

Quetzalcoatl et Guadalupe, la formation de la conscience nationale au Mexique, 1531-1813.



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the *converso* community. In drawing a picture of the social bonds joining *conversos*, Cohen is particularly insistent on the relationship between Inquisition pressure, the need for secrecy, and group cohesion. Security considerations were so overweening that they practically mandated endogamous marriages among a relatively small group of *conversos*; on occasion they would refuse to marry Old Christians for fear of the Inquisition. The result was to foster greater cohesiveness by keeping the circle relatively closed and stable.

If the group's social cohesion was tenuous at best, its cultural boundaries were even less secure. Cohen demonstrates throughout the book the pervasiveness of the Catholic environment in shaping the impoverished religious doctrine of crypto-Judaism, subjective in form, and in content a "precipitate created by isolation and persecution" (p. 94) scarcely related to normative Judaism. The adjustment that the *conversos* made to Spanish colonial society reflected both acculturation (leading to such syncretistic practices as kneeling for prayer, conducting religious services in Latin, and belief in resurrection) and reactive adaptation (exaggerated reverence for "St. Esther" as a counterpoint to the Virgin).

Cohen's narrative is extremely dramatic, a palliative to pedantic monographs, written in a style made possible by the literal way in which the Inquisition recorded testimony, which permits the recreation of whole conversations. The entire context of *converso* life lends itself to drama: constant pressure from the Inquisition; the consequent need for secrecy, even among members of the same family; indeed, the splitting of family groups along the lines of religious conviction. The martyrdom of the Carvajals makes a mockery of the clichés of frontier evangelical Catholicism: the crypto-Jews, by rejecting the dominant religious cant, went to the stake resolutely, in unwitting emulation of primitive Christian values.

Immaculately researched, provided with rich and useful critical notes, powerfully written, *The Martyr* is a major contribution to *converso* studies and to colonial social history in general.

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THOMAS F. GLICK

Quetzalcóatl et Guadalupe, la formation de la conscience nationale au Mexique, 1531-1813. By JACQUES LA FAYE. Preface by OCTAVIO PAZ. Paris, 1974. Editions Gallimard. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xxviii, 481. Paper.

This book is one of the most exciting studies of Mexican intellectual history to be published in several decades.

It seeks to probe the origins and the development of the ideology of Mexican nationality by focusing on the historical development of two key politico-religious myths. Jacques La Faye observes:

In order to elucidate the Mexican notion of the fatherland in its proper dynamic, we must go back further into the indigenous past. Mexico is a vast country which does not constitute a natural region; its lack of physical unity has for corollaries an orographic dispersion with a wide variety of climates and of soils and most particularly an ethnic diversity.

He concludes:

This feature reinforces our conviction that Mexico must be defined more as a holy and spiritual space than as a geographical area or a cultural ambient. Mexico is the combination of geographical zones and of ethnic communities which have in common the worship of the Virgin of Guadalupe and Mexico City as an urban focus.

What created the special character of Mexican nationality was the symbiosis of the Indian myth of Quetzalcóatl and the Spanish Christian myth of Guadalupe. The Mexicanization of both myths consisted in the fact that Quetzalcóatl was hispanized and Guadalupe was indianized, to such a degree that these two legends created a metaphysical bond uniting Indians, mestizos, and Creoles. Quetzalcóatl, the Plumed Serpent and the great civilizer, who according to Aztec mythology was destined to return to reign once again over his people, became identified with Saint Thomas, the Apostle. According to a pious if extra-orthodox legend, Saint Thomas preached the gospel in the New World countless centuries before the arrival of the Spaniards.

The cult of the Virgin Mary, identified in Mexico to a large extent with the Virgin of Guadalupe, permitted the continued worship of the mother goddess of the Aztecs—Tonantzin—behind the façade of Marian orthodoxy. Spanish Christianity in effect coexisted with the ancestral polytheism of the Aztecs through the popular and devotional cult of saints and the worship of the Virgin Mary.

During the course of the colonial period a national and folk religion developed, on both a popular and an intellectual level. Popular devotion flourished around the many sanctuaries dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the most outstanding one being that of Guadalupe, to which the populace enthusiastically and periodically made pilgrimages. Secondly, a whole series of Creole intellectuals were adopting the Aztec world as their own American "classical antiquity." They yearned to secure roots that sank deep into the history of the New World. They felt the need for an American past, one disconnected from the

Europe from whence they had come. Hence they warmly espoused the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Their enthusiasm for that cult was proto-nationalist in inspiration. She was an Indian, that is, an American and not a European Virgin. Hence the Creoles also claimed her as their own. It was not fortuitous that Father Hidalgo proclaimed her the patroness of the independence movement, for the brown Madonna was as popular with the Creoles as she was with the Indians.

Until the late eighteenth century Mexico's gradually evolving national religion managed to grow to maturity under the protective umbrella of the Catholic orthodoxy of imperial Spain. After the expulsion of the Jesuits, which was the first phase of the incipient anti-clerical program of Charles III and Charles IV, the Quetzalcóatl-Guadalupe cults fell into the hands of parish priests in the countryside. During the crisis of 1810 those warrior-priests molded this indigenously Mexican spiritual heritage into a patriotic, utopian, and Messianic ideology for political emancipation from Spain.

Servando Teresa de Mier and Carlos María de Bustamante justified political freedom as the restoration of the "Aztec antiquity" that the Spanish conquistadores had unjustly overthrown. Mier passionately embraced the Quetzalcóatl-Saint Thomas myth, in order to deprive the Spaniards of their major historical justification to govern the New World, that is, that they had introduced Christianity there. Mier's flamboyant tour de force was that the Spaniards had corrupted the pure and primitive Christianity that the apostle, Saint Thomas, had given the Indians centuries before the arrival of Hernán Cortés.

La Faye argues quite convincingly that utopian aspirations and Messianic hopes have been permanent features of the Mexican ideological landscape, from the Aztecs to the present day. In Aztec times the Quetzalcóatl myth was apocalyptic and Messianic in character; the millenarian aspirations of the early Franciscans have been well documented. The Virgin of Guadalupe was sometimes identified with the Woman of the Apocalypse according to the vision of Saint John, thus providing the emerging national Mexican faith with an eschatological dimension. Who can deny the utopian and Messianic character of the principal folk-heroes of post-independence Mexico, i.e. Hidalgo, Morelos, Juárez, Madero, Villa, Zapata, and Cárdenas? New wine in old wine skins.

It is indeed fortunate that this arresting and sweeping attempt to recreate in historical perspective the formation of the Mexican national conscience will soon be available in an English translation. Benjamin Keen is translating it for the University of Northern Illinois press.

In a sense La Faye has done for the intellectual history of early

Mexican nationalism what François Chevalier earlier had done for the origins of Mexican latifundia. Both historians have formulated that kind of lucid, erudite, and brilliant synthesis in which French scholars sometimes excel.

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Ethnic and Social Background of the Franciscan Friars in Seventeenth Century Mexico. By FRANCISCO MORALES, O.F.M. Washington, 1973. Academy of American Franciscan History. Monograph Series, 10. Tables. Appendices. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xiv, 166. Cloth. \$10.00.

Francisco Morales's book represents a modest but significant contribution to the growing body of social and quantitative history in the field of Latin American Studies. The author examines with the skill and the patience of a medieval miniaturist the more than one thousand individual cases of candidates to the Franciscan Order in seventeenth-century New Spain, in an effort to establish their ethnic and social background. The Franciscan legislation concerning the admission of candidates to the Order is described in an introductory chapter, while the body of the book explores how that legislation was applied in the Franciscan Province of the Holy Gospel, the oldest and largest Franciscan Province in New Spain. Both the numbers of individuals from different ethnic and social groups and their role and status within the Franciscans of New Spain are clarified in the course of the study. The Franciscan Order emerges as a religious-social body that rejected Indians and mestizos and "attracted principally the middle classes of the white population of the Mexican society during the seventeenth century" (p. 128).

The religious convents were well-defined, stable, and controlled samples of the larger colonial society, and can be studied to illuminate the social structures and tensions of that society. The study of the colonial convents helps also to clarify how Iberian values and institutions were transferred and adapted to the new cultural environment of the Americas. The Iberian statute of purity of blood, for instance, was used by the Franciscans of New Spain to discriminate against Indians and mestizos, although the statute was originally intended in Spain to be used against persons of Jewish and Moorish descent. The well-known confrontation between criollos and peninsular Spaniards attained some of its most dramatic and even violent moments within the walls of the colonial convents. Morales shows that the tempo of that confrontation was increased by the presence among the Francis-