

7-2008

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Recommended Citation

Beebe, R. M., Senkewicz, R. M., & Schwaller, J. F. (2008). Uncertainty on the Mission Frontier: Missionary Recruitment and Institutional Stability in Alta California in the 1790s. In Francis in America: Essays on the Franciscan Family in North and South America (pp. 295–322). Academy of American Franciscan History.

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Uncertainty on the Mission Frontier: Missionary Recruitment and Institutional Stability in Alta California in the 1780s

Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz

The Alta California missions have been at the center of the historiography of Spanish California for over a century. The history of Alta California, for instance, has often been presented as beginning with a “sacred” expedition and the expansion of the mission system served as a convenient symbol to chart the spread of the Spanish colonial presence along the Pacific coast.¹ In the 1980s, the combination of two controversial events, the beatification and potential canonization of Fray Junípero Serra and preparations for the 500th anniversary of Columbus’s voyage, intensified public interest in the effects of the missions in California and elsewhere. The literature that ensued, often impassioned and both polemical and

¹ The missions were a consistent focus of the great nineteenth-century multivolume histories of California, such as Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, 7 vols. (San Francisco: The History Company, 1884–1890) and Theodore H. Hittell, *History of California*, 4 vols. (San Francisco: Pacific Press Publishing House and Occidental Publishing Company, 1885). The early twentieth-century work of Zephyrin Engelhardt, O.F.M., *The Missions and Missionaries of California*, 4 vols. (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Mission Santa Barbara, 1929) was in many ways a rebuttal to Bancroft’s assessment of the missions. Contemporary works that continue the discussion with greater nuance include Francis F. Guest, O.F.M., *Hispanic California Revisited*, edited with an introduction by Doyce B. Nunis, Jr. (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Santa Barbara Mission Archive Library, 1996), and Edward D. Castillo and Robert H. Jackson, *Indians, Franciscans, and Spanish Colonization: The Impact of the Mission System on California Indians* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995). The name “sacred expedition” was bestowed on the land and sea journey from Baja California to San Diego in 1769 by the missionaries and it survives to the present. See, for instance, James J. Rawls and Walton Bean, *California: An Interpretive History*, 7th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998), 32–35.

scholarly in nature, has benefitted the study of colonial California in a number of ways.² For example, since the quincentennial touched both North and South America, it imbued the study of the California missions with a much greater realization that these institutions were a part of a wider evangelical enterprise in the New World in general and New Spain in particular.³ Bolton's concept of the borderlands has been revived in a more sophisticated form and it offers new ways of conceptualizing and understanding the encounters among Europeans, mestizos, and indigenous peoples throughout the U.S. Southwest and elsewhere.⁴ Also, all throughout the region, detailed study of the mission records, combined with a close sensitivity to oral traditions, has allowed anthropologists, ethnographers, and historians to reconstruct the lives and experiences of Native Americans, including Native Californians, with much greater precision and nuance than ever before.⁵ California scholars are now themselves engaging in the type of family reconstitution that has enlivened and enriched the study of colonial New England over the past three decades.⁶

While these and similar developments have greatly increased our understanding of Spanish and Mexican California, the study of the Alta California mis-

² The more polemical side of the literature can be seen in Rupert Costo and Jeanette Henry Costo, eds., *The Missions of California: A Legacy of Genocide* (San Francisco: Indian Historian Press, 1987), and Thadeus Shubdsda, ed., *The Serra Report* (Monterey, 1986). This was a collection of various items released to the press by Monterey Bishop Shubdsda's office on November 24, 1986, the 273rd anniversary of Serra's birth. The issue was put into a historical context in James Sandos, "Junípero Serra's Canonization and the Historical Record," *American Historical Review* 93 (December 1988): 1253–1269. For an attempt to stake out a balanced position, see Antonine Tibesar, O.F.M., ed., *Junípero Serra and the Northwest Mexican Frontier, 1750–1825* (Washington, D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1985).

³ An example is Robert H. Jackson, "Northwestern New Spain: The Pimería Alta and the Californias," in Robert H. Jackson, ed., *New Views of Borderlands History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 73–106. Also see Erick Langer and Robert H. Jackson, eds., *The New Latin American Mission History* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

⁴ Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 104 (June 1999): 814–841. A series of responses and comments on this essay can be found in *American Historical Review* 104 (October 1999): 1221–1239.

⁵ An outstanding example is Randall T. Milliken, *A Time of Little Choice: The Disintegration of Tribal Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1769–1810* (Menlo Park, Calif.: Ballena Press, 1995).

⁶ Sally McLendon and John R. Johnson, *Cultural Affiliation and Lineal Descent of Chumash Peoples in the Channel Islands and the Santa Monica Mountains* (Washington, D.C.: National Parks Service, 1999); Helena M. Wall, "Notes on Life Since A Little Commonwealth: Family and Gender History Since 1970," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser. 55 (October 2000): 809–825.

sions still tends to be conceived on a somewhat narrow temporal and spatial canvas. Research on the Alta California missions clusters around two time periods, the lifetime of Fray Serra and the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. The emphasis on Serra, who died in 1784, was heightened by his beatification.⁷ The nineteenth-century focus is partially due to the fact that the historical record tends to be fuller for that period, especially after 1810. The most systematic Franciscan accounts of indigenous life at the missionary establishments were in the form of responses to a government questionnaire in the early 1810s.⁸ The early nineteenth century also witnessed an increase in the number of foreign vessels visiting California. The published accounts of sea captains and traders offer detailed pictures of mission life.⁹ The number of foreign residents in Alta California also increased during this time and their writings provide rich sources of the study of the nineteenth-century missions.¹⁰ But the period between Serra's death and the beginning of the contest for Mexican independence in 1810 tends to receive less attention. When Serra died, nine rough missions were struggling to survive. In 1810, nineteen missions dotted the landscape and most were beginning to experience at least a measure of social stability, agricultural bounty, and economic prosperity.¹¹ However, we know the least about the period that was in some ways the most crucial in mission history: the transi-

⁷ Maynard Geiger, O.F.M., *The Life and Times of Fray Junípero Serra*, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1959) remains the basic source. Works that appeared in connection with the Serra beatification include Don DeNevi and Noel Francis Moholy, *Junípero Serra: The Illustrated Story of the Franciscan Founder of California's Missions* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), and Bartolomé Font Obrador and Norman Neuerburg, *Fr. Junípero Serra: Mallorca, Mexico, Sierra Gorda, Californias* (Palma de Mallorca: Comissio de Cultura, Consell Insular de Mallorca, 1992).

⁸ Maynard Geiger, O.F.M., *As the Padres Saw Them: California Indian Life and Customs as Reported by the Franciscan Missionaries, 1813–1815*, anthropological commentary, notes, and appendices by Clement W. Meighan (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Santa Barbara Mission Archive Library; Glendale, Calif.: distributed by A. H. Clark Co., 1976).

⁹ Auguste Duhaut-Cilly, *A Voyage to California, the Sandwich Islands and Around the World in the Years 1826–1829*, translated and edited by August Frugé and Neal Harlow (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

¹⁰ Alfred Robinson, *Life in California, and a Historical Account of the Origin, Customs, and Traditions of the Indians of Alta-California*, foreword by Joseph A. Sullivan (Oakland, Calif.: Biobooks, 1947); Doyce Nunis, "Alta California's Trojan Horse: Foreign Immigration," in *Contested Eden: California Before the Gold Rush*, edited by Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Richard J. Orsi (Berkeley: Published in association with the California Historical Society by the University of California Press, 1998), 299–330.

¹¹ The economy of the missions is the subject of Robert Archibald, *Economic Aspects of the California Missions* (Washington, D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1978), and Steven W. Hackel, "Land, Labor, and Production: The Colonial Economy of Spanish and Mexican California," in *Contested Eden*, edited by Gutiérrez and Orsi, 111–146.

tion from infancy to maturity. Inattention to that development can clothe the history of the California missions in an implicit assumption that the missions' "successes" were inevitable.¹²

Also, as the developmental period of the missions tends to receive the least attention, so the developmental experience of the missionaries themselves has not been accorded much notice. The overwhelming majority of the Franciscans who served in Alta California were not natives of America. They were born in Spain and they received their religious training there as well. Their decisions to become friars were made in Bourbon Spain, their desires to serve in America were formed under the influence of Iberian Catholicism, and their notions of mission itself were shaped by the strong and complex traditions of the Franciscan order. Yet that part of their story tends to receive only intermittent attention.¹³

The present essay seeks to investigate the 1790s in Alta California, incorporating the Spanish background of the missionaries into the story. We examine the Alta California missions, not only from the standard point of view of their rivalry with Spanish soldiers and settlers and their struggles against presidios and pueblos, but also in terms of their struggles against themselves.¹⁴ This internal struggle was a key factor in the manner in which some missionaries thought they should relate to the Indians. It also points to the fact that, at an important point in the development of Alta California, the missionary system proved to be internally fragile, weak, and divided.

The tensions within the missionary communities were not always obvious because they were sometimes hidden beneath more conventional issues such as religious/civil or mission/military face-offs. This was the case with a clash that

¹² For instance, "Although Alta California was an isolated region located at the extreme northern edge of the Spanish empire in North America, the greater availability of arable land and water when compared to Baja California allowed for the settlement of large numbers of people by the Spanish government. Moreover the mission economies flourished and produced large surpluses that eliminated the precariousness of the food supply that was such a large problem in Baja California." Jackson, "Northwestern New Spain," 85.

¹³ Michael J. González, "'The Child of the Wilderness Weeps for the Father of Our Country': The Indian and the Politics of Church and State in Provincial California," in *Contested Eden*, edited by Gutiérrez and Orsi, 147–172.

¹⁴ The mission struggles against the presidios and the pueblos have been the object of considerable study and are discussed in the standard biographies of the California Franciscans. Besides Geiger's biography of Serra, cited above, see Francis Guest, O.F.M., *Fernán Francisco de Lasuén: A Biography* (Washington, D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1973). A good short summary of some of the major issues is Francis F. Guest, O.F.M., "Pedro Fages' Five Complaints Against Junípero Serra," *The Californians* 8, no. 2 (July/August 1990): 39–48. The issue is presented from the military side in Edwin A. Beilharz, *Felipe de Neve, First Governor of California* (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1971), and Carlos U. López, *El Real ejército en California* (Madrid: Editorial Medusa, 2000).

began on June 9, 1794.¹⁵ On that date, José Joaquín de Arrillaga, the interim governor of the Californias, wrote Viceroy Revilla Gigedo from his headquarters at Loreto in Antigua California. Arrillaga noted that in his judgment the presidio soldiers did not receive sufficient ministry from the Alta California clergy who were all missionaries. Soon after writing this report Arrillaga left office and was succeeded by Diego de Borica. The new governor found this unfinished item of business on his desk and decided to look into it further. On November 24, he sent out a questionnaire to the commanders of the Alta California presidios in which he posed nine questions concerning the missionaries. The questions included specific items such as, "Do they go to the presidio to celebrate mass on each feast day?" and "For the annual confession do they require the families to go to the mission or do the missionaries come to the presidio to hear confessions?" and "What is the distance between the mission and the presidio?" It concluded with a general request for information: "Finally, have any serious deficiencies been observed in spiritual administration that would prejudice the Christian instructive presence that we should maintain?"

By the end of January the governor had received answers from the presidio commanders at San Francisco, Monterey, Santa Barbara, and San Diego. The San Francisco commander complained about one of the priests at Mission San Francisco, Fray Antonio Dantí, and the San Diego commander reported that the soldiers and settlers experienced some inconveniences in attending to their religious obligations. However, the responses in general were more positive than negative. The commander at Monterey, José Argüello, responded to the first question by stating, "I report that the Reverend Fathers at Mission San Carlos come to celebrate mass on all mandated days."

Felipe Goycoechea, the commander at Santa Barbara, wrote, "With regard to spiritual instruction I have not observed any deficiency whatsoever that is prejudicial to the Christian presence."

Borica adopted this positive tone in his report to the new viceroy, the Marqués de Branciforte. He acknowledged that the mission priests had to manage the temporal administration of large mission complexes. He said, "These reasons in addition to continually trying to attract the gentiles make it impossible for the missionaries to attend to the Presidio companies as we would like them to. In my opinion, they do more than one can demand from priests who are completely dedicated to caring for the spiritual and temporal affairs of the mission." However, he did add that there was a genuine problem: "On the other hand, the soldiers and their families suffer when they have to travel one or two leagues to baptize their children, bury their dead, or fulfill their religious obligations. Many

¹⁵ Californias, vol. 12, expediente 3, folios 58–78, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City (hereinafter cited as AGN).

times the husbands must leave their wives and small children behind when they are out on cavalry maneuvers, delivering communiques, or performing other required duties." The solution seemed clear to him. He told the viceroy, "Taking everything into consideration, I am of the opinion that chaplains should be sent to Monterey and to the presidios of San Diego and San Francisco and they should be paid 400 pesos. It is also my opinion that these chaplains should be religious from the Colegio de San Fernando for, if secular priests or priests from another institution are placed at these new establishments this could result in disturbances and disputes that could hinder the conquest."

But when this recommendation reached the Colegio de San Fernando in Mexico City, its guardian was not receptive. He argued that the presence of Franciscan chaplains at the presidios would disrupt "subordination and obedience." He stated:

If they are addressed with the title of chaplain, there surely will be at least one who will take exception to recognizing the authority of the president, because this is typical of their character. And, even if that particular chaplain is successful in his operations, in such an event he will not be able to implement any reforms. This would not be the case if they were sent in the capacity of ministers because then they would acknowledge their subordinate position. They also would have the sound understanding that their objective would be to be spiritual ministers to the people who live at the presidios. If they did not devote themselves to this, if their methods somehow contradicted the religious way of life they have embraced, or if there were other sufficient reasons, they could be reproached, admonished, corrected and even separated by the president with notification from the governor. This would be demanded by reason, peace, and harmony which would have to be carefully protected.

The concern of the Alta California missionaries for establishing their authority and control over the indigenous population and over the other *gente de razón* in the province is well known and much has been written on this aspect of the missionary enterprise. However, the response of the guardian to Borica's suggestion points out another lesser-known but very important tension. In the guardian's letter, the question of the relationship between the religious and military sectors immediately was subsumed into a fearful discussion of authority and subordination within the religious community itself. Before the Colegio de San Fernando was able to turn its full attention to establishing its authority and control over others, it had to deal with members from its own ranks. Before the missionaries could establish control over others, they had to establish control over themselves.

This proved to be a thorny and troublesome task. We would like to examine it by looking briefly at four interrelated themes: (1) the task of recruiting missionaries for the Colegio de San Fernando; (2) the internal difficulties of the Colegio de San Fernando; (3) the tensions surrounding the question of the administration of the temporal affairs of the missions; and (4) the disputes in the

1790s about how to treat the indigenous population. The intersection of these four themes demonstrated that, a quarter-century after Alta California's founding, the missions were not on a secure path to a certain future.

The Colegio de San Fernando was founded in 1733 from the Colegio de Santa Cruz in Querétaro. Its first major missionary field was the Sierra Gorda. The Colegio entered that area in 1740 when it founded Mission San José de Vizarrón which lasted for eight years. The Colegio's greatest time of activity was the period from 1744 to 1770 when it staffed five missions. In 1770, these missions were secularized. To support its missionary endeavors, the Colegio, like most apostolic colleges, engaged in systematic recruiting in Spain. The first such trip was made in 1742 under the leadership of Fray Pedro Pérez de Mezquía, and it brought twelve new members into the Colegio. Another trip in 1749 resulted in the arrival of thirty-three, while a third journey in 1759 resulted in eighteen additional members. A 1770 trip was very successful for it added an additional forty-two members to the ranks of the Colegio de San Fernando.¹⁶

In 1767, the expulsion of the Jesuits occasioned a reshuffling of missionary fields. At the end of the maneuvering, the Colegio de San Fernando ended up with the Jesuit missions of Baja California. From there it was assigned to lead the thrust north into Alta California. The opening of this new missionary field, one that promised to be larger and to require more manpower than the Sierra Gorda had demanded, immediately began to put a strain on the resources of the Colegio. Fray Francisco Palóu had more than an inkling of the future troubles from the beginning. When the guardian of Colegio de San Fernando, Rafael Verger, asked him on June 1, 1771 for a detailed report on the California missions, Palóu responded with

¹⁶ Fray Fidel de Jesús Chauvet, O.F.M., *La iglesia de San Fernando y su extinto colegio apostólico* (Mexico City: Centro de Estudios Bernadino de Sahagún, 1980); Lino Gómez Canedo, *Sierra Gorda: un típico enclave misional en el centro de México, siglos XVII–XVIII* (Pachuca: Centro Hidalguense de Investigaciones Históricas, 1976), 50–59; Félix Saiz Diez, O.F.M., *Los Colegios de Propaganda Fide en Hispanoamérica*, 2nd ed. (Lima: CETA, 1992), 113–121; Maynard Geiger, O.F.M., “The Internal Organization and Activities of San Fernando College, Mexico (1734–1858),” *The Americas* 6 (1949): 3–31; Maynard Geiger, O.F.M., “The Franciscan ‘Mission’ to San Fernando College, Mexico, 1749,” *The Americas* 5 (1948): 48–60. See also Carmen Cebrian González, “Expediciones Franciscanas a Indias: 1725–1750,” in *Actas del IV Congreso Internacional sobre los Franciscanos en el Nuevo Mundo, siglo XVIII* (Madrid: Editorial DEIMOS, 1993), 187–207; Antonio Abad Pérez, “Estadística franciscano-misionera en ultramar del siglo XVIII. Un intento de aproximación,” in *Actas del IV Congreso Internacional sobre los Franciscanos en el Nuevo Mundo, siglo XVIII* (Madrid: Editorial DEIMOS, 1993), 125–156; and Francisco Morales, “Los franciscanos ante los retos del siglo XIX mexicano,” in *Actas del V Congreso Internacional sobre los Franciscanos en el Nuevo Mundo, siglo XIX–XX* (Madrid: Editorial DEIMOS, 1997), 187–207; Pedro Borges Morán, *El envío de misioneros a América durante la época española* (Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia, 1977), 518–535.

typical thoroughness. Palóu did not receive Verger's request until January 18 and he completed a very full response in less than a month. After describing the missions the Fernandinos had taken over from the Jesuits, Palóu said:

In view of the undertaking that we have in hand, I can do no less than make known to you how many missionaries will be needed. They are as follows: twenty-six for the thirteen towns named; two for the new mission of Velicatá; ten for the five missions which are to be placed in the country between Velicatá and San Diego, and sixteen for the eight between San Diego and the port of our Father San Francisco, making altogether fifty-four missionaries. It will be necessary to have some supernumeraries, in case of the misfortune of death or sickness, as the Colegio is far away for recourse. Seeing that the number of missionaries is so large I realize that this is a heavy charge for one colegio alone. For this reason it would be best to take steps to learn whether other missionaries can come from some province of our Order or of some other Order, to take charge of those missions that are farthest from the frontier of the heathen.¹⁷

But Palóu underestimated the problem. For even after the Fernandinos split the California missions and handed over the Baja section to the Dominicans, the Colegio was unable to staff the remaining missions in an orderly and systematic fashion.

Recruiting efforts at the Colegio were hampered by religious developments in Spain. The growth in the mendicant orders in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries led to increasing criticism on the part of thinkers who held that demographic growth was an indispensable element of national economic development. In addition, the centuries-long Franciscan attachment to papal supremacy put the order out of step with the Enlightenment-influenced nationalism of Bourbon Spain. As a result of these and other pressures, the order agreed in the late eighteenth century to begin limiting the number of novices it would accept. This process began in earnest in 1769 with the establishment of a reform commission headed by Cardinal Luis de Borbón. As a consequence, after the establishment of the Alta California missions the recruitment efforts of the Colegio de San Fernando were conducted in an environment in which there were fewer young Franciscans to recruit.¹⁸

¹⁷ Miguel León-Portilla, *La California Mexicana: Ensayos acerca de su historia* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México; Mexicali: Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, 1995), 211–242; Lino Gómez Canedo, "Informe franciscano sobre misiones jesuíticas en Baja California," *Historia mexicana* 19, no. 4 (1970): 559–573; Francisco Palóu, *Historical Memoirs of New California*, vol. 2, edited by Herbert Eugene Bolton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1926), 212. See also Francisco Palóu, *Cartas desde la península de California, 1768-1773*, transcritas y editadas, con algunas notas y cuatro apéndices documentales por José Luis Soto Pérez (Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, 1994), 209–237.

¹⁸ Lázaro Iriarte, O.F.M., Cap., *Franciscan History: The Three Orders of St. Francis of Assisi* trans. Patricia Ross (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982), 381–386; Pedro Riquelme Oliva, O.F.M., *Iglesia y liberalismo: Los franciscanos en el reino de Murcia, 1768-1840* (Murcia: Editorial Espigas, 1993), 24; Borges, *El envío de misioneros*, 228–235.

The results of these difficulties were all too clear. A 1774 official ecclesiastical visitor to the Colegio de San Fernando noted what he termed the “scarcity of young religious” and this concern was never far from the minds of those who directed the affairs of the Colegio or the staffing of the missions. Ten years later the *comisario general* of the Indies, Manuel de la Vega, reported to the Colegio de San Fernando that a recruiting effort in Spain was going to come up a bit short because of what he termed “the tremendous shortage of religious in these provinces and the unexpected opposition which is not small.”¹⁹

Six years later in 1790, Guardian Pablo de Mugártegui wrote to Spain that recruiting efforts in 1784 and 1786 had resulted in bringing over forty men to New Spain. However, he continued, “very soon we will have 15 missions in New California for which we need 30 religious who can administer them immediately. They must also work at the house, attend to the old and sick as well as other occurrences at the missions and at the Colegio. Christian charity cannot be refused when faced with such urgent needs as the endless work in the Colegio’s confessional, attending to the sick in the city, constant petitions from the missions in one pueblo or another, repeated calls to bury the dead or aid the dying whether they be near or far, rich or poor.”²⁰

Two years later, another guardian, Tomás de Pangua, was forced to raise Mugártegui’s estimate of the number of missionaries needed. Pangua reported that, besides the thirty that his predecessor had reckoned, an additional twenty would be necessary. When the government pushed the Franciscans in the 1790s into a dramatic expansion of the mission chain, this concern became even more urgent. This was one of the factors that accounts for the consistently harried and almost weary tone of much of the Franciscan mission correspondence at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. This tone became very prevalent in the writings of Junípero Serra’s successor as president of the California missions, Fray Fermín Francisco de Lasuén, in the mid-1790s as he struggled to fill the posts created by the government-ordered rapid expansion of the mission chain. In 1796, he wrote to the guardian, “Neither have I been able to restrain Frs. Calzada and Arroita, despite all my pleadings, prayers, and requests—and I made them as forcible as I could—that they would stay, even one of them. Instead, they have placed me in a position in which I cannot do otherwise than give them permission to retire.” In March 1797 he wrote to the guardian, “The Governor speaks

¹⁹ José de Leyra, May 13, 1774, Libro de decretos del colegio de San Fernando de México, 1736–1850, *Documentos para la historia de México*, 2nd series, vol. 9, 68–72, AGN; Manuel de la Vega al guardián y padres discretos del colegio de San Fernando, December 22, 1784, Fondo Franciscano, vol. 123, 35–36, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City.

²⁰ Pablo de Mugártegui al Conde de Revilla Gigedo, November 13, 1790, Provincias Internas, vol. 153, ex. 14, f. 157, AGN.

to me frequently about the five missions which the Viceroy wishes to be founded. To found all of these in one year seems to me to be impossible. Three would be the maximum, and even that would involve a great deal of work." Later that same year he worried, "If Frs. Torrent and Concepción now leave, it will bring to eight the number of missionaries who ought to come next year."²¹

The persistence of this tone into the nineteenth century was one of the reasons that the Colegio de San Fernando ceded nine of the Alta California missions to the Colegio de San José de Gracia in Orizaba after Fray Juan Calzada was elected guardian in 1815. By that time, however, the feelings of the Fernandinos at the missions themselves had changed, and they actively opposed the transfer, which was eventually rescinded after Fray Baldomero López was elected guardian in 1818. For our purposes, however, it is important to note that the Colegio de San Fernando, because of the chronic shortage of ministers, was not able in the 1790s and early 1800s to organize much systematic planning for the furtherance of its missionary efforts.²²

A good part of the difficulty under which Lasuén was laboring stemmed from the fact that the internal life of the Colegio de San Fernando was anything but smooth. When talk about the possible secularization of the Sierra Gorda missions was being heard in the 1760s, a number of friars who had been missionaries there strongly objected. The intense desire to prevent the imposition of secularization seems to have thrown the Colegio into a turmoil from which it was not to recover for the rest of the eighteenth century.²³ Complaints were aired about the quality of religious life in the Colegio as early as 1764 when some friars complained that too many members were inviting guests into the Colegio without permission and that these visitors, mainly young boys, were disturbing the tranquility of community life. These accusations were echoed by ecclesiastical visitors in 1774 and 1780. These visitors, Frays José de Leyra and Romualdo Cartagena, added observations of their own, including complaints about what they considered the deplorable state of the Colegio's archive and library.²⁴

²¹ Tomás de Pangua al Conde de Revilla Gigedo, September 5, 1792, *Provincias Internas*, vol. 153, ex. 14, f. 165, AGN; Fermín Francisco de Lasuén, *Writings of Fermín Francisco de Lasuén*, 2 vols., edited by Finbar Kenneally, O.F.M. (Washington, D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1965), 1: 384; Guest, *Lasuén*, 184; Lasuén, *Writings*, 2: 44.

²² Chauvet, *San Fernando*, 127; Libro de decretos del colegio de San Fernando de México, 1736–1850, *Documentos para la historia de México*, 2nd series, vol. 9, 240–262, AGN.

²³ Gómez Canedo, *Sierra Gorda*, 203–213. The College accepted secularization in 1770 to free men for mission work in the Californias. See Maynard Geiger, O.F.M., trans. and annotator, *Palóu's Life of Fray Junípero Serra* (Washington, D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1955), 35–36, 352–353.

²⁴ Geiger, *Serra*, 1:142; José Ortés de Velasco al comisario general Manuel Nájera, October 15, 1764; Juan Antonio de la Concepción y Pico al comisario general Manuel Nájera,

The arrival of the two groups recruited in 1784 and 1786 only seemed to complicate matters even further and unsettle the already fragile state of the Colegio's peacefulness. By 1788 an identifiable group of seven members, called the "padres descontentos" in the official documents, were seriously disrupting the life of the house. The two members most notable in this regard were two young friars from Mallorca, Mariano Rubí and Bartolomé Gilí, who arrived in 1786 and 1788, respectively. They alone were not responsible for creating disorder at the Colegio de San Fernando, for it had already been unsettled for two decades. Rubí and Gilí did, however, intensify the disorder and, in a sense, the two of them became the symbols of all that was problematic at the Colegio.²⁵

Soon after they arrived, the seven "padres descontentos" began to petition to be transferred out of the Colegio de San Fernando to the Colegio de la Santa Cruz de Querétaro, which was located in the San Pedro y San Pablo province in Michoacán. In April 1788, three of them, Frays Pedro Pinedo, Antonio Seguí, and Martín de Landaeta, traveled without permission to Querétaro asking to be admitted there. They made this petition claiming that they were suffering from ill health at the Colegio de San Fernando. Another four San Fernando priests, Frays Buenaventura Merino, Severo Patero, Mariano Rubí, and Bartolomé Gilí, had made the same requests for the same reasons. Gilí stated in his petition that in addition to ill health and melancholy, he also felt useless and frustrated at not being able to perform his apostolic duties: "I have spent my entire life acquiring these skills," he complained. Since the Crown had paid for the transportation of all these priests to work in specific mission areas of New Spain, the requests were all referred to the viceroy's office. In June, the requests were turned down and the priests who were already in Querétaro were ordered to return to the Colegio de San Fernando.²⁶

November 10, 1764; Juan Andrés al comisario general Manuel Náxera, November 14, 1764, all in Fondo Franciscano, caja 115, folio 1554, Biblioteca Nacional, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City; José de Leyra, May 13, 1774, Libro de decretos del colegio de San Fernando de México, 1736–1850, *Documentos para la historia de México*, 2nd series, vol. 9, 68–72, AGN; Romualdo Cartagena, June 1780, Libro de decretos del colegio de San Fernando de México, 1736–1850, *Documentos para la historia de México*, 2nd series, vol. 9, 90–97, AGN.

²⁵ The seven were Bartolomé Gilí, Martín Landaeta, Buenaventura Merino, Severo Patero, Pedro Pinedo, Mariano Rubí, and Antonio Seguí. They were all eventually disaffiliated from the colegio—Pinedo, Seguí, and Landaeta in 1788, Merino and Patero in 1790, Rubí in 1796, and Gilí in 1797. Landaeta, however, returned to the Colegio and served in California, where he died in

1809. See Fondo Franciscano, vol. 69, 12, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

²⁶ Provincias Internas, vol. 5, ex. 11–12 contains much of the correspondence. The quote from Rubí is from a letter that he, Merino, and Patero addressed to the San Fernando "discretos" on April 28, 1788, in ex. 12, f. 234.

Gilí and Rubí did not give up. They then began to send their petitions directly to the viceroy. Rubí explained that he suffered from ill health that had been exacerbated by the “intolerable matins at midnight which have caused me dry heaves. There have been many times when I have been in danger of choking to death even though over a period of ten months I have taken all the medications that the doctors have prescribed.” He asked the viceroy to send him to any other province in New Spain of the viceroy’s choosing, as long as he could leave the Colegio de San Fernando. The governing group of the Colegio, known as the “discretos” or consultants to the guardian, responded to the viceroy with a long letter of their own denouncing Rubí. A few years later, another guardian, Fray Tomás de Pangua, was more specific about the kind of behavior the Colegio was denouncing:

A very short time after their arrival from Spain, Frs. Rubí and Gilí manifested repugnance for the regular life, repugnance for the laudable customs of this Apostolic College, and regret for having come. . . . Pretending to have ills, which they really did not have, they retired into the infirmary where they spent the days in rest and idleness, and the nights in disturbing the repose of those who had labored during the day and needed rest and sleep at night. . . . [T]hey loosened bolts to rob the store-rooms, more than once they broke the earthen jars of the community which are in the chocolate room, they stole from there the small kettles used for grinding it, they took with them the balls the community uses for pastime on recreation days, and rolled them along the floor of the dormitories at unseemly hours of the night, causing fright and disturbance among the religious, and finally, they scaled the walls of the college and went out, likely not for any virtuous deed.

The “discretos” added that Rubí was only one factor in a much larger concern: “If this religious is granted his petition, others will want to follow his example. This would open the door for everyone else to leave. The Colegio would be left without ministers and the King’s goals would be hindered.”²⁷

The staff attorney in the viceroy’s office agreed and said that it was crucial to stop this hemorrhaging from the Colegio de San Fernando. He recommended that the Colegio itself reprimand Rubí. If that did not change his behavior, it should apply for special permission to send him back to Spain, even though he had not completed his required ten years of service in the Americas.²⁸

²⁷ Mariano Rubí al muy reverendo y venerable discretorio del colegio de San Fernando de México, [June 1788], *Provincias Internas*, vol. 5, ex. 12, f. 242, AGN; the response of the “discretos” in July 1788 is in *Provincias Internas*, vol. 5, ex. 12, f. 253; Tomás de Pangua al Conde Revilla Gigedo, September 13, 1793, *Provincias Internas*, vol. 5, ex. 12, f. 220. For this last letter of Pangua, the translation into English was found on file in the Santa Barbara Mission Archive Library, Santa Barbara, Calif.

²⁸ El fiscal de lo civil al asesor general, August 14, 1788, *Provincias Internas*, vol. 5, ex. 12, f. 256, AGN.

In April 1789 Fray Romualdo Cartagena was sent by the father comisario general de Indias (Fray Manuel María Trujillo) to visit the Colegio de la Santa Cruz de Querétaro and the Colegio de San Fernando. In his report to the viceroy, Cartagena noted that the Colegio de San Fernando had deteriorated tremendously since his last visit nine years ago. He attributed the problem in part to the difficulties among the friars:

This community has deteriorated from the state in which I found it nine years ago when I was sent on a similar commission. My Reverend Father does not ignore this fact and that is why he has entrusted me and ordered me to try to bring this Colegio back to its former splendor. However, I confess that it will be impossible for the Colegio to restore itself to its former state unless Frs. Mariano Rubí and Bartolomé Gili, who arrived from Spain from the province of Mallorca, leave the Colegio. During my visit I have admonished them several times, but I have not been very successful, perhaps only slightly with Fr. Rubí. I have questioned them, inquiring as to their intentions of remaining at the Colegio. I find them to be filled with disgust, ill will, and the desire to leave the Colegio. The community is very disturbed by the behavior of these priests. I have been told a number of very serious things about these men, especially about Fr. Gilí, things which are contrary to the obedience of the Prelates and contrary to our Seraphic rule. I view them as incorrigible, regardless of the measures that have been taken to try to reincorporate them into the community. With regard to their behavior and demeanor, I view them as spiteful. After pondering the matter and having consulted with experienced people I realize that if I decided to solve the problem by punishing them, which would be appropriate for such rebellious obstinacy, nothing more would be achieved than their scandalous perdition.²⁹

Gilí then began to petition the government for permission to be transferred to the missions of Alta California. Viceroy Revilla Gigedo agreed to the request in October 1790 and Gili departed for California sometime during 1791. In a letter dated August 28, 1793, Pangua related that, "It was believed that by transplanting him to a different climate and different interests he might be of some use. This idea was quite acceptable keeping in mind his nervous tendencies and the ease with which he could move from one mission to another, if this would be conducive to his health and happiness." Although Pangua and the governing council agreed that Gilí might benefit from this change, Pangua still had doubts, stating, "Fr. Gilí is better suited for destruction than for construction."³⁰

Rubí arrived at Monterey in August 1790. He first was stationed at Mission San Antonio. In October 1791 he was sent to inaugurate the new mission at Soledad with Fray Diego García. Within five months García wrote the superior,

²⁹ Romualdo Cartagena al Conde Revilla Gigedo, April 22, 1789, Provincias Internas, vol. 5, ex. 12, f. 274, AGN.

³⁰ Tomás de Pangua al Conde Revilla Gigedo, August 28, 1793, Provincias Internas, vol. 5, ex. 12, f. 214, AGN.

Fray Fermín Francisco de Lasuén, and said that he could not work with Rubí any longer. Faced with the necessity of keeping all the missions staffed, Lasuén responded in a manner that probably seemed to him to be the best in a series of dismal alternatives. He sent García to Mission San Antonio. García's replacement at Mission Soledad was the priest who had been serving at San Antonio since July of the previous year—none other than Fray Gilí!

Gilí and Rubí went about convincing each other that California was not for them. Lasuén found himself quick to agree. By January of the following year, Rubí had gotten the doctor at Monterey to declare him unfit for duty in California on account of his health. He left California in February. On his return to the Colegio de San Fernando, he was diagnosed with a disease that the authorities delicately termed the “French disease,” but which also may have been scurvy. When he recovered, Rubí again requested permission to transfer. This time he asked to go to Tampico. His request was turned down and he remained at the Colegio de San Fernando until his ten years were up. In 1796, he was finally given permission to go to another province in New Spain.

Gilí, meanwhile, had been left alone at Soledad. The person Lasuén sent to Soledad to replace Rubí was none other than Fray Diego García. García got along with Gilí no better than he had gotten along with Rubí earlier. Within a month of García's arrival, he and Gilí had engaged in at least four shouting matches, and Gilí began to complain of chest pains. Lasuén sent him first to San Luis Obispo, then to San Diego, and finally, back to Mexico. While he was at the port of San Blas on his journey back, he agreed to serve as chaplain on a ship that was bound for the Philippines. In Manila, he joined the Philippine province. Finally, in 1803, he returned to Spain.³¹

Rubí and Gilí, along with the five other “padres descontentos” disrupted the life of the Colegio in the 1780s and early 1790s. All seven were eventually disaffiliated from the Colegio, although one, Fr. Martín Landaeta, was readmitted and eventually served for over a decade in Alta California. It is difficult to ascertain with precision the specific issues underlying the discontent. However, one point at issue seems to have been the administration of the temporal affairs of the missions.

Disputes over the extent of evangelical poverty and its place in Franciscan life went all the way back to the time of St. Francis himself. These controversies were largely responsible for creating the various branches within the movement,

³¹ Diego García a Fermín Francisco de Lasuén, February 3, 1792; Lasuén to Pablo Soler, January 4, 1793; Lasuén to José Argüello, January 11, 1793; Mariano Rubí to Tomás de Pangua, February 6, 1793; Soler to Lasuén, September 20, 1793, Soler to Lasuén, March 6, 1793; Gilí to Lasuén, March 6, 1793, all in *Documentos para la historia de México*, 1st series, vol. 1, f. 7–45, AGN; Maynard Geiger, O.F.M., *Franciscan Missionaries in Hispanic California, 1769–1848: A Biographical Dictionary* (San Marino, Calif.: The Huntington Library, 1969), 96–97, 106–108, 210–212.

most notably between the Observants, whose interpretation of the obligations of religious poverty tended to be literal and strict, and the Conventuals, whose views were that the community could be allowed to possess some property, as long as this possession was strictly related to an apostolic and ministerial purpose. In late fifteenth-century Spain, a somewhat more radical and reformed group of Observants with a stricter interpretation of poverty than even the main-line Observants gathered in the northwest, as an offshoot of the province of Santiago. They formed a “custody” or semi-province which they called Santo Evangelio. This custody eventually evolved into a full-fledged province on its own, called San Gabriel. It was from this province that the first organized group of Franciscans, the so-called Twelve Apostles, came to New Spain in 1523. When the first Franciscan province was formed in New Spain, it was named Santo Evangelio in honor of the custody from which San Gabriel had emerged.³²

The origins of Franciscan activity in New Spain were thus closely associated with the ideal of evangelical poverty, and this association formed an important part of the Order’s narrative of its missionary efforts in New Spain. Early Franciscan historians and chroniclers consistently argued that there was a link between the strict poverty practiced by the friars and the simple lifestyles of the indigenous peoples that created a genuine bond between the Indians and the Franciscans. According to this view, the Franciscans’ practice of poverty made them especially adept at preaching the Gospel to the peoples of New Spain, while the Indians’ frugal and unaffected manner of life enabled them to recognize the Franciscans as virtual brothers under the skin. Even when the first wave of missionary activity died down, many friars still regarded their poverty as providing them with a special facility in the task of converting the native peoples. In the seventeenth century, for instance, when Alonso de Benavides visited Sor María de Ágreda, his subsequent letter to his fellow missionaries in New Mexico stressed that even her dress was entirely in keeping with a strict interpretation of poverty.

³² William Short, O.F.M., *The Franciscans* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1989), 29–70; Francisco Morales, O.F.M., “Franciscanos y mundo religioso en el México virreinal. Algunas consideraciones generales,” in *Franciscanos y mundo religioso en México*, edited by Elsa Cecilia Frost (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1993), 12–14; Antonio Rubial García, *La hermana pobreza: El franciscanismo de la edad media a la evangelización novohispana* (Mexico City: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1996), 61–67; Edwin Edward Sylvest, Jr., *Motifs of Franciscan Mission Theory in Sixteenth Century New Spain, Province of the Holy Gospel* (Washington, D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1975), 24–33; Jacobo de Castro, O.F.M., “El árbol cronológico de la provincia de Santiago, Primera Parte, 1722,” in *Crónicas franciscanas de España*, vol. 1, edited by Odilo Gómez Parente, O.F.M., 47–63 (Madrid: Editorial Cisneros, 1796); Juan Bautista Moles, O.F.M., “Memoria de la provincia de San Gabriel, 1592,” in *Crónicas franciscanas de España*, vol. 25, edited by Hermenegildo Zamora Jambrina, O.F.M., 11–33 (Madrid: Editorial Cisneros, 1796).

"Her habit," he wrote, "is just the same as our habit. It is made of coarse grey sackcloth, worn next to the skin, without any other tunic, skirt, or underskirt." Her observance of poverty, he strongly implied, was one of her virtues that rendered her worthy to be summoned to missionary activity by God and to have that activity so blessed by the Lord.³³

In eighteenth-century Spain, as we have seen, the Enlightenment critique of the orders as too big, too rich, and too lax, led to a number of changes, such as the restriction of the number of incoming novices. These same critiques also led a number of friars to call for a heightened observance of traditional and strict practices, especially regarding poverty. A recent study of the order in Murcia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century has found that an effort to renovate the order through a more literal and unyielding observance of poverty was an important strain in Franciscan discourse. There are indications that this endeavor was widespread. Urgent discussions of poverty and reform were hence a part of the religious conversations in which the Franciscans who arrived in Mexico and California in the late eighteenth century would have participated.³⁴

The initial Franciscan experience in Baja California also heightened awareness of the thorny issue of the relationship between poverty and the administration of temporalities. When the Jesuits were expelled from Baja California the missions were handed over to lay administrators called *comisionados*. When Visitor General José de Gálvez arrived at Baja California in the second week of June 1768, he was appalled at the poor state of the missions. He was first inclined to believe that this state of affairs had resulted from the fashion in which the Jesuits had administered the temporalities of the missions and the way in which they had kept the peninsula isolated from the rest of Mexico. When he received further reports from both the new Franciscan missionaries, who attributed the poor condition of the missions to the greed of the *comisionados*, he reconsidered and entrusted the administration of the temporalities to the Colegio de San Fernando on August 12. When Serra and Gálvez met on October 31, the visitor general decided that the supplies for the expedition north would be mostly taken from the older missions of the south. The need to ready the expeditions to the north forced the missionaries to take a great number of items from the already strapped Baja California missions. When the Dominicans took over these missions in the early 1770s, they soon became embroiled in a series of disputes with the Franciscans over just how much had actually been taken from the Baja California missions.³⁵

³³ Clark Colahan, *The Visions of Sor Maria de Agreda: Writing, Knowledge, and Power* (Tucson and London: University of Arizona Press, 1994), 107.

³⁴ Riquelme Oliva, *Iglesia y liberalismo*, 67, 503–504; Iriarte, *Franciscan History*, 377.

³⁵ "Para que se entreguen las temporalidades a los padres," Josef Gálvez, 12 agosto 1768, Real de Santa Ana; also "Representación hecha por los padres del colegio de San Fernando

The administration of the temporalities, besides being a potentially explosive issue because of the place of poverty in Franciscan history, was also tightly woven into the historical fabric of the Franciscan California missions from the moment that the Franciscans set foot in Baja California. The issue reared its head in Alta California in the early 1790s and tended to be associated with Frays Gilí, Rubí, and the other “padres descontentos” in a manner that is not entirely clear. In the words of Maynard Geiger, the group was “opposed to Franciscan administration of temporalities as out of harmony with the Franciscan rule.” The exact forum in which the issue was raised and the precise nature of the internal Franciscan discussion on this point remain unclear. Yet judging from the few references that are extant, the controversy peaked in the middle of the 1790s and was very intense. On August 13, 1794, Guardian Tomás de Pangua wrote to Lasuén:

I will try as hard as I can to facilitate the departure of two or three by next year so they can see exactly the type of missionary that is needed at the missions; not like those of the new system of temporalities who balk at swallowing a mosquito, then turn around and gulp down elephants. Of course, one must understand the spirit that inspires them. Much patience is necessary to fight against these types. And therefore, as I place myself before Your Reverence I am very troubled by such inconsiderate people who cannot be reached with either reason or prudence.³⁶

Less than a month later on September 30, Pangua returned to the same point in another letter to Lasuén:

There has been discovered another temporalista, that is to say, a declaimer against temporalities. It is Father Antonio Danti, whom without doubt the other two practitioners have imbued with their mode of thinking. Your reverence will endeavor to convince them and make them see the fatal consequence of their opinion, and that far from bring opposed to our religious state, the management of temporalities for the Indians is very acceptable to God.³⁷

de México a el señor virrey de dicha ciudad,” August 26, 1770, *Colección de documentos para la historia de México*, 2nd series, vol. 3, Misiones de las Californias: Informes y Documentos Diversos, 1772; Cuentas y Resúmenes, 1791–1828, Archivo del Colegio de San Fernando, AGN; Harry W. Crosby, *Gateway to Alta California: The Expedition to San Diego, 1769* (San Diego: Sunbelt Publications, 2003), 38–41; Albert Nieser, *Las fundaciones misionales dominicas en Baja California, 1769–1822*, trans. Estéban Arroyo G., O.P. and Carlos Amado L., O.P., preface by Salvador Bernabéu Albert (Mexicali: Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, 1998), 93–94.

³⁶ Geiger, *Franciscan Missionaries*, 62; Tomás de Pangua to Fermín Francisco de Lasuén, August 13, 1794, Santa Barbara Mission Archive Library.

³⁷ Tomás de Pangua to Fermín Francisco de Lasuén, September 30, 1794, Santa Barbara Mission Archive Library.

Father Mugártegui was less diplomatic. He simply referred to “the disconnected reasonings of two Mallorcan charlatans.” He was referring to Gilí and Rubí. A year later on April 29, 1795, Pangua tried to settle the entire issue. He told Lasuén:

Some have become discontented and scrupulous over the smallest details, convincing themselves that the management of the temporalities is against the first of our rules. However, Your Reverence can reiterate your warnings and tell them that I have conferred with experienced, learned, and God-fearing people on this issue. They responded that the friars can administer the temporalities without any misgivings. They should also accept this as a principle and not abandon the ministry to which they were called for having heeded false arguments.³⁸

These three issues—the difficulty of recruiting missionaries for San Fernando, the internal difficulties of the Colegio de San Fernando, and the tensions surrounding the question of the administration of the temporal affairs of the missions—resulted in a tremendous instability in the mission system in the 1790s. We have already seen this in the careers of Gilí and Rubí in Alta California, but the problems went far beyond the two of them. This larger instability can be seen in the basic demographic data and in the brief California experiences of two other missionaries, Antonio de la Concepción Horra and José María Fernández.

Maynard Geiger’s thorough research on the biographies of the California missionaries makes rudimentary demographic analysis possible. To investigate questions of recruitment and retention, it seems best to organize the missionaries according to their arrival in Alta California, and then place them into four large groups that correspond roughly to the cycles of mission-founding. The missions did not appear in a regular and sequential process. Rather, they were founded in spurts. In the first seven and a half years, from 1769 to 1777, eight missions were founded but only three were started in the next fourteen years. Then there were two more spurts. Two missions were founded within six weeks of each other in 1791, and the founding of another five was crammed into the thirteen months from June 1797 to June 1798. After that, only three more were founded. One result of this cyclical pace was that additional missionaries were not needed on a predictable basis—they were needed suddenly and quickly.³⁹

We have organized the missionaries into four groups. The first group, which we have named the First Founding Generation, consists of the twenty-seven friars who arrived during the first cycle of mission founding. The second group or First Consolidating Generation, consists of the fourteen friars who arrived

³⁸ Tomás de Pangua to Fermín Francisco de Lasuén, April 29, 1795, Santa Barbara Mission Archive Library.

³⁹ All the data in the following paragraphs and the table are extracted from Geiger, *Franciscan Missionaries*, especially pages 282–293.

TABLE I. SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF FOUR GENERATIONS OF FRANCISCANS IN ALTA CALIFORNIA

Generation	Dates of Arrival	Total Number	Average Age at Arrival	Average Years in Alta California	Percent Leaving Before 10 Years
First Founding	1769 to 1777	27	37.8	15.9	30
First Consolidating	1778 to 1789	14	33.4	13.9	14
Second Founding	1790 to 1798	40	31.2	14.7	45
Second Consolidating	1799 to 1820	42	31.7	18.5	10

during the period of relative inactivity from 1778 to 1787. The third group or Second Founding Generation, consists of the forty friars who arrived during the founding cycles from 1790 to 1798. The fourth group or Second Consolidating Generation, consists of the Fernandinos who arrived after 1789 through 1820.

The average age of the first group at arrival was thirty-eight years, and they remained in California for an average of sixteen years. In that group, 30 percent of the men left California before they had completed ten years of service there. For the second group, the average age at arrival dropped to thirty-three years, while the average stay in California also dropped to fourteen years. In this group, only 14 percent left before they had completed ten years service. For the third group, the average age dropped still further, to thirty-one years, while the average stay rose to fifteen years. In this group, 45 percent left before they had completed their ten years. In the final group, the average age was thirty-two years, while the average stay was nearly nineteen years. Only 10 percent left before their ten years were completed. These figures are summarized in Table 1.

The figures indicate that the formation of a stable Second Founding Generation proved to be a thorny problem for the order. The forty men who arrived during the second spurt of missionary founding were an unsettled group. As a whole, they remained in Alta California for about a year less than had the First Founding Generation, which was itself six years older when it arrived. Almost half of the Second Founding Generation left the mission field before serving the ten years for which they had come. In the First Founding Generation, that figure had been less than a third. Clearly, the Order had great difficulty in initially staffing the institutions that were established during the second wave of mission founding. The figures demonstrate that Lasuén's worry and weariness in the 1790s were indeed very well based.

The human face of Lasuén's concerns can be seen in the California careers of two members of this Second Founding Generation. In the conflicts involving José María Fernández at San Francisco and Antonio de la Concepción Horra at San Miguel, the first set of difficulties were within the missionary communities,

which stemmed from the troubles we have outlined. Since the instability of the Second Founding Generation was related to the very core of the Colegio de San Fernando—who came to the Colegio, the manner in which they lived, and the legitimacy (in a Franciscan sense) of their primary ministry—it is not surprising that the Alta California controversies of this generation involved the very core of the mission enterprise itself, that is, the relations between the missions and the Indians. Once out in the open, these controversies affected the relationships between the missions and the rest of California.⁴⁰

José María Fernández, a member of Castilla Province, arrived in San Francisco in June 1796. Almost immediately he began to complain to his brethren about their treatment of the Indians. Fernández's disagreements with them were apparently public matters, for on August 11, 1796, Governor Borica wrote to a military officer, Pedro Alberni, that he had just seen copies of letters which two San Francisco priests had written to Alberni. The letters offered contradictory assessments of the state of affairs at the mission. Borica remarked, "Judging by the letters, each father has a distinct way of thinking," but that "preference and support should be given to the ideas of the most recent arrival since they are more moderate." Specifically, Borica instructed Alberni that the military should not "assist the missionaries in punishing or shackling the Indians unless the two priests agree in requesting it. A request from one priest alone will not suffice. And, on the other hand, whenever either of the two priests requests something on behalf of the Indians, this should be facilitated in one way or another, without it being necessary for the two fathers to be in agreement." After hearing directly from Fernández, Borica also fired off an angry letter to Lasuén, demanding that he do something about the "excesses committed against the poor, pitiful Indians at Mission San Francisco. . . . For God's sake I beg you to don all your vestments so that once and for all those wretched souls can be allowed to live happily. It is a matter that keeps me from sleeping and has me talking to myself."⁴¹

In connection with a military investigation in September, second lieutenant of the cavalry and paymaster of the presidio, Raymundo Carrillo, offered some further observations about Fernández:

With the arrival of the new Friar, Father José María Fernández, in whom resides gentleness, affability, and good treatment, they [the Indians] are not only content and

⁴⁰ We have published more extensive excerpts from the primary sources relating to these two men and the controversies surrounding their stays in California in Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz, *Tensions Among the Missionaries in the 1790s* (Bakersfield, Calif.: California Mission Studies Association, 1996).

⁴¹ Diego de Borica to Pedro Alberni, August 11, 1796, Archive of California, 16: 8–10; Borica to Fermín Francisco de Lasuén, September 15, 1796, Archive of California, 24: 495, both in Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Calif.

happy, but five Christians who have been missing from the missions for about five years have reappeared. And six or seven pagans have come to the presidio and to the mission, who one hopes will be converted by good treatment. It is believed, according to what several Indians had told him, that if it could be managed to get Fr. Martin Landaeta to retire, as did his colleague Fr. Antonio Dantí, and get another Friar with the character of Friar José María Fernández, the rest of the Christians would come in, and along with them some pagans as well.

Pedro Amador, a soldier at San Francisco, added that Fernández had “a distinct manner, love, and gentleness,” and that he had increased the rations and meals” for the mission Indians.⁴²

Lasuén visited San Francisco and tried to calm matters down. A few months later he wrote to the guardian, and revealed the toll the affair had taken on him:

At the beginning of last month I returned from San Francisco, a place to which I was obliged to go because of the gravest and most trying problem I ever faced in all my life. The Reverend Fathers Fray Diego García and Fray José María Fernández plotted with fanatical zeal to expel Fray Landaeta from that mission. The Indians joined in the conspiracy, and the officers of the presidio, Alberni and Argüello, joined it or tended that way. For this purpose they collected accounts of unbecoming incidents that took place at different times in the past, giving them the appearance of cruel, enormous, and monstrous crimes, and these they attributed to Frs. Dantí and Landaeta. I worked hard to put an end to all this by means of letters. In this I was not successful, so I went there myself. I had to put up with a great deal, but, thanks be to God, everything ended in a peaceful solution, and to the general satisfaction of the governor. Thanks be to God.⁴³

In June of the next year, two of Fernández’s brethren at San Francisco decided to send out an expedition of mission Indians to the east bay with the aim of returning the previous year’s runaways. The priests entrusted the leadership of the expedition to a Baja California Indian named Raymundo the Californian. This expedition was a failure. The east-bay Indians drove Raymundo’s band away. This affair caused Fernández to write directly to the Governor. On June 27, 1797, he wrote:

Very dear Sir: I have reason to suspect and I assume that Lt. Don Josef de Argüello has submitted a report to Your Excellency in which he tells you that without his knowledge the Reverend Fathers of this mission have sent thirty or more men to the other shore under the command of the Californian Raymundo. . . . If I had been consulted, such an absurdity would not have been carried out, for I know very well that

⁴² Randall T. Milliken, “An Ethnohistory of the Indian People of the San Francisco Bay Area from 1770 to 1810” (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1991), 551–552, 555.

⁴³ Fermín Francisco de Lasuén to Antonio Nogueyra, November 2, 1796, in Lasuén, *Writings*, I: 404.

the fugitive Indians harbor bad feelings toward Raymundo. I also know why they have fled. It is due to the terrible suffering they experienced from punishments and work. Raymundo, the executioner used by Frs. Danti and Landaeta, was not the only one that the Indians wanted to get; they longed for the opportunity to take revenge against those two Fathers or at least cause some harm at the mission.⁴⁴

When Lasuén heard about these letters he acted swiftly. Besides disagreeing with Fernández about the Indians, the superior had also been equally concerned with the young priest's willingness to publicly air his differences with his brethren. In his visit to San Francisco the year before, Lasuén thought he had reached an agreement with Fernández not to go public with internal disagreements. So when Fernández did go directly to the governor, Lasuén had had enough. On July 8, he told Borica that he had responded to the "formal request" of Fernández that he be allowed to retire from the missions.⁴⁵

In September, Fernández left California aboard the vessel *Concepción*. One of his fellow passengers was another member of the Second Founding Generation who had caused Lasuén grief: Antonio de la Concepción Horra.

Concepción Horra had come to California aboard the *Concepción* on April 17, 1797. He arrived as part of a large group of missionaries whose presence would make possible the staffing of the five missions that were to be opened in the next year: San José, San Juan Bautista, San Miguel, San Fernando, and San Luis Rey. Concepción Horra was assigned to assist Fray Buenaventura Sitjar in the founding of San Miguel, which opened on July 25, 1797. Less than a month later, on August 19, Lasuén wrote to Borica, "It is impossible for me to exaggerate the sorrow I feel because of the matter I have to report to Your Lordship. The Reverend Fr. Fray Antonio de la Concepción, who was assigned to the important and singularly successful founding of San Miguel, has become insane, or has given evidence that he is suffering from grave nervous breakdown; and so far from promoting the good that he is undertaking, he is destroying it." In Monterey, the governor initially stated that he had not noticed any evidence of derangement in Concepción Horra's behavior. However, he eventually became convinced that Concepción Horra was troubled and sent him back to Mexico. Once in Mexico, Concepción Horra took up residence at the Colegio de San Fernando. On July 12, 1798, he penned a long letter to the viceroy.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Milliken, *A Time of Little Choice*, 153–155, 288; José María Fernández to Diego de Borica, June 27, 1797, Santa Barbara Mission Archive Library.

⁴⁵ Fermin Francisco de Lasuén to Diego de Borica, July 8, 1797, in Lasuén, *Writings*, 2:36; Lázaro Lamadrid Jiménez, O.F.M., *El Alavés Fray Fermin Francisco de Lasuén, O.F.M. (1736–1803), Fundador de Misiones en California*, 2 vols. (Alava, Spain: Diputación Foral de Alava, Consejo de Cultura, 1963), 2: 200–208.

⁴⁶ Fermin Francisco de Lasuén to Don Fray Francisco Rousset, April 26, 1797, in Lasuén, *Writings*, 2: 21; Lasuén to Pedro Callejas, September 28, 1797, in Lasuén, *Writings*, 2: 47–49.

Concepción Horra's letter contained three major sets of accusations. First, he complained about some alleged catechetical practices, such as the language of instruction for the Indians and whether the missionaries baptized the same Indians more than once. Second, he complained that he had been mistreated by his Franciscan brethren. Third, he asserted that the missionaries were guilty of specific abuses. They mistreated the Indians. He wrote, "Your Excellency, I would like to inform you of the many abuses that are commonplace in that country. The manner in which the Indians are treated is by far more cruel than anything I have ever read about. For any reason, however insignificant it may be, they are severely and cruelly whipped, placed in shackles, or put in the stocks for days on end without receiving even a drop of water." Concepción Horra went on to say that the missionaries overcharged for items that they were selling and that they were selfish in not assisting the younger missions with sufficient provisions. In addition, they refused to extend hospitality to other *gente de razón*.⁴⁷

Concepción Horra's letter set off a chain of events. Viceroy Miguel José de Azanza ordered Borica to investigate what Concepción Horra had said in his letter. Borica told the viceroy, "Generally, the treatment given the Indians is very harsh. At San Francisco, it even reached the point of cruelty." Following the procedure he had used in dealing with the question of the military chaplains in 1794, he then sent out a fifteen-item questionnaire to the presidio commanders.⁴⁸

Among the questions that Borica sent to the commanders was one, number 11, that was not specifically related to anything in Horra's document: "If they [the Indians] are permitted or not to have contact with the *gente de razón* and if they are punished when they go to the presidios even if it is during their free time." This question was thematically linked with question number 4: "If certain missionaries allow the Christian Indians to wander about in the woods for an unlimited period of time." Both questions were concerned with the whereabouts of the Indians when they were not at the missions. When one combines these two questions, it is not too difficult to discern the contours of Borica's implicit complaint: that when the Indians were allowed off of the mission grounds, the fathers did everything they could to keep them from associating with the other Spaniards. They would rather have the Indians in the mountains, far from the presidios or the pueblos. Borica was using the issues stirred up by Concepción Horra to open up in California a long-standing dispute in New Spain about the place of the indigenous peoples. Were they to be separated or assimilated? The missionaries, of course, would have framed the question differently: Were the Indians to be protected or exploited? In an age of Enlightenment ideas and greater liberal tendencies in both Mexico and Spain, the Fernandinos did not want that question

⁴⁷ Provincias Internas, Legajo 216, ex. 14, 7-9, AGN.

⁴⁸ Guest, *Lasuén*, 221.

raised. They knew that the missions themselves were less popular in the eighteenth century among the elite on both sides of the Atlantic. In addition, they had had experience with the liberal notions of Indian mobility and assimilation entertained by José Escandón in the Sierra Gorda in the 1740s. They had resisted those trends at that time, and declined Escandón's invitation to join him in settling Nuevo Santander. They were not pleased to see the same concepts appearing in Alta California.⁴⁹

The commanders' response to this question was unanimous. Argüello, for instance, said that the Indians were permitted to come to the presidios infrequently. Only recently had the fathers allowed them to do so on feast days. Sal said that soldiers who wanted to have the Indians leave the missions to fetch items such as wood or water had to make sure that the fathers would not find out about it or the Indians would be punished. Grájera agreed, but added that he was not sure if the fathers would punish Indians who went to the presidios during their annual vacations. Goycochea's answer to this question was the longest response he gave to any inquiry. The first sentence of his answer was deliberately meant to highlight the importance he gave to it: "It is necessary that I avail myself of Your Lordship's prudent understanding to state the protest on which I stake my honor. Not only are the Christian Indians at these missions not allowed to have any contact with the gente de razón, but also any Indian who even during his free time associates with soldiers is deprived of food and punished." He added that not only were the Indians discouraged from going to the presidios, they were punished if they got too close to the soldiers of the mission guard: "An Indian is made to suffer if he is somewhat helpful to a soldier who has perhaps taught him to make shoes, sole leather, leggings, or other things of this kind for his personal use or for sale."⁵⁰

By these two questions and by the intensity of the commanders' response to them, the military turned Horra's charges into an opportunity to raise some basic and fundamental questions about the missions. Franciscan disunity had opened a wedge in the religious ranks that the military authorities were quick to enter, widen, and exploit.

Realizing the seriousness of the situation and knowing that the self-inflicted wound needed strong attention were factors that motivated Lasuén to compose his long defense of the missions. In September 1799, when the commanders' responses that Borica had requested reached Mexico City and had been reviewed

⁴⁹ Provincias Internas, vol. 216, ex. 14, f. 9–11, AGN; Gómez Canedo, *Sierra Gorda*, 65–68; Guest, *Hispanic California Revisited*, 91–94.

⁵⁰ The replies are archived in the Bancroft Library, the Santa Barbara Mission Archives, and the AGN. They have been extensively summarized by Engelhardt in *Missions and Missionaries*, 2: 549–580, and by Guest in *Lasuén*, 223–239.

by the viceroy's staff, his office forwarded them all to Fray Miguel Lull, guardian of the Colegio de San Fernando. Lull was told to have Lasuén respond to the questionnaires. Lasuén collected information from a number of missionaries. Unfortunately, only the responses of Frays José Seán at Mission San Buenaventura, Esteban Tapis at Mission Santa Bárbara, and Gregorio Fernández at Mission La Purísima Concepción have survived. Using these responses and his own deep experience, Lasuén composed a reply that was completed on June 19, 1801. Bancroft called it "the most eloquent and complete defense and presentation of the mission system in its many phases which is extant." Far and away the longest of his works, it runs forty pages in his *Writings*.⁵¹

After Lasuén's response had been sent to the capital city, the viceroy's office declared itself unable to resolve the contradictions between the commanders' and the missionaries' accounts. It called for more study of the matter. The governor, who was by this time José Joaquín de Arrillaga, asked soldier Raymundo Carrillo for another report. This military man composed a document favoring the missionaries. Arrillaga adopted this perspective in his own report that was completed on November 3, 1804 and sent to the viceroy, who by this time was José de Iturrigaray. The viceroy concurred and issued the final report on the Concepción Horra matter on April 19, 1805.⁵²

By that time the Franciscans were well into the task of recruiting the Second Consolidating Generation of missionaries. From the year in which Concepción Horra wrote his letter until the year in which the final report was issued in Mexico City, twenty-one additional missionaries arrived in Alta California. Only four of them would leave California before they completed their ten years of service. This greater stability was part of a larger pattern of change that was beginning to affect the missions. Commercial vessels were beginning to appear with greater frequency along the coast and the products of California's indigenous peoples and of its missions began their own long journey of assimilation into the world economy. The outbreak of hostilities in Mexico in 1810 disrupted the transport of supplies from New Spain. The missions, therefore, became primary sources of production for the food and goods on which the survival of Spanish California depended.

However, at the end of the eighteenth century, all of that lay ahead. Crown and Church placed eighteen fragile institutions on the very edge of the frontier. Their establishment presented the Colegio de San Fernando with a series of difficult logistical, personnel, religious, and ideological challenges. These challenges peaked in the last fifteen years of the eighteenth century. They threatened the mis-

⁵¹ Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, 1: 589; Lasuén, *Writings*, 2: 194–234.

⁵² Guest, *Lasuén*, 240–247; José de Iturrigaray to José Joaquín de Arrillaga, April 19, 1805, Archive of California, 12: 91, The Bancroft Library.

sionary enterprise itself by undermining the visible development of well-ordered Christian communities, upon which the mission system's very legitimacy rested. Thirty years after Junípero Serra had initiated Alta California's first mission at San Diego, the chain was buffeted by fierce internal and external controversies. The survival and prosperity of the mission system were not a foregone conclusion.

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