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Book Reviews

Church and State in Bourbon Mexico: The Diocese of Michoacán, 1749-1810. By D.A. Brading. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. xiii + 300 pp. Tables, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$59.95 cloth.)

Few historians of the last quarter century have influenced our thinking about the history of late colonial or early national Mexico as much as D.A. Brading. With the publication of *Church and State in Bourbon Mexico*, he completes his trilogy on the period from 1750 to 1850 that began with *Miners and Merchants in Bourbon Mexico*. The style of inquiry and the level of research established in *Miners and Merchants* are equally evident in *Church and State*, and as in his earlier works on Bourbon policies and practices, Brading approaches the rift between church and state in a multi-layered rather than linear fashion. The interaction between institutions produced a contradictory world of shared goals and divided loyalties which was never satisfactorily harmonized. To read Brading for a simple but straight-forward explanation of church-state relations is to miss the richness and complexity of the struggle over reform and change that ensued between these two powerful colonial institutions.

Focusing on the Diocese of Michoacán in *Church and State*, Brading explores the spiritual, political, and economic life of the church in the sixty years before rebellion and the independence that followed. Although much of the book concerns reforms, personalities, and crises in Michoacán, it also examines church-state relations in other dioceses throughout the colony. In part because it could claim two of the principals—Manuel Abad y Queipo and Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla—in a growing contest between church and state over property, jurisdiction, and doctrine, Michoacán may reflect more dramatically than other dioceses how the royal reforms underscored the widening gap between the clergy and the government.

Brading organizes *Church and State* into three parts: 1) "The Religious Orders," 2) "Priests and Laity," and 3) "Bishops and Chapters." In each section the author devotes chapters to aspects of the work of the orders, the priesthood, and the bishops. Although Brading acknowledges the research of other scholars, mainly Mexican, this book, like his previous studies of Bourbon Mexico, unfolds through his own reading of the extensive religious archives of the Michoacán diocese, in particular the Casa Morelos. Readers will find fascinating details on what mendicants wrote in their chronicles about the times, how clergymen reacted to deviance from accepted Catholic practices within their parishes, and how bishops strategized to thwart the state's

confiscation of their revenues. The details, however, become the basis not only for understanding the persistent assault on the church by the state but more importantly for appreciating a revitalized religious establishment's vigorous defense against the state's relentless demands. Brading's narrative takes various paths, determined by his desire to let the documents tell as much of the story as possible. Yet each chapter offers conclusions designed to help the reader see how these paths have some common underlying characteristics.

By the author's own admission, this book on late Bourbon religious life has "a more introductory character" (p. xii) than his other works on Bourbon Mexico, and as such it succeeds. Those interested in a more analytical approach to reform within the church or conflict between church and state may find the evidence too anecdotal. A dispute between a priest and his curate, or a report for a single year on diocesan finances, may highlight some important changes without actually demonstrating how deep and extensive these changes were. Further, there is the problem of time and place: it remains unclear whether the growing alienation between church and state was mainly a manifestation of developments in Michoacán or whether similar events were taking place in other colonial dioceses.

If we accept Brading's own injunction that this book should be read along with other recent church histories, we have a thoughtful and at times penetrating inquiry into the changing nature of Bourbon Mexico's religious life.

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