



Mexico - Violent Separation of Church and State

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Benito Juarez, a Mason



Maximilian I, represented the Church



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Mexico: A Deadly Separation Between Church and State

*The Brotherhood of Man, a fundamental
Principal of the Masonic Order, provided
a connecting link with ideas of the masses
and with republican nations.¹*

*The longer you can look back, the farther
you can look forward²*

Winston Churchill

Opposition to the Catholic Church has been a factor in western politics since the Age of Enlightenment's intellectual members began to oppose the intolerance and some abuses of power by the church through its influence over state institutions. The political ideals associated with the Enlightenment influenced the intellectuals in the western hemisphere who subsequently created the American Declaration of Independence, the United States Bill of Rights, while ensuring that there was a careful intent to separate the government they intended to create from the former abuses of power they saw where clerical influence was strong or even controlled actions taken by states. At the foundation of these revolutionary changes were men who were members of secret political societies, the Freemasons, who many believed were the descendants of the survivors of the Knights Templar who had nearly been exterminated by the King of France and the Vatican that created them.

In the United States, at least nine of the Founding Fathers were Freemasons, including George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. Out of 74 generals in the Continental Army, 33 were reportedly Masons, indicating a willingness to lead men in combat to achieve their political and social goals.³ Similarly, Masons were active in Latin America where Simón Bolívar was a 33rd degree Mason and his lodge, the Masonic Lodge "Lautaro" out of Cadiz, Spain, was also home to many other South American founding fathers,⁴ including Jose De San Martin, Bernardo O'Higgins, Jose Marra Zapiola, Carlos Marra De Alvear and Mariano Moreno among other South American Founding Fathers.⁵ Like their American counterparts, these

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1. Wilfrid Hardy Calcott, *Church and State in Mexico (1822-1857)*, New York: Octagon Books, 1965, pg. 37 as quoted in <http://louisianalodgeofresearch.org/papers/03BROTHERS%20DIVIDED%202.pdf>, accessed March 31, 2013.
 2. In *Churchill by Himself (2008)*, Appendix I: Red Herrings, ed. Langworth, Public Affairs, p. 577.
 3. See <http://www.usnews.com/listings/freemasons/3-founding-fathers>, accessed on March 31, 2013 and <http://bessel.org/foundmas.htm> accessed on March 31, 2013. Bessel suggests that 9, or 16%, of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence, 13, or 33%, of the Signers of the U.S. Constitution, and 33, or 46%, of the generals in the Continental Army were Masons, data suggesting that more Masons were willing to fight for their political beliefs than to be politicians.
 4. See <http://www.businessinsider.com/powerful-masons-2011-9?op=1#ixzz2P8ad3i3X>, accessed March 31, 2013.
 5. See <http://calodges.org/nrc1/bolivar.html>, accessed March 31, 2013.

revolutionary leaders generally opposed the Catholic Church and this anticlericalism was to become a feature in Mexican politics following its independence from Spain. Michael Warner's Concise Encyclopedia of Mexico explained:

“The attacks on the church wealth and property was more often a practical than an ideological matter.... The need for the government to appropriate a share of church wealth became especially imperative when the government ... needed funds to prosecute the war with the United States.... This amounted to the de facto nationalization of nearly a tenth of all church wealth. The hierarchy responded with particular vehemence, threatening with excommunication any who dared enforce the law. Santa Anna eventually rescinded the law in exchange for a large cash payment from the clergy – in effect, a bribe to restrain him from other attacks on church property.... Under a storm of accusations of absolutism, treason, and corruption, Santa Anna was overthrown for the last time in 1854.

“This liberal revolution of Auytla marked the ascending to power of a new generation of dogmatic and doctrinaire liberals who were fairly quick to undertake the most sweeping and devastating attack on the Catholic Church yet seen in Mexico. The liberals aimed once and for all to liberate the country from clerical and military domination and form an egalitarian civil society founded upon values of private property, freedom of conscience, the free circulation of capital, secular education, and nationalism. Nearly all of the outstanding figures of the new liberal government were freemasons and staunch anticlericals.”⁶

But Mexico sat directly upon a larger fault line, one that separated the United States and its generally Protestant-dominated society that was essentially anti-European and South America where the Catholic Church and European traditions were still quite dominant. Mexicans were also split between Europeans following long traditions and Indians who were caught up in what remains a cultural transition. This fissure in Mexican society even had an impact upon the two forms of Freemasonry that were established in Mexico. One, the York Rite, had evolved in the British Isles, was relatively open to scrutiny, for a secret society, and was generally apolitical. The other Masonic group, the Scottish Rite, developed in Scotland but was forced by political circumstance to relocate to France where it functioned in deep secrecy and was very political. Wilfrid Calcott explains the general consequence of the two interpretations of Freemasonry in Mexico:

“Mexico was the only country to be divided by Masonic Wars in which the Scottish Rite and the York Rite entered into armed conflict to determine which faction of Masonry was to control the destiny of the nation.”⁷

Calcott continued with significant information:

“Scottish Rite Masonry received its name from the attempts of followers of Bonnie Prince Charlie, the Young Pretender, to regain the thrones of England and Scotland for the Stuart dynasty. After the defeat of Charles's forces in 1715, many of the Stuart Masons escaped to France, where Mary Stuart had served as Queen prior to becoming Mary, Queen of Scots, and had embarked on an attempt to restore the Stuarts to the British throne. During their stay in France, the Stuarts had been deeply involved in the dissemination of Freemasonry. Indeed they are generally regarded as the source of the particular form of Masonry known as the Scottish Rite. The Scottish Rite promised initiation into greater and more profound mysteries supposedly preserved and handed down in Scotland. And it elaborated not only on the antiquity, but also on the pedigree of the craft. Scottish Rite

6. Michael Werner. Concise Encyclopedia of Mexico, Taylor & Francis, 2001, pp. 87-88.

7. Calcott, op. cit.

Masonry then had its beginning in political turmoil, evolving on the European continent as a secret organization seeking a political goal. It was this form of Masonry, practiced in Spain after the coronation of Joseph Bonaparte, which was exported to the New World.”⁸

Amazingly, the York Rite Masons and the members of the Scottish Rite fought a war against one another in which several people lost their lives in a continuation of the endemic political instability found in Mexico. Interestingly, the Mexican’s original attempt at independence from Spain was led by Father Miguel Hidalgo and following his death, the effort was continued in a form of social revolution by the lower classes under another priest, Jose Maria Morelos, until the upper classes declared Mexico’s independence in 1821 with Agustin Iturbide as their emperor.⁹ While membership in secret societies is difficult to document, it is accepted that all three of these early leaders in Mexico were Masons. Mason Edward N. Thompson explains:

“Since 1831, most of the presidents of the Republic of Mexico have been members of the Fraternity; however, the downfall of Guerrero marks the end of Masonry as an outstanding political force in Mexico. The Escoceses [Scottish Rite] had been scattered and the Yorkinos split.... From the divided Fraternity, there arose the Rito Nacional Mexicano. It gained strength from its inception. Masonry ceased to be divided; brotherhood prevailed.”¹⁰

But the violence didn’t stop because the York Rite Masons were absorbed into the more National Rite, controlled by the Scottish Rite. The liberals allied with Mason Benito Juarez and the anticlericals next developed a new constitution in 1857 that seems to have cemented the negative relationship between State and Church in Mexico as yet another war started.

“Mexicans found themselves caught between civil and religious power; the government demanded that public officials swear allegiance to the document [the 1857 Constitution], even as the clergy threatened excommunication and denial of sacraments to any who did so.... By December, an alliance between church and army under the leadership of General Felix Zuloaga declared was on the Constitution.... The ensuing war was, in effect, a civil war fought in the name of religion.... The inevitable polarization attending civil war led the Liberals to carry their anticlerical legislation to its logical conclusion.... The nationalization of church property, however, was so compromised.... The government of Benito Juarez defaulted in its foreign debt in 1861, providing a pretext for the French intervention.”¹¹

Enter the French, Belgians, and Austrians who cooperate with the church and had support mainly from conservative Catholics, at the time the majority within Mexico, and the main means of support came from affluent Mexicans who were seeking to promote stability and end the constant cycle of conflict that developed with the government of Benito Juarez. This resulted in a continuation of the previous war with Juarez’ forces being driven north toward the border with the United States where he received some support from the Lincoln and Johnson administrations while the Europeans, especially Napoleon III, supported Maximilian I, the newly proclaimed emperor who soon adopted Iturbide’s grandsons in an effort to establish legitimacy in Mexico for himself.

When Benito Juarez died, Mexico passed into the hands of Porfirio Díaz, also a Freemason, but after his defeat and exile in the 1910 revolution, Mexico was ruled by a succession of presidents who were also Masons and developed a strongly anticlerical Constitution in 1917 that was similar to the Auytla document . It was soon repudiated by the Catholic Church and a new civil war, the “Cristos Rebellion,” resulted in the killing of priests

8. Michael Baigent, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1982, p. 145, in <http://louisianalodgeofresearch.org/papers/03BROTHERS%20DIVIDED%202.pdf>, accessed March 31, 2013.

9. Martin C. Needler. *Mexican Politics: The Containment of Conflict*, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1995, pg. 4.

10. See <http://louisianalodgeofresearch.org/papers/03BROTHERS%20DIVIDED%202.pdf>, accessed March 31, 2013.

11. Werner, op. cit., pg. 89.

and their parishioners by the government's military, again essentially Masons fighting the church. By the late 1920's, this violence left a large imprint upon Mexico's culture and its constituent subcultures. From Michael Warner:

“The Cristo Rebellion left a deep scar on the country and the Mexican Catholic Church. It explains the difference between Mexico and other Latin American countries. Mexico's church became more cautious than those elsewhere in Latin America, but at the same time it became far more national, practically without a foreign priesthood and backed by numerous members of religious orders.”¹²

At the same time, this is also the root of the continuing strong anticlerical position of the Freemasons of Mexico who are members of Masonic Lodges affiliated with the Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite which remains closely identified with the political party that ruled Mexico until 2000, the “Partido Revolucionario Institucional,” or the PRI.¹³

Presidents Obregon and Calles, his hand-picked successor, may have been responsible for the deep entrenchment of the recent positions taken by the state against the clergy. The clergy supported the lower classes of Mexico's population during this period, including the Indians. Obregon selected Jose Vasconcelos as his Minister of Public Education – the man who created the theory of a superior race in his book, *La Raza Cosmica* or “The Cosmic Race”, whose intellectual dreaming involved the creation of a hybrid Mexican through the Spanish population producing offspring with Indian women. This prevalent view among the elites of the period seems to have been instrumental in the development of a form of racial disgust, bordering on hatred, that occurs within Mexico's Indians and the non-Indians. President Calles also created the PRI, the long ruling political party.

While conclusions from this complex admixture of both religion and politics are hard to make, there are a few that can be made. First, with the state's levers of power generally in the hands of the elites of Mexican society who are influenced by generations of anticlerical propaganda and activities emanating from the country's Masonic lodges that are far from being apolitical, the control of political and military power is likely to remain under their control. This will ensure that the majority of the nation's wealth will remain under their control. Second, as the fissure between the state and the Catholic Church that has tended to support the lower and underclass, the position of the clerics and their “liberation theology” will be less likely to achieve any of the changes and development desired by the lower classes. Additionally, as the clerical attempt to hold on with the rural and slum-dwelling portion of the population fails to upgrade lives, the people will become increasingly criminalized on one side of the balance scale and as the accumulation of common grievances against those holding power and wealth increases, the likelihood that a charismatic leader will emerge to politicize them increases dramatically.

Much like the situation against Spain in 1810 when Father Hidalgo emerged to lead a major rebellion, Mexico – especially the rural and poorer areas of the cities – is best defined as being in a “pre-insurgency status.” It is only a matter of time before a key leader emerges to rally a large number of very unhappy, hungry and poor Mexicans into a full-blown insurgency. The only questions remaining are related to the political ideology the people will be following: socialism-communism, radical Islam, or nihilistic Aztecism. All are possible.

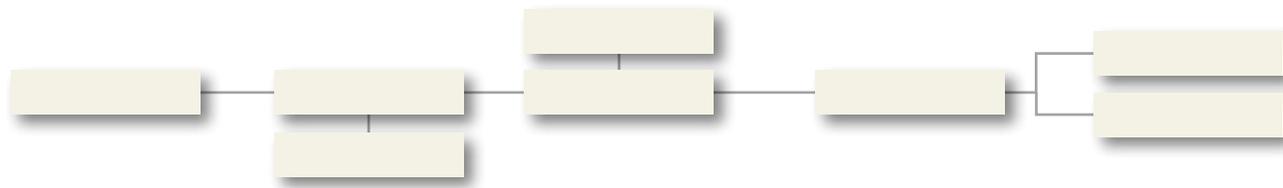
12. Warner, *op. cit.*, pg. 93.

13. See <http://www.yorkrite.com/gcmx/os1999.html>, accessed March 31, 2013.

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Traditional anthropological research conducted among tribes inhabiting remote areas where insurgents and criminals operate has become increasingly difficult to implement. Studies carried out among people living in small-scale societies now are nearly impossible due to the physical dangers associated with the civil and religious unrest found in those areas. Swat, for example, has become so dangerous that Frederick Barth's studies only could be repeated at the risk of the investigator's life. Similar research is not feasible among Burma's Rohingya tribes located on both sides of the border with Bangladesh, as well as with the Pashtuns in Afghanistan's interior and within Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, where even Pakistan's army enters with reluctance.

Given the difficulties of conducting direct fieldwork in conflictive areas, the Tribal Analysis Center utilizes an indirect approach. Using multidisciplinary research, we seek to collect and analyze data obtained from a wide variety of sources, both current and historical. In the absence of new ethnographic fieldwork to update our base of knowledge, the Tribal Analysis Center compiles and summarizes existing research and documents on tribal societies, combining this material with contemporary press reports and articles. We assume that much can be gleaned from well-informed observers who are not anthropologists, ranging from journalists and travelers to government officials.



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