B., *Magistrates of the Sacred: Priests and Parishioners in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

David M. Whitford (ed.), *Reformation and Early Modern Europe: A Guide to Research*
(Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2008).