

4-1-1999

Material and Cultural Dimensions of Episcopal Authority: Tridentine Donation and the Biblioteca Palafoxiana in Seventeenth-Century Puebla del los Angeles, Mexico

Michael M. Brescia

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/clahr>

Recommended Citation

Brescia, Michael M. "Material and Cultural Dimensions of Episcopal Authority: Tridentine Donation and the Biblioteca Palafoxiana in Seventeenth-Century Puebla del los Angeles, Mexico." *Colonial Latin American Historical Review* 8, 2 (1999): 207.
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/clahr/vol8/iss2/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Colonial Latin American Historical Review by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact disc@unm.edu.

Material and Cultural Dimensions of Episcopal Authority: Tridentine Donation and the Biblioteca Palafoxiana in Seventeenth-Century Puebla de los Angeles, Mexico

MICHAEL M. BRESCIA

On 5 and 6 September 1996, the city of Puebla commemorated the 350th anniversary of the founding of the Biblioteca Palafoxiana. On those same dates in 1646, the bishop of Puebla, Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, donated his personal library of five thousand volumes to the city. As part of the anniversary festivities, the Secretary of Culture for the State of Puebla sponsored and published a transcription of the instrument of donation. The original document was removed from its *caja* in the Archivo General de Notarías de Puebla and, after a transcription was rendered, became part of the official anniversary program.¹ The document, translated herein, reveals certain material and cultural dimensions of Bishop Palafox's exercise of episcopal power in seventeenth-century Puebla. The donation was not merely a philanthropic expression of aristocratic sensibilities but was part and parcel of the institutionalization of Tridentine Catholicism in colonial Mexico.² Employing juridical

¹ The provenance of the instrument is Archivo General de Notarías del Estado de Puebla, Notario #2, Nicolás de Valdivia [tenured clerk], caja 2, años 1644-1646. A microfilm copy of the original document, which the author has examined, can be found in Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, *Autos y diligencias tocantes a la fundación del colegio de los niños, advocación del glorioso príncipe de los Apóstoles San Pedro, que á fundado, en la ciudad de los Angeles, el ilustrísimo y excelentísimo don Joan de Palafox y Mendoza, obispo del aquel obispado*, Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid (hereinafter BN), manuscript 3838, fols. 31-35v. The original document housed in Puebla was removed so that it could be transcribed as part of the anniversary program and has not yet been returned to the archive. For this transcription, see Secretaría de Cultura, "CCCL aniversario de la muy ilustre Biblioteca Palafoxiana de Puebla," *Fojas Culturalis* 52 (1996):1-64.

² As this article demonstrates, Palafox's donation was not simply an act of *noblesse oblige*, that is, he was not moved by any contemporary sense of aristocratic responsibility or duty to the masses. Although Palafox was far from being a parish priest of humble origins or modest means, he donated his personal library as an exercise of episcopal power. Modern notions of philanthropy obscure rather than

language in the act of donation that demonstrated pastoral sentiment, Palafox wielded his crozier to activate the reforms of the Council of Trent.³ The donation, therefore, represented a concrete manifestation of his responsibilities as shepherd of a diocese. Since Trent defined the ecclesiastical boundaries of those responsibilities, Palafox's donation became one of many platforms in his efforts to construct the Tridentine edifice of Mexican Catholicism.⁴

The document also reflects the bishop's appreciation of urban spiritual geography. The public nature of the library and its intimate links to other Tridentine practices show that Palafox deployed his power to structure the social life of the city. The boundaries between public and private spheres were not distinct, semi-autonomous entities to the bishop. Prayer, religious education, frequent reception of the sacraments, adherence to the precepts of the Church, as well as a proper disposition during these activities, overlapped the public and the private. Public worship and praying at home, for example, were not separate activities that were then excerpted from everyday life as isolated, static variables. They complemented and sustained each other. Moreover, Palafox expected the clergy, who were drawn from the lay populations of the city and rural towns of the diocese, to supervise and mediate this intersection of the public and private spheres.

Raised and socialized in this blending of domains, the young men who entered Palafox's seminaries required appropriate training and education to strengthen the spiritual elements located within the public and private lives of the faithful. Palafox believed strongly that vibrant faith and spirituality coexisted with the more profane aspects of urban life. Sometimes faith and morals in Puebla, however, were not practiced according to the letter and spirit of institutional Catholi-

illuminate the power-laden discourse of this seventeenth-century episcopal donation.

³ The crozier, or shepherd's staff, is one of two sacred items that symbolize the office of bishop. The other is the miter, a liturgical headdress that a bishop wears during solemn ceremonies. The Roman Catholic Church in Europe convened the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century (1545-1563) as an institutional response to the Protestant Reformation.

⁴ According to David A. Brading, Palafox was "anxious to define New Spain as an integral province of the Tridentine Church...where the truths of the Faith shine resplendent." See David A. Brading, *The First America: The Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots, and the Liberal State, 1492-1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 241, 251.

cism. If Tridentine values were to permeate the public and private lives of the faithful, Palafox first had to nurture them in his priests. The library, therefore, assisted Palafox in his endeavors and became closely linked to the establishment of another material dimension of Puebla's spiritual geography, the Tridentine seminary. The donation of Palafox's library reveals the bishop's episcopal authority as well as the cultural ordering of an urban landscape in seventeenth-century New Spain.

Palafox arrived in 1640 as both bishop of Puebla and visitor-general of New Spain. The son of the Marqués de Ariza, a leading figure of the Aragonese nobility in Spain, Palafox accompanied the Infanta María as chaplain on her bridal journey to Vienna soon after his ordination to the priesthood in 1629. A favorite of the Count, Duke of Olivares, Palafox rose quickly in the ranks of the court and church bureaucracies. Upon his return from Central Europe, he was appointed to the Royal Council of the Indies and the Council of Castile. After being consecrated a bishop in 1639, Palafox was offered the bishopric of Puebla, and he soon found himself appointed visitor-general of the colony as well as captain-general. He approached his tasks with such zeal and sense of purpose that the Crown appointed him interim viceroy in 1642.⁵ Palafox's secular posts occupied most of his first two years in the colony. Upon the arrival of the new viceroy, García Sarmiento de Sotomayor, in late 1642, however, Palafox began to fulfill his ecclesiastical duties. During Palafox's general tour of the colony as visitor-general and his subsequent pastoral visits to his diocese as bishop, he encountered few books and other reading materials. As someone who received a good education in Spain's leading schools, Palafox had a special affinity for books and was an avid book collector. Before, during, and after his stay in New Spain, he had authored many treatises himself that contributed to the literary, theological, and political debates of his time. So important were books to the cultural well-being of society that Palafox once wrote,

he who finds himself in an activity without books finds

⁵ For a comprehensive biography that details Palafox's early years in Spain and his subsequent rise in royal and ecclesiastical circles, see Sor Cristina de la Cruz de Arteaga, *Una mitra sobre dos mundos: la de don Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, obispo de Puebla de los Angeles y de Osma* (Seville: Artes Gráficas Salesianas, S.A., 1985).

himself in solitude without consolation, on a mountain without company, on a road without direction, in darkness without a guide.⁶

While Palafox brought his personal library with him to New Spain, the scarcity of books in the colony moved him to donate the collection to the city.

A previous bishop, Juan de Zumárraga, had introduced the printing press in the viceregal capital in 1539, but local printers could not satisfy the needs of local scholars seeking to disseminate their works nor the demands of the general literate creole public.⁷ Moreover, the ecclesiastical seat of Palafox's authority, Puebla, which was also the second largest city in the colony, did not even have a printing press. As one of his first tasks when he returned to the city after his tenure as viceroy had ended, Palafox established a printing press there in 1642.⁸ Almost immediately, printed matter inundated the city as Palafox ordered the publication and distribution of Tridentine reforms. The high cost of paper and ink, however, hindered the systematic publication of books. Founding a library would soon follow because the bishop recognized that the new printing press could not make up for years of dearth. His personal collection of approximately five thousand volumes contributed to the intellectual vitality of literate culture in Puebla.

In the first paragraph of the instrument of donation, Palafox stated that both New Spain and the city of Puebla needed a public library. He attributed the need for books and reading materials to the high costs of printing, the scarcity of paper, and the distances involved in shipping books from Spain to Mexico. The number of books printed overseas surpassed that of those locally printed in Mexican bookstores and private libraries.⁹ Furthermore, everyone

⁶ Quoted in Secretaría de Cultura, "CCCL aniversario," 1. The original Spanish reads "...el que se halle en un beneficio sin libros se halla en una soledad sin consuelo, en un monte sin compañía, en un camino sin báculo, en unas tinieblas sin guía..." Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the author.

⁷ Magdalena Chocano Mena, "Colonial Printing and Metropolitan Books: Printed Texts and the Shaping of Scholarly Culture in New Spain, 1539-1700," *Colonial Latin American Historical Review* 6 (1997):69-90.

⁸ Elías Trabulse, "Prólogo," *Cien impresos coloniales poblanos* (México: Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, 1991), 10.

⁹ Chocano Mena, "Colonial Printing and Metropolitan Books," 70.

was to enjoy access to the library, that is, it was not limited to clerics. The library was probably the first of its kind to be designated as a public institution in Latin America. While convents, monasteries, and schools had their own private libraries, and a few wealthy colonists also collected books, none of them were placed in the public domain.¹⁰ At the time of the donation, Palafox's collection was by far the largest personal library in the New World. But he emphasized the public character of his donation throughout the document, using such expressions as "everyone" and reiterating that "all ecclesiastical and lay persons of this city and diocese" should have access to the library.

The kind of public library that Palafox envisioned, however, was not the municipal library so common today in North America. Puebla's city council did not maintain nor support the library through taxes and subsidies. In fact, the library remained in the care of the Church until 1858, when the Reform laws obliged the Church to hand over the library and seminaries to the state. Palafox stipulated that the donation was a contract between him and the seminary college of Saint Peter. The administrator of the seminary, a priest, took possession of the library on behalf of the city of Puebla, illustrating once again the close ties between Church and State during the colonial period. But Palafox used the term "public" because he wanted the library to serve another public good, namely the education of boys and young men in the recently established Tridentine seminaries of Saints Peter and John. Without books and reading materials, a rigorous education was impossible, and without a proper education, future candidates for the priesthood could not fulfill the obligations and responsibilities that the Sacrament of Ordination conferred. Since the student body consisted of young men from families within the diocese, the library was indeed serving the public good and therefore

¹⁰ For a good discussion of the first academic library in the Americas, see W. Michael Mathes, *The America's First Academic Library: Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco* (Sacramento: California State Library Foundation, 1985). Irving A. Leonard's classic study of the Baroque details Melchor Pérez de Soto's personal collection of 1,663 volumes. See Irving A. Leonard, *Baroque Times in Old Mexico* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959), 85-86. A leading textbook on Mexican history notes that Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651-1695) was surrounded by approximately four thousand of her own books. And by the seventeenth century, the College of Discalced Carmelites had twelve thousand volumes. See Michael C. Meyer, William L. Sherman, and Susan M. Deeds, *The Course of Mexican History*, 6th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 219.

had social value. Students who successfully completed the required course of studies would then receive holy orders, thus enabling them to contribute to the community by way of the priesthood.

Although a sacred space for learning, seminaries were very much a part of city life in Europe, even if only males were enrolled. Convents served the same purposes for young girls and single women who desired a religious vocation. Both occupied the urban landscape and offered educational opportunities to the sons and daughters of families. Palafox founded Saint Peter's College in 1644 and issued regulations for another seminary, Saint John's College, which was established during the last years of the sixteenth century. Palafox founded a third seminary, Saint Paul's College, a few years later, and all three constituted the Tridentine Seminaries for New Spain and were located on the same city street, next to the episcopal residence. The cathedral, with its large atrium, was located across from them. Palafox situated the library and seminaries near the seat of episcopal authority and his own living quarters. The library, in effect, allowed the [seminaries] colleges to hold classes by providing the necessary scholarly apparatus, while Palafox's episcopal gaze ensured compliance with the letter and spirit of Trent.

Palafox made an explicit linkage between the library and seminaries in the second paragraph of the donation. Founded on 22 August 1644, the seminary college of Saint Peter fulfilled session 23, canon 18 of the Council of Trent, which stipulated that bishops should exercise their ordinary power to establish centers of learning for young boys and single men.¹¹ During the proceedings of that particular session, the bishops of Europe had decided that seminary educa-

¹¹ Council of Trent, Session 23, 15 July 1563, canon 18, cited in Norman P. Tanner, S.J., ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Washington, DC: Sheed & Ward and Georgetown University Press, 1990), 2:750-53. The act of foundation for Saint Peter's College is found in Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, *Acta de la fundación del Colegio Seminario del Glorioso Apóstol San Pedro en la Puebla de los Angeles*, 22 August 1644, Archivo Histórico Diocesano de la Arquidiócesis de Puebla de los Angeles (hereinafter AHDP), fols. 1-9. Today the seminary is called Pontificio Seminario Palafoxiano Angelopolitano. The archdiocese provided a photocopy of the original and transcribed it as part of the festivities to commemorate the 350th anniversary of the seminary in 1994. My discussion is based on this transcription. Another copy of the original, which I also examined, can be found in Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, *Autos y diligencias tocantes a la fundación del colegio de los niños*, BN, manuscript 3838, fols. 8-12.

tion should consist of three levels or classes. The first level consisted of what would be called today minor seminary education, that is, junior high school and high school-level preparation that nurtured vocations in those young students who enrolled; Saint Peter's College occupied this first level. The second level consisted of formal seminary training, a comprehensive next step to the priesthood that included advanced studies and further practice in the rites and ceremonies of the Catholic Church; Saint John the Evangelist Seminary was this second level. The third level consisted of post-ordination refinement of the art and craft of the priesthood, what would today be called the "continuing education of priests;" Saint Paul's Seminary constituted this third and final class.

After establishing Saint Peter's College as the first level, Palafox decided that the library would be located in the new seminary.¹² The seminary was open to children of wealthy and poor families alike. In the act of foundation, Palafox expressed a sentiment quite common among the elite of Europe and New Spain. Cities and towns had too many young males who were susceptible to the more profane aspects of the world around them. Some children of prominent and wealthy families, in particular, failed to find gainful and respectable employment, or they did not even work at all, thus failing to contribute anything to their communities. Palafox feared that the diocese's male youth, rich and poor, would grow up without any formal education and without a healthy dose of Tridentine values.¹³ The moral norms that Palafox championed included a vibrant prayer life, veneration of the saints, solemn administration of the sacraments (or, for the laity, proper reception of the sacraments), obedience to ecclesiastical authorities, and appropriate conduct during mass. The Tridentine seminaries would foster these values through coordinated instruction and training. A seminary education was the first step to curbing the anxieties and uncertainties of youth. By the time they left the seminary these young men were to be well-trained in the art and craft of Tridentine Catholicism.

¹² Palafox's successors added new bookshelves to accommodate additions to the library. In late 1767, following the expulsion of the Society of Jesus, Bishop Francisco Fabián y Fuero expropriated Jesuit libraries within the diocese and ordered the construction of a special room in Saint John's College to hold the expanded collection. The library remains there, although today the building is home to the city's Casa de la Cultura.

¹³ Palafox y Mendoza, *Acta de la fundación*, 22 August 1644, AHDP, fol. 2.

Saint Peter's curriculum consisted of teaching grammar and rhetoric to boys between the ages of eleven and seventeen. Liturgical music, reading the divine office, and assisting at mass during holy days were other activities designed to impart an effective study regimen and introduce the ritual component of the priesthood. If the student received high marks, he entered Saint John's College at the age of eighteen to begin the second level of studies, which included moral theology, canon law, and arts and letters. The student also received the minor order of acolyte and, to better prepare for the daily activities of the priesthood, he reviewed in systematic fashion the ritual and ceremony of the mass, the appropriate ways to administer the sacraments, and learned other forms of church music.¹⁴

At the age of twenty-four, the candidate received major orders, that is, the Sacrament of Ordination, and earned a *bachiller en artes* (bachelor's degree) from Saint John's College. Until the newly ordained could find a benefice, he was expected to reside in the newly established seminary of Saint Paul to begin the third and final course of studies. There he would recite or sing the divine office in the cathedral with other members of the choir, review his moral theology, and perfect the art and craft of being a priest.¹⁵ Although an inventory of the initial book collection is not found in the document translated here, the broad subject headings that Palafox assigned his collection reflect this course of seminary education: Sacred Theology, Canon Law, Civil Law, Philosophy, and Arts and Letters. These subjects reflected both the reading tastes of elite culture and the knowledge now required by institutional Catholicism of those who wanted to devote their lives to the people of God in the age of the Baroque. Moreover, students in all three seminaries could consult books and manuscripts under these headings for five hours a day.

Two other items in Palafox's donation illustrate the intellectual and spiritual milieu of Palafox's world. He included in the donation an altarpiece and several navigational instruments. The altarpiece contained images of the Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit, and Saint Thomas Aquinas. Palafox had a special devotion to the Virgin of Trapani, a popular manifestation of Christ's mother in the European Alps, and he often reminded his priests and flock of the central role the Blessed Mother played in salvation history. The Holy Spirit,

¹⁴ Palafox y Mendoza, *Acta de la fundación*, 22 August 1644, AHDP, fols. 4-5.

¹⁵ Palafox y Mendoza, *Acta de la fundación*, 22 August 1644, AHDP, fols. 5-7.

on the other hand, provided the bishop with the strength and courage to exercise his office with prudence, firmness, and tenderness. Palafox probably invoked the consoler or paraclete, as the Holy Spirit was often called, to guide him in his role as shepherd. Veneration of Saint Thomas Aquinas, patron saint of scholars, perhaps best reflected the scholarly elements within Tridentine Catholicism. A recent interpretation of colonial altarpieces locates this public art form within the reforms of the Council of Trent, which promoted the special importance of saints and images. And the altarpiece did indeed become an esteemed public art form in seventeenth-century New Spain. Such colonial altarpieces were meant to evoke feelings of awe and devotion and to invite contemplation. Altarpieces could be quite costly since they were usually large gilded ensembles much in the spirit of Tridentine Catholicism.¹⁶

The navigational instruments that Palafox included as part of his donation conjure up images of the late-seventeenth-century savant, Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora. As Irving Leonard points out, Sigüenza's scientific writings distinguished him from other Baroque contemporaries. He often separated secular concerns from the spiritual and theological traditions of academic learning.¹⁷ Palafox's writings suggest, on the other hand, that the bishop did not have any permanent interest in the maritime sciences. Moreover, it would have been uncharacteristic of him to divorce the sacred and profane. If anything, science served the interests of the Church and Crown. In the early stages of his career, Palafox accompanied the royal court during the European bridal journey of the Infanta María. Perhaps during these visits, which included Vienna, Germany, Flanders, and Italy, he acquired compasses and astrolabes as a hobby. His travels near the Alpine region of Europe also probably fostered Palafox's devotion to the Virgin of Trapana. The secular nature of the navigational instruments, however, indicates that the bishop was not adverse to worldly things; he recognized them as temporal elements of daily life.

Spanish civil law required Palafox to employ other secular components of public life. City clerks and notaries were absolutely necessary for all legal transactions and affairs. Last wills and testa-

¹⁶ "The Huejotzingo Altarpiece, Mexico (1586)," in *Colonial Spanish America: A Documentary History*, ed. Kenneth Mills and William B. Taylor (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1998), 141-46.

¹⁷ Leonard, *Baroque Times in Old Mexico*, 163, 201-08.

ments, powers of attorney, buying and selling of property, and formal financial transactions were invalid without notarial certification. These public servants provided their services for royal, municipal, and ecclesiastical transactions. Palafox used the services of Nicolás de Valdivia, who was a tenured clerk for the city of Puebla, which means he had passed an exam and, in theory, his appointment was permanent. Valdivia also served the Crown and the Inquisition. The notarial dimensions of the donation reveal the legal and social mechanisms that Palafox employed to exercise episcopal power. Notarial assent of his actions showed the intimate links between the exercise of ordinary power, that is, episcopal power, and the more routine, mundane aspects of public law.

Valdivia certified that Palafox made the donation as a pious work, and therefore the bishop was able to circumvent the civil law requirement that donations worth more than a set amount had to be registered before a judge. The books were Palafox's personal property that, according to the act of donation, he had acquired over the years as an employee of the Church and State. Pious works, or *obras pías*, were quite common during the colonial period. They expressed in material terms a person's piety or devotion to the faith and also gave the Church an almost unlimited supply of operating capital. Pious works usually took three forms: chantries, funds to provide dowries, and the founding of convents, monasteries, or hospitals. While they achieved different material ends the three types shared one common element: pious works, regardless of their outward manifestation, relied on invested capital to supply the income necessary to fulfill the patron's or benefactor's wishes.¹⁸ This material and spiritual device was linked to the Church's doctrine of good works, whereby graces and merits reserved in heaven by Christ and his saints could relieve punishment owed to sinners if they performed "pious works" on earth. As a rule, the laity participated in good works and the Church received the material benefits; at the same time, however, the Church, acting in its capacity as Christ's temporal institution, imparted spiritual benefits to the lay benefactor. Pious works, therefore, dulled the sharp edge associated with punishment in the afterlife.

Palafox identified his donation as a pious work for different

¹⁸ John Frederick Swaller, *Origins of Church Wealth in Mexico: Ecclesiastical Revenues and Church Finances, 1523-1600* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985), 111-12.

reasons, however. The donation did not fit nicely into any of the three traditional forms that a pious work could take. He was not providing funds to establish a library nor was the bishop offering real property (real estate) or even an annuity to establish one. The building that would hold the collection already existed. Moreover, the donation provided neither hard cash nor credit to the city or diocese; it did not consist of money to be loaned out and then invested in the local economy. While Palafox assessed the fair value of the entire donation at 15,000 *pesos*, he did so only to demonstrate that he could circumvent the civil requirement of public registry by designating his donation as a pious work.¹⁹ In other words, Palafox was exercising the power of his office through the act of donation, whereby he fulfilled the educational reforms of Trent while forgoing the civil law that defined the boundaries of public donation.

On the other hand, Palafox declared that the donation would not undermine the material and spiritual dignity of his office. Bishops could not expect to wield the authority nor implement the pastoral dimensions of their office without sufficient income. In the New World, bishops personally received one quarter of the *diezmo*, or tithe, collected within their diocese. The tithe was a tax on most agricultural and ranching activities, such as wheat, corn, honey, cattle, and sheep. The cathedral chapter also received another quarter of the tithe to pay for the salaries of its members. Since a bishop was a member of the cathedral chapter by virtue of his office, his salary, as well as the administrative costs of his office and residence, were paid out of the cathedral chapter's portion. Thus, bishops could spend their own portions as they wanted without worrying about the maintenance of their household and office.²⁰ Since the library was Palafox's personal property, acquired during his years of service, there was no danger of depleting episcopal coffers. Moreover, if there were doubts as to the bishop's sincerity or intentions, especially if fiscal conditions turned poor and warranted an abrogation of the donation, Palafox promised the city, in writing, that he would not revoke the donation even though the law permitted it. He waived and renounced those laws that prohibited large donations and rejected other laws that allowed him to change his mind and take back the library. By handing

¹⁹ Royal officials often worried that large public donations would drain funds from municipal coffers. The civil law of donation reflected their concerns.

²⁰ Schwaller, *Origins of Church Wealth*, 56.

over the library's keys as a symbolic gesture to the administrator of Saint Peter's College, Palafox relinquished possession of his books and established the library as yet another dimension to Puebla's material culture.

The legal act of transfer and possession, according to the civil law of property, was nearly absolute. Save for a few laws that favored the royal household and high clergy, once correct procedures were followed and any stipulated obligations fulfilled, there was little room, if any, to legally nullify a property transaction, unless both parties agreed to do so. Palafox had waived those laws that favored his episcopal office but he also attached several conditions and obligations to the instrument of donation, including reserving the right to define access to and control of library resources. Therefore, during the official act of donation, in front of the clerk, notaries, and witnesses who had gathered in the Episcopal Palace, the administrator of Saint Peter's College returned the library's keys to him. While Palafox expected professors and their students to take advantage of the library so that course preparation and instruction would be effective, he still maintained the right to deny other parties access to the collection. The bishop reserved for himself the right to define the "public" in "public library" during his lifetime. Palafox's understanding of his episcopal authority prevented him from making a complete and total donation, however, because such an act might have restricted or undermined subsequent episcopal policy. How could Palafox restrict his own access to the library? The exercise of power anticipated and allowed for changes in the way that Palafox directed Tridentine reform. He also planned to define more clearly in a separate document the library's functions as well as devise rules and regulations for its use.²¹

The bishop also reserved for himself any manuscript or text in the library. Moreover, he prohibited anyone, including future bishops or the cathedral chapter, from selling or alienating the library. Palafox went so far as to prohibit anyone from borrowing a book, even if the person received permission from a bishop, who was

²¹ Palafox never issued the guidelines. The Chilean bibliophile, José Toribio Medina, located a copy of a 1773 *reglamento* in the Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, Spain, written by Bishop Francisco Fabián y Fuero. See José Toribio Medina, *La imprenta en la Puebla de los Angeles, 1640-1821* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1991), 444-45.

likewise prohibited from taking or borrowing them. Books and manuscripts could only be consulted within the confines of the library. He secured from the papacy the penalty of excommunication for anyone who disobeyed the prohibition.

This section of the instrument of donation reveals yet another dimension of Palafox's public consciousness. He wanted to prevent future bishops from making his donation their private library. Books and manuscripts were not donated so that they could become the personal prerogative of episcopal office. Only the donor, Bishop Palafox, enjoyed unfettered access to the books. Palafox stated that there was no need for bishops to borrow or take books from the library since their residence occupied the same building. They only had to walk a few paces to consult whatever text they desired. This particular exercise of episcopal power restricted future bishops from alienating his library, thereby restraining the exercise of their own office. These restrictions were necessary to preserve the public character of the library, as well as to guarantee a scholarly apparatus for seminary education. He even called upon the vigilance of the city council and cathedral chapter to ensure that future bishops, or any potential transgressor, obeyed the prohibition. By assigning a quasi-enforcement role to the two bodies, Palafox harnessed the strength of two public branches of urban authority to ensure compliance. In the process, he knowingly situated two sets of watchful eyes upon future bishops. This suggests that Palafox favored one Tridentine reform, the education of youth, over the council's definition of ordinary authority in another. But he made sure that his actions did not impede his own ability to exercise the power of episcopal office. Moreover, the threat of excommunication served to deter those who considered disturbing the contents of the donation and thus breaching the public trust.²²

The instrument of donation concludes with the administrator of Saint Peter's College taking possession of the library on behalf of the seminaries. He acknowledged that the bishop's donation served a public good for the city and diocese. The education of urban youth

²² Pope Innocent X approved the donation in a papal brief on 17 February 1648. In it he granted Palafox the authority to raise the ecclesiastical censure of excommunication on those who disobeyed the prohibition. Reference to the papal brief is found in Nicanor Quiroz y Gutiérrez, *Historia del Seminario Palafoxiano de Puebla, 1644-1944* (Puebla: Ediciones "Palafox," 1947), 30.

had genuine social value, especially in light of the Tridentine concern that too many children of prominent families were not maintaining the dignity of the social status given to them by their parents. Four other clerics attested to this public good by serving as witnesses. The clerk identified them as "citizens and residents" of Puebla. Two of the witnesses were members of the cathedral chapter and hence secular clergy; the other two were regular clergy.

The presence of clergy as witnesses intimates an ecclesiastical character to the donation, but it also suggests public assent of the donation's goals and ideals. Two of the four witnesses identified themselves as educators. Moreover, since the clergy did not operate in a social vacuum, they were as much a part of the urban landscape as city councilmen, merchants, and blacksmiths. The fact that two witnesses were members of religious orders is significant. Palafox had secularized several parishes in his diocese, transferring them to diocesan priests. The Franciscans were deeply affected by his move, while the Mercedarians less so. A polemic then ensued with the Society of Jesus over episcopal jurisdiction and the tithe, prompting several priests of the Dominican order to side with the Jesuits and oppose the bishop. Palafox's exercise of episcopal power had shifted the material and spiritual balance of power in favor of the secular clergy. And the regular orders often formed alliances when bishops attempted to strip them of their parishes and restrict their priestly ministry. Their presence at the act of donation indicates that Palafox worked to accommodate and co-opt those who did not resist episcopal authority. He knew that the regular orders operated in the public sphere and had fostered strong relations with civil officials and leading families. Palafox maintained good relations with individual members of certain orders, a few Franciscans and Mercedarians in particular, despite his mistrust of their corporate interests. The implementation of Tridentine reform would have been much more difficult without the support of some regular clerics. He appreciated many of their contributions to the spiritual well being of society.

The clerk's designation of these priests as citizens and residents of Puebla deserves some attention too. Citizenship defined the civil status of lay persons who were not nobles. For a great majority of Spaniards in the Hapsburg period, legal rights, political participation, and economic benefits derived from citizenship, which was acquired by birthright or marriage. But nobles and priests did not

need citizenship because their civil status gave them legal privileges (*fueros*) and tax exemptions not available to the ordinary lay person.²³ Then why did the clerk, Nicolás de Valdivia, identify those priests as citizens of Puebla? Perhaps it was a seventeenth-century legal innovation that had developed in New Spain. More likely, however, the clerk employed the term citizen (*vecino*) to indicate that these witnesses were born in Puebla, and he used the term resident (*estante*) to show that they still inhabited the city, that is, they did not live in Veracruz or Mexico City but in Puebla.

The witnesses had invested their energies and devoted themselves to the spiritual development of the city. They were not outsiders unfamiliar with the strengths and weaknesses of this particular urban society. The four witnesses certainly knew many of the city's laity; they administered the sacraments to them, heard their confessions, counseled them, blessed their marriages, instructed their children, and buried their loved ones. The public clerk chose to identify them as citizens because they did indeed constitute important threads in Puebla's urban fabric. This document, whose translation follows, illustrates one dimension in the process of spiritual ordering of material culture. Juan de Palafox y Mendoza's exercise of episcopal power permeated the process and in turn shaped Puebla's urban landscape to mirror his Tridentine vision of society.

²³ Helen Nader, *Liberty in Absolutist Spain: The Habsburg Sale of Towns, 1516-1700* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 28-29.

Donation of the library of Don Juan de Palafox y Mendoza to the
Royal and Pontifical Seminaries of Saint Peter and Saint John,
their venerable founder

In the Name of Almighty God. Amen.

Let it be well known to all who see this public document that we,²⁴ Don Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, by Divine and Apostolic Grace Bishop of this Diocese of Puebla de los Angeles of His Majesty's Council and the Royal [Council] of the Indies, Visitor-General of this New Spain, etc. We say that having come to these provinces to serve this Holy Church, at the request of both His Majesty [Philip IV] (may God protect him) and the papal bulls of His Holiness, Urban VIII, and as Visitor-General and with other particular commissions, we decided it useful and opportune that this city [Puebla] and Kingdom [of New Spain] should have a public library of various subjects and sciences,²⁵ for the honor and glory of Our Lord God, and where everyone, in particular the secular and regular clergy and other professors of letters, students and apprentices, can study at their convenience. Because of the scarcity of books in these parts that have to be brought from other remote areas, where there are few copies and not enough paper to [print them], as a consequence (at our cost) we have acquired and founded a library of various authors, sciences and subjects of Sacred Theology, Canon Law, Civil Law and Philosophy, Medicine, and Arts and Letters. [The library] consists of five thousand volumes, more or less, which at present we have in bookcases with wire grilling and other rare objects, which will be mentioned later, in our Episcopal Palace. And with the help of Divine Grace we have erected and founded in this city a seminary under the invocation of the glorious Prince of the Apostles, Saint Peter. [This new seminary], located between the [Seminary] College of Saint John the Evangelist and our Episcopal Palace, is divided into three classes, conforming to the Council of Trent session and His Majesty's direct

²⁴ In contemporary Spanish usage, the collective "we" is no longer used in the nominative case, except by sovereigns, tribunals, and the normal ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church.

²⁵ The original reads "diversas facultades y ciencias." According to the *Diccionario de la lengua española* of the Real Academia Española, *facultad* comprised the traditional subjects of theology, law, and medicine.

orders. And we hope to start the process of founding another seminary under the patronage of Saint Paul the Apostle, according to and in the manner that we have prepared in the document for the establishment of the aforementioned [Seminary] College of Saint Peter, in which there is a large, spacious room already built and finished, with corresponding entrances to our [Episcopal] Palace and the said [seminary] college, where the library, annexed and adjudged to the [seminaries] colleges of Saint Peter, Saint Paul and Saint John, can be comfortably utilized by the collegians. [There] students can study and later undertake scholarly endeavors; therefore, the aforementioned students, like all ecclesiastical and lay persons of this city and diocese, will want to take advantage of the library. In order that this very holy and pious work remains in perpetuity, for the greatest service to Our Lord God, and by the love and goodwill that we have for this our Diocese and its possessions, as well as for the foundation of the three [seminaries] colleges, we agree to donate the aforementioned library to them and that which pertains to it, with the conditions and obligations that will be outlined. Therefore, by placing it into effect, condensing it as a public record through the present document, by our own free will and by way of a pious work and in recognition of [the library's] obvious utility to this city and its Diocese, or in whatever form it may later take, we agree to make favor and donation, good, pure, true, perfect, and irrevocable by a firm contract between us and the three [seminaries] colleges of Saint Peter, Saint Paul, and Saint John the Evangelist. And for the aforesaid effects of the library, with its five thousand volumes, more or less, and of everything else that from this day forward we might add and incorporate, with its book cases and its wire grill; a celestial and a terrestrial globe, each one 1.5 *varas* in height;²⁶ a navigational lodestone; a metal burning glass;²⁷ a castillian black velvet box that contains mathematical instruments and compasses, with two pantometers and a small sphere; and two astrolabes, one large, the other small, to measure the sun; a forestaff to [measure the distance of] the star; a three-hour ebony sand clock; two writing tables made of jasper

²⁶ 1 vara = 32.909 inches, or .8539 meters.

²⁷ Burning glasses were quite common in colonial inventories. In an age without matches or lighters, burning glasses were used to start fires. One simply held the glass up to the sun's rays and directed them to the object that was to be burned, such as wood or paper.

that they call Tecali;²⁸ and all the navigational maps and charts and other instruments and fixed paintings that we might choose to add to the library. Our altar piece and chapel ornaments shall remain in place [in the chapel] of Saint Peter's [Seminary] College. Together [the library and altar piece] are worth the fair and usual value of 15,000 *pesos de oro común*²⁹ and will remain free from legal transfer. We waive our legal rights and faculties to the library, its effects, and everything else that we add to this donation. We cede, relinquish and transfer to the three [seminaries] colleges our library and its effects, and thereupon we give tenancy and possession. As proof of this, we deliver the library's keys to Licenciado Francisco Moreno, priest, Treasurer and Administrator of Saint Peter's [Seminary] College. Because we retain use of the library all the days of our lives, he returned the keys to us. And I, Nicolás Valdivia y de las Roelas, notary and Deputy of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, a tenured, public Clerk of His Majesty and one of many in this city, by mandate of His Most Illustrious Excellency, certify truthfully that in both my presence and the presence of witnesses, by true act of possession and transfer, [the bishop] delivered the keys to the Treasurer, Licenciado Francisco Moreno, who accepted them with due reverence and solemnity and then returned them to His Illustrious Excellency. Since this donation is made as a pious work, it does not require public registry before an appropriate judge, even though [the donation] exceeds the legal amount of five hundred *sueldos aureos*.³⁰ We declare that our library and its effects were acquired through *casi castrenses*,³¹ and that we do not need them for our income,³² success

²⁸ A region of Puebla known for its colorful jasper and onyx.

²⁹ 1 *peso de oro común* = 272 *maravedís*

³⁰ These were gold coins used primarily during the thirteenth century in Castile, Extremadura, and Toledo. The value of the *sueldo aureo* varied from region to region. Although they were not common units of currency in colonial Mexico, *sueldos aureos* often meant "hard cash."

³¹ A juridical concept with roots in Roman Law, *casi castrenses* (or *cuasi castrenses* in its modern spelling), refers to the material goods, items, and property acquired by the sons of leading families during their years of military and/or royal service, especially when they held and exercised certain public offices. In the case of Bishop Palafox, this referred to the books and manuscripts he collected during his years of service to the Church and Crown (as priest and bishop, as chaplain in the royal court, as a member of both the Royal Council of the Indies and the Royal Council of Castile, and finally as visitor-general, captain-general, and interim viceroy of New Spain). The Real Academia Española provides the historical and legal

and finery for our person and for offices that we might obtain because with our Episcopal monies we have enough for the aforementioned [expenditures]. Moreover, we waive the law which stipulates that a large or general donation is invalid. And we promise by signing this document that this donation is secure and resolute forever; we shall not revoke it even though aspects of the law should permit it. And if we were to abrogate [the donation], our actions would be invalid. Because of this, [the donation] remains approved and ratified. We establish the following conditions and obligations:

First, we withhold from this donation manuscripts that we have in the library so that [we can] freely take and remove them or copies thereof as we see fit.

Item, that the library and its effects remain intact in perpetuity, in the finished room that is property of the [Seminary] College of Saint Peter and of the other two [seminaries] colleges of Saints Paul and John, [we give] license to its students and all ecclesiastical and lay persons of this city and its Diocese, so that they may conduct their studies at reasonable hours, from 8:00 A.M. to 11:00 A.M., and from 3:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M., to consult whatever they need without hindrance. We especially direct this donation so that [the students] may benefit from such a laudable exercise in service of two Majesties.³³ We fully prohibit anyone from selling and alienating the library and its effects, as well as the chapel and its effects, nor can anyone borrow or take a book in some other fashion, even with the permission of the Bishops who may Succeed us, or that of our Venerable Dean and Cathedral Chapter when the see is vacant, on their own initiative or at the request of private parties, no matter what their title

contexts of this term in its *Diccionario de Autoridades* (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1990), 1:605.

³² Both the original document and the transcription read *congruo*, although the context strongly suggests that the word is *congrua*, or the income that an ordinand had to possess before receiving the Sacrament of Holy Orders. In this particular case, Bishop Palafox employed the term to indicate that the donation of his library had no adverse effect on the appropriate level of income required of a bishop. In a strict canonical sense, however, the *congrua* obliged seminarians to demonstrate a guaranteed source of income before they could attain the priesthood. John Frederick Schwaller explores the various manifestations of the *congrua* in his book, *The Church and the Clergy in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 111-12.

³³ The two majesties of Crown and Church.

or pretext may be. For the observance [of this prohibition] in perpetuity we solemnly affirm that we have sought a Papal Brief with a reserved ecclesiastical censure.³⁴ This same prohibition we place on each of the Bishops, our successors; they cannot remove any books from the library to their house. Since the library's doors lead to our Episcopal Palace, they can come and go as they please from the library. We make formal and legitimate provisions to both the Cathedral Chapter and City Council of this Very Noble and Loyal City, as well as the Rector and Treasurer of the [seminaries] colleges, requesting their compliance of this condition against transgressors, since the overall usefulness that results from the permanent conservation of said library can be seen. And since [public] use of the library is the primary objective of our donation, we retain the right to define as we see appropriate this use in a separate document, which will order us to safeguard and comply with this donation, that remains perfect in everything else.

Item, that if we name a Librarian, as we desire, to care for this library after we are gone or in our absence, with qualifications and conditions that we shall determine, we declare that the appointee shall forfeit the office of librarian should he permit or allow anyone to take a book, and [we] request his compliance with all that is declared formally in the preceding condition.

And we retain possession of the library's keys all the days of our lives; afterwards the librarian whom we appoint shall have them, or if there is no librarian at the time, the rector of the seminaries or the person whom we name.

And with these conditions and obligations we make this donation to whose perpetuity we dedicate our property and assets, and we confer jurisdiction to the qualified authorities who, having knowledge of our intention, should resolve it quickly, and we waive any specific and general laws in our favor.

I, Licenciado Francisco Moreno, as the Treasurer and Administrator of Saint Peter's [Seminary] College, and on behalf of

³⁴ While the word censure in English suggests a mild rebuke or criticism, it conveys an entirely different sentiment in everyday ecclesiastical usage. Canon Law designated several different kinds of censures, or punishments, that either could be incurred automatically by a person who disobeyed a specific prohibition or could be raised by appropriate authority. The pope gave Palafox such authority to raise a specific type of censure, excommunication, on anyone who violated the prohibition against selling or borrowing books from the library.

the others accept this donation for use by the [seminaries] colleges however and whenever it is suitable for them. With due reverence I value and appreciate the donation that His Illustrious Lordship makes in well-known utility to this city, Diocese, and its possessions, which is done in His Illustrious Lordship's Episcopal Palace, in the City of Angels of New Spain, 5 September 1646, and His Illustrious Lordship signed [the document] along with the Treasurer, whom I, the clerk [Valdivia], testify that I know. The following witnesses are citizens and residents of this city: the Most Reverend Father Buenaventura de Salinas, commissary of the Franciscan Order of this Province of the Holy Gospel; Doctor Don Juan de Vega, Dean of this Cathedral and Doctor Don Miguel de Poblete, Cathedral School Master; and Father Juan de Herrera of the Mercedarian Order.³⁵ Signatures—The Bishop of Puebla de los Angeles [Palafox]; Francisco Moreno; Fr. Buenaventura de Salinas, General Commissary; D.D. Juan de Vega; Fr. Juan de Herrera; D.D. Miguel de Poblete. Before me, Nicolás Valdivia, public clerk.

The clerks who sign below certify and attest that Nicolás de Valdivia y de las Roelas, who has signed and affirmed the aforementioned document, is Notary for the Holy Office of the Inquisition, a tenured, public clerk of this city and of His Majesty, and who is faithful, authorized, and trustworthy. We certified these documents and other instruments that appear before him, in witness whereof, in the City of Angels, New Spain, on the 6th day of September, 1646. Signatures and Rubrics—Andrés Ruiz de Aguilar, His Majesty's Clerk; Luis Macías, Royal Clerk; Pedro Leonardo y Sevilla, His Majesty's Clerk.

³⁵ The *comisario general* was a Franciscan official subordinate to the superior general of the order, with authority over the provincials. The *dean* was president of the cathedral chapter and presided over its meetings in the absence of the bishop. He acted more or less as a modern day rector of a cathedral, that is, as pastor of the cathedral parish. The *maestrescuelas* was in charge of the cathedral school. He was required to teach Latin to all clerics and seminarians who requested it, and he was ordinarily expected to have a bachelor's degree in canon law or philosophy.