

THE ROLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN MEXICO'S POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

To ignore what happens inside the churches is to ignore a remarkable part of the spirit of the century and the factors of national life

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Abstract

This article shows and explains the different political positions and actions that the Catholic Church in Mexico has had throughout the twentieth century, culminating with the transition to democracy that the nation experienced in 2000. It is about the contemporary history of the Church-State relationships in Mexico. The central position of the author is that the Catholic Church in Mexico has not been an "ideological state apparatus", by contrast, has played a role as auditor of public life, being a strong critic of the post-revolutionary political system, even becoming an agent who helped to establish in Mexico a competitive and plural party system.

Keywords: Church-State relations, Mexican religion, conservatism, democratization.

The Catholic Church, like any other human organization, is not monolithic. Within itself there is a convergence of a wide spectrum of ideological powers and groups with different interests. The purpose of this work is to show the institutional positions of the highest level of the Mexican Catholic Hierarchy, analyzing its relationship with Mexican State throughout the 20th century. In opposition to the idea that the Church is an ally or collaborator with the ruling class to preserve the *status quo*, this paper shows the Church as a combative and hard critic of the Mexican State's political and economic actions; even becoming a factor of change because of its role as a pressure group and an auditor of public life. The

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relationship between Catholic Church and Mexican State has had many stages. On the basis of the different changes of that relationship it is possible to identify five historic periods.

The first of them happened between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, when it was possible to observe the Catholic Church changing its defensive positions against capitalism and liberal politics, building its own alternative model of society known as Catholic Social Teaching. The second period is focused in the "Cristeros War", a violent confrontation between the Church and a secular State which was born out of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917). The defeat of Cristeros guerrillas in 1929 was the result of that conflict. The third period is a truce between the Church and the State to join forces after the armed clash to face a common enemy: communism. The fourth period started with the end of the nonaggression pact between the Catholic Hierarchy and the secular powers in the seventies, reinitiating the open conflict between both elites, but this time with no violence. In the last period of the Church-State relationships in Mexico, the Catholic Hierarchy emerged as an agent of democratization, when it had integrated with many conservative but secular organizations, to form a common front to end the hegemonic party system.

Antecedents: The Catholic Social Teaching

The Hierarchy of the Catholic Church, since the papacy of Leo XIII (1878-1903), has planned to boost its own project of socioeconomic transformation to face the ruling ideologies of the 20th century in the Western world: liberalism and communism. That project is known as the Catholic Social Teaching (CST), which consists of a group of standards and general principles about the social, political and economic problems of mankind. CST's roots come from the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* - On Capital and Labor- (1891). The objective of this pontifical document is to build a "third way" between *laissez faire* capitalism and socialist collectivism. The main goal of this "third way" is to improve the economic situation of dispossessed masses, which was generated by capitalism. But, in opposition with socialism, CST rejects both the expropriation of private property as the indifference (and in some cases hostility) against religion.

Faced with the individual atomization of liberalism, and the class struggle of Marxism, CST proposes an organic vision of society, integrated by different groups, all of them with a specific social function, but interconnected in a symbiotic way; in that scenario, the different social classes are interdependent and trying to work for the common good and benefiting each other. The pontifical guidelines point out that the struggle against the "injustices of individual capitalism" should be done on the basis of three key elements: defense of private property, social justice and unionism. The definitions of those concepts by Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum* are:

Private property: The fact that God has given earth for the use and enjoyment of the whole human race can in no way be a bar to the owning of private property. For God has granted the earth to mankind in general, not in the sense that all without distinction can deal with it as they like, but rather that no part of it was assigned to anyone in particular, and that the limits of private possession have been left to be fixed by man's own industry, and by the law of individual races (...) the common opinion has found in the careful study of nature, and in the laws of nature, the foundations of the division of property, and the practice of all ages has consecrated the principles of private ownership, as being pre-eminently in conformity with human nature, and as leading in the most unmistakable manner to the peace and tranquility of human existence.

Social Justice: Doubtless, before deciding whether wages are fair, many things have to be considered; but wealthy owners and all masters of labor should be mindful of this: that to exercise pressure upon the indigent and the destitute for the sake of gain, and to gather one's profit out of the need of another, is condemned by all laws, human and divine (...) Lastly, the rich must religiously refrain from cutting down the workmen's earnings, whether by force, by fraud, or by usurious dealing; and with all the grater reason because the laboring man is, as a rule, weak and unprotected, and because his meager means should in proportion to their scantiness be accounted sacred (...) Among the many and grave duties of rulers who would do their best for the people, the first and foremost is to act with strict justice -with that justice which is called distributive-toward each and every class alike.

Unionism: It is gratifying to know that there are actually in existence not a few associations of this nature, existing either for workmen alone, or for workmen and employees together, but it is greatly to be desired that they should become more numerous and more efficient. We have spoken of them more than once, yet it would be well to explain here how notably they are needed, to show that they exist of their own right, and what should be their organization and their mode of action (Leo XIII, 1891).

Rerum Novarum was preceded by the Encyclical *Sapientiae Christianae* (1890), which talked about the duties of Christian citizens. The Pope made called for his loyal laymen to defend the Church's rights and liberties in the field of common law, as well as to seek the guidelines of CST. That objective implied their active participation in politics.

In the Mexican case, the majority of the bishops have been formed doctrinally in the *Colegio Pío Latino Americano* in Rome. In that Catholic College they were strongly influenced by the social reform doctrines which emanated from *Rerum Novarum*. When those clergymen returned to Mexico, they tried to im-

plant the Church's social and economic projects. The first Social-Catholic Congress took place in Puebla in 1903, where the meaning and goals of the Encyclical were discussed. Afterwards, other Congresses were held: Morelia (1904), Guadalajara (1906), Oaxaca (1909) and the most important, judging from its results, was the Zamora's Diet (1913), which generated specific programs to improve the conditions of the workers, such as the creation of programs of social assistance, co-operative banks, associations of mutual assistance, redistribution of land to create family farms, a declaration of minimum wage, work protection for children and women, and the prevention of the concentration of wealth, as well as the extension of technical and financial help for agriculture (Goddard, 1981).

That Catholic position has been named for many experts of the relationship Church-State as *integral-intransigence* (Poulat, 1977; Blancarte, 2005). *Integral-intransigence* is defined by these authors as a Catholic and alternative model of society against modernity. Basically, its main components are: rejection of individualism, defense of organicism and family, the dream of an alliance between the clergy and the people against the ruling classes, a model of society based on small communities or regions with a high grade of autonomy, contrasting with central government (judged as an oppressor power), the search for a third way between capitalism and socialism, anti-industrialism, anti-capitalism and anti-semitism. The roots of this Catholic intransigence are found in Pope Pius IX's document entitled *Syllabus Errorum* (1864), attacking the rationalism, liberalism, materialism, socialism, communism, religious freedom, sovereignty of temporal powers above eternal powers, and the separation Church and State.

The secular State and the Cristeros movement

During almost all the decade beginning from 1910, Mexico suffered a revolutionary and violent movement. After that, the Constitutionalist faction of the revolution took control of the Mexican State. The Constitutionlists had a modern project which consisted of the capitalist development, and some elements of socialism (it included the help and support of the State to guide the industrialization of the nation). Nothing illustrates better the Catholic vision of the new political system, its economic model, and the "socialist solution" than the 1920 letter of the Mexican Episcopal College to the country's President:

Mister President, let us explain to you the two solutions for the social problem: the socialist and the Catholic. Both disagree about the conceptions of the origins of that discomfort and about the ways to solve that issue; when socialists want to find the roots of the problem in individual private property, capital, family relationships and the links with religion; we, the Catholics, find the origins in the abuse of property, capitalism, the looseness of family relationships, religious ignorance and the relaxation of traditions. All of this was provoked by the social disintegration of lib-

eral principles. They abolished, instead of reforming, the old guilds, and instituted obstacles to the Church, cutting off the development of its programs of justice and charity, from the absolutism of kings to the tyranny of governments based on individual principles.

If we leave the origin of the social problem and move to search for its solution, the difference between socialist and Catholics is noticeable. Socialists take into account neither God nor Christian morals; on the contrary, Catholics are based, precisely, on these fundamentals of social life that the others attack (O'Dogherty, 1991:129).

As result of the clash between those antagonistic visions of nation, such as the Constitutionals and the Catholic Hierarchy, President Plutarco Elías Calles (1924-1928) tried to enforce the legislation of that time about religion and public worship (articles 3², 5³, 24⁴, 27⁵ and 30⁶ of the Political Constitution of United Mexican States). The consequence of that anti-clerical legislation was a civil war in Mexico from 1926 until 1929 (mostly in the Mexican region known as “el Bajío”), popularly called “Cristeros War” (Guerra de los Cristeros), because the battle slogan of the Catholic peasant masses was “Long live Christ the King!” This movement not only included a religious motivation, but also showed the political aspiration of the Mexican Catholic Hierarchy to establish its social-Christian project.

When the Cristeros conflict exploded, all Archbishops of Mexico, with the exception of Oaxaca's and Puebla's, were under the control of a group known as “plancartistas”. That nickname was due to all the members of that select group having graduated from the *Colegio Pío Latino Americano* in Rome, thanks to the recommendations and resources of Antonio Plancarte y Labastida (Responsible for the Basilica of Holy Mary of Guadalupe -the most important Catholic sanctuary in Mexico-), who was nephew of the famous Archbishop Pelagio Antonio

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- 2 This constitutional article said in that time: “The religious corporations and the ministers of religion that exclusively or predominantly have educational activities, and the associations or organizations linked with the propaganda of any religious creed, cannot interfere in the schools, including the teaching of basic, middle or high education, as well as that also aimed for the workers and peasants” (CPEUM, 2010).
 - 3 This constitutional article said in that time: “The State cannot allow the application of any contract, pact or agreement whose purpose implies the diminishment, the loss or the sacrifice of man's freedom, because of his work, education or religious vote. The law, as consequence, does not allow the establishment of monastic orders, no matter their denomination or objective” (CPEUM, 2010).
 - 4 This constitutional article stipulated in that time: “Every religious act of public worship should be celebrated only inside the temples, and always under the vigilance of civil authority” (CPEUM, 2010).
 - 5 In that time, this constitutional article affirmed in its second paragraph: “The religious associations known as churches, no matter its creed, are not able, in any case, to acquire, possess or administrate property nor the capital in it neither” (CPEUM, 2010).
 - 6 In that time, this constitutional article emphasized: “The law does not recognize any personality of the religious groups denominates as churches (...) The ministers of any religion should never criticize, in private or public gathering, the fundamental laws of the nation, or the civil authorities; they should never have active or passive vote, nor rights to gather with political purposes” (CPEUM, 2010).

Labastida y Dávalos. Plancartistas was an elite group with very clear economic and political interests. Furthermore, they were well-known for their religious intolerance and intellectual arrogance. That group strongly supported the violent way as the only option to achieve the constitutional modification they wanted (Chávez,1968).

The Catholic armed movement, in the beginning, was incited and supported by the Mexican Hierarchy, but at the same time, the international Hierarchy, most specifically Pope Pius XI (1922-1939), was strongly opposed to the fact that Catholic laymen used violence and revolutionary ways to overthrow "legitimately instituted governments". As a consequence, the Supreme Pontiff sought to negotiate the end of the conflict with President Emilio Portes Gil (1928-1930), and entrusted that task to José Mora y del Río (Bishop of Mexico City), and the Jesuit Pascual Díaz y Barreto (Bishop of Tabasco) (García Ugarte,2006).

Pascual Díaz y Barreto did not have any tie with the "plancartistas", and did not graduate from the *Colegio Pío Latino Americano* of Rome. His education was obtained from the *Society of Jesus* in Spain and Belgium. Barreto was a remarkably gifted man, with an austere personality, and distanced from ecclesiastic politics, until Rome asked him for his services (Valverde,1949:243-244). According to the Pope's view, Pascual Díaz had an adequate profile to assure the accomplishment of papal dispositions, which were directly opposed to the wishes of the Mexican Hierarchy as well as to the Catholic guerrillas. As soon as the armed conflict ended, Díaz y Barreto was anointed with the most privileged position in Mexican Hierarchy: the Archbishopric of Mexico.

Struggles in the Revolutionary Regime

The end of *Cristeros War* was the beginning of a new phase in the Church-State relationship called *Modus Vivendi* by the specialists in this matter. It consisted in the Clergy's support of the new revolutionary regime, the Church resign to contest the control of labor unions, and not rejecting the modernizing reforms deployed by Mexican State. In retribution, the government stopped religious persecution and socialist education, and allowed to the Church to open its own schools teaching religious education (Blancarte,1993) (Pattnayak:2008).

Nevertheless, that peace was weak and ephemeral. The anti-clerical behavior of the revolutionary governments came back between 1931 y 1933, trying to implement in Mexico a "scientific and rational" education, meaning an anti-religious perspective. In that time, many Catholics who participated in the Cristeros Movement rejected the agreement between the government and the Church, and the *Modus Vivendi* as well. Some of them disobeyed the Holy See, resuming the armed way, and restarting a flimsy and fleeting movement known as "The Second". In that movement, its members fought until death defending their Catholic ideals, abandoned by a Hierarchy who preferred to betray its believers in

search of its own interests (Serrano,1992).

Although President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) searched for peace with the Hierarchy since 1936, he stipulated very clearly that the government did not have any intention to derogate the constitutional articles that were considered anti-clerical, or to give up to socialist education. The impossibility of defeating the government in the fields of education, ideology and secularism, provoked the Church to try to interpret the term "socialism", in the legislation about education, as values from Catholic Social Teaching against the injustices of capitalism, individualism and free market. In parallel to the secular education in public schools, the Church demanded to be allowed to offer religious education in private institutions (Margadant,1991). That petition was surprisingly accepted by President Manuel Ávila Camacho (1940-1946), who tolerated Catholic education, and public worship, such as the massive processions to "Our Lady of Guadalupe", ignoring the explicit prohibition in the Mexican Constitution, valid at that time. However, the prohibition to create religious political parties prevailed without changes⁷.

In one hand, there was an intransigent Catholic Church against modernizing reforms, and on the other hand, a Jacobin government disrespecting religious freedom. But as we can see, the attitude from both elites was changing in this period. Those changes were stronger since restarting the *Modus Vivendi* (1937 to 1938). The Catholic Hierarchy maintained its doctrinal differences with civil power, but the Church supported the government in its fighting to improve the social and educative conditions of Mexican people and, above all, did not systematically combat the governmental efforts to transform the socioeconomic structures of the nation. An emblematic element of that "pact of nonaggression" was the Clergy's calling to its believers to contribute to the payment of the debt that the revolutionary government of Cárdenas had to face, because of the nationalization of American and British petroleum companies. The Hierarchy strongly opposed the idea of many believers to build a new pro-catholic political party, and channeled their energies and desires to integrate secular and peaceful organizations affined with CST values.

7 The Constituent Assembly of Queretaro, which created the Constitution of 1917, declared prohibited the political organizations that, in their name or logo, made reference to some religion or ecclesiastic association. The motivation of that ban was that, in 1911, the National Catholic Party offered the candidacy to Francisco I. Madero to run for President of the Mexican Republic in a democratic way. However, in 1913, some leading members of Catholic Party supported the coup d'état led by General Victoriano Huerta. This fact was a terrible historical mistake, and the Church had to pay a high price for it, because the revolutionaries (mainly the Constitutionalist faction which won the Mexican civil war) interpreted that event as though the entire Church was an important part of the enemy they must defeat (Correa, 1991).

The Church and the fight against Communism

After Cárdenas, the next administrations never took seriously the socialist project as a political or educational program. This explains, in part, the subsequent convergence between governments emanating from the Mexican revolution and the Catholic Hierarchy: the fight against communism. Both elites had a common enemy, and that fact provoked the leftists to confuse and link, in a wrong and simplistic way, the Church as a simple sidekick of the capitalist State.

There was a revival of the conflict between Church and State in the 1960's. Some political groups, inspired by bishops and priests, incorporated aspects of Christian doctrine into modern ideologies, like Marxism, that were searching for a revolutionary change to achieve an ambitious program of social justice to end capitalism and restore a "socialist and Christian order". That movement was known as Liberation Theology. But the official position of the Catholic Hierarchy was absolute and total respect for the law and republican authorities. Despite the fact that the Clergy still disagreed with some aspects of Mexican legislation, that inconformity was expressed in peaceful ways, never with violence.

To describe the relationship between the Catholic Hierarchy and the Mexican State during *Modus Vivendi*, some specialists have used the expression "wrong partnership". It was used originally to explain the last phase of Franco's regime in the Spanish case. According to Soledad Loaeza, that concept, applied in the Mexican case, "describes a situation where the Church pretends to identify itself with the State, obtaining juridical and material advantages without renouncing its original position" (Loaeza, 1984:143).

It is not possible to deny that the Mexican Catholic Church collaborated with the State during *Modus Vivendi*, in fact that is the definition of that agreement; nevertheless, the Church's position was not a "partnership", because it never pretended "to identify itself with the State". Furthermore, it is totally incomparable to the situation of the Catholic Church in Franco's Spain, where it sought to maintain its strong position; while the Catholic Church in Mexico after the revolution was in a completely defensive situation. We should never forget that the Church was juridically inexistent in Mexico.

On the contrary, Catholic Hierarchy always rejected a kind of relationship with the State that could be interpreted as complicity with the application of the socioeconomic model of development from the Mexican revolution. Since the decade of the 1950's the Church strove to gain distance from the project of the Revolutionary Institutional Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional -PRI-), and tried to redeploy the CST (Blancarte, 1993:149). In addition, the Catholic priests were often hard critics of the authoritarian PRI's regime.

Although during the administration of President Luis Echeverría (1970-1976), there arose what the Mexican press of that time called "ecclesiastic rapprochement", it would be a mistake to affirm that an alliance occurred with the

State. The “ecclesiastic rapprochement” happened, in some way, because the local and international Catholic Hierarchy distrusted some radical sectors inside the Church who disputed the actions and authority of the Catholic Magisterium, mainly in southern Mexico. But, above all, what happened was a convergence between the social policy of the government and the CST program, because, as never seen before, the Mexican Hierarchy identified its project of social reform with the one applied by PRI administrations in the 1970’s (Blancarte, 1995).

It is very important to make clear that the ecclesiastic support to the Mexican government was not unconditional, and less absolute. It was limited to social reforms that the Church considered compatible with the CST project, such as the Mexican Food Program (Programa Alimentario Mexicano) of President José López Portillo (1976-1982). The objective of that public policy was to lower the food deficit for the weakest and most vulnerable sectors of Mexican population. The differences were very noticeable on topics that the Church has never ceded such as birth control and secular education, which gave birth to the fight about the subject-matter of free textbooks in the public schools (Gómez, 2007:73) (Ata:2007).

The Church and the political openness

Modus Vivendi’s obsequies are found at the end of 1970’s, with a virtual explosion of pastoral exhortations, pronouncements and proclamations about politics, particularly focused on fighting electoral fraud and all the antidemocratic viciousness of the Mexican political system.

The explanation for that is, in great part, the ascent of new characters inside the Mexican Catholic Hierarchy; that was the case of the combative Cardinal Ernesto Corripio Ahumada. Furthermore, with the rise to power of John Paul II in 1978⁸, the papal policy was to have a dissident and active Mexican Church. In this aspect, the declarations of Carlos Quintero Arce, Archbishop of Hermosillo (1968-1996), are illuminating. He said the local Hierarchy should imitate the *Polish Way*, meaning that the Mexican Church must become a center of organization to allow civil society to break down a corrupt, illegitimate, overweight and authoritarian State (Fahed:2009). That was not simply a personal feeling of the Archbishop, but the echo of the international Hierarchy’s guidelines to local Hierarchy. When in 1979 the Pope visited Mexico, he declared: “Of my country we can say ‘Poland *semper fidelis*’; I also want to say ‘México *semper fidelis*’” (Aguilar, 1998:123-124).

A synthesis of the sociopolitical objectives of John Paul II, based on his speeches and official documents, is:

8 Until Leo XIII, all the Popes had come from the nobility and the aristocracy. Since then, the Church has had some “plebeian popes”, such as Pius X, whose father was a mailman and mother a seamstress; John XXIII was a peasant’s son and all his family worked on rented lands. But the distinctness of John Paul II was his original social class, linked to the Catholic Workers Movement, following the guidelines of Catholic Social Teachings inside factory life, as well as fighting an authoritarian and anticlerical State.

- a) To encourage and support a larger Vatican presence in the world and boost the strengthening of local churches inside their national environment;
- b) To promote Catholic culture as a universal project of life, in confronting the blows of modern secularization;
- c) To fight against Marxism, the countries under socialist regimes and, at the same time, to delegitimize and exclude Liberation Theology;
- d) To denounce liberal capitalism as responsible for the huge inequalities between rich and poor countries, as well as the inequalities inside society, with its sequel of poverty and marginalization; to fight modernity because it foments consumerism, materialism and hedonism;
- e) To promote CST as a third way before the fall of capitalist and socialist systems;
- f) To defend conservative tradition and morality, including opposition to birth control, decriminalization of abortion, euthanasia, divorce and sexual relations outside marriage (Pérez-Rayón, 2005) (Serafimova:2007).

An important change in CST, after the Second Vatican Council, was the acceptance of democracy as an optimal form of government⁹. John Paul II, in his Encyclical *Centesimus Annus* (the name of the document refers to a continuation of social-Catholicism from *Rerum Novarum*), said:

The Church values the democratic system inasmuch as it ensures the participation of citizens in making political choices, guarantees to the governed the possibility both of electing and holding accountable those who govern them, and of replacing them through peaceful means when appropriate. Thus it cannot encourage the formation of narrow ruling groups which usurp the power of the State for the individual interests of ideological ends. Authentic democracy is possible only when the State ruled by law, and on the basis of the correct conceptualization of the human person (John Paul II, 1991).

The Vatican conception of democracy is not reduced to procedural elements, like electoral processes, but also includes democratic values such as: human dignity with no distinction of race, gender or creed, the respect for human rights, and the acceptance of common good as the supreme end and regulatory criteria of political life. It also describes the individualist doctrine as the biggest danger to current democracies. The argument for that is that ethic relativism induces one to consider nonexistent any objective and universal criteria to

⁹ Before Second Vatican Council, the Popes had always stipulated that the Church cannot be linked to or compromised with a specific form of government, because its main objective is found in the eternal field, not in the temporal one. A good example of this is the Encyclical *Graves de Communi* (On Christian Democracy) of Leo XIII (1901).

establish the foundations of society and the correct hierarchy of values¹⁰. Now the political project of CST includes the research of democratic systems, which means an effective check of powers and the political authority is responsible to civil society. This includes building ways of political representation controlled by citizen bodies (John Paul II, 1989).

Since Corripio Ahumada as Primate Archbishop of Mexico (1977), who wanted to follow the *Polish Way*, the Mexican Episcopate has made public declarations about many important topics related to politics and economics; the Church showed its intention to emerge as the natural leader of civil society, channeling people's discontent against the State. This stance by the Catholic Hierarchy escalated with the economic crisis of 1982, which meant the death of the Revolution's model of development. The PRI's popularity was diminished in large segments of the population. In November of that year, the Cardinal Corripio Ahumada declared that the conditions of the country had changed and the Church should leave "the legal corner" where the revolutionary regime had placed it, denouncing injustices in the country "with prudence but with energy". Thus in this phase the Mexican Catholic Hierarchy adopted an open and strong anti-State and anti-authoritarian position, which is expressed in its rejection of the nationalization of banks and, in general, to the whole revolutionary model of State-led development (Loaeza, 1984).

Unlike what happened in the 20's and 30's, where the Hierarchy's project proposed a strong Catholic unionism to fight against capitalist *laissez faire* and statist socialism; in the 70's and 80's, the CST project in Mexico had better reception from business elites. The explanation is that the trade union movement was more concentrated, by far, in the PRI's corporative labor organizations. At the same time, some events happened that triggered the belligerency of Mexican entrepreneurs: the sympathy and support of the administration of President Echeverría for the socialist Salvador Allende from Chile, the assassination of Mexican industry leader Eugenio Garza Sada by a communist guerrilla, and the expropriation of the wealthy Yaqui Valley in Sonora, in northern Mexico.

Mexican entrepreneurs mobilized different groups of civil society against the government, provoking, in 1975, the creation of the Business Council (Consejo Coordinador Empresarial -CCE-). The CCE was born as the leadership body of the top organizations of Mexican businessmen to face the economic and political reforms driven by Echeverría's administration. The CCE has not only pointed out the mistakes in public policy, but also proposed an alternative development

10 "Nowadays there is a tendency to claim that agnosticism and skeptical relativism are the philosophy and the basic attitude which correspond to democratic forms of political life. Those who are convinced that they know the truth and firmly adhere to it are considered unreliable from the democratic point of view, since they do not accept that the truth is determined by the majority, or that it is subject to variation according to different political trends. It must be observed in this regard that if there is no ultimate truth to guide and direct political activity, then ideas and convictions can easily be manipulated for reasons of power. As history demonstrates, a democracy without values easily turns into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism" (John Paul II, 1991).

program opposed to the government's. The "petroleum boom" throughout the Presidency of José López-Portillo momentarily turned off the protests and political tensions, but it postponed the structural reforms that entrepreneurs required, mainly in issues related to: taxes, labor unions, state intervention, subsidies, etc. When petroleum prices collapsed on 1980-1981, the corporate offensive was re-activated and became stronger because of the bank expropriation in 1982. Because of that, CCE fought not only the government, but the entire post-revolutionary regime and the constitutional pact of authoritarian Mexico (Flores:2003).

It should be clarified that not all of the business elite shared CST's ideas and values. Many of them disagreed with Statism¹¹ because they sympathized with *laissez faire* ideals; but some business and pro-business organizations have had an explicit doctrinal inspiration from CST, such as the Social Union of Mexican Businessmen (USEM), the Employers Confederation of the Mexican Republic (COPARMEX), the Mexican Institute of Catholic Social Teaching, and the Christian Family Movement (Salas-Porras, 2001). These organizations were against Statism but at the same time against a rampant free market. They proposed a third way which consists of a program of unrestricted respect for private property; in addition, the free market is assigned with more than a lucrative function, but also a social function redistributing wealth with Christian values, respecting the environment and a prudent and responsible intervention by an actually democratic State. The essence of the economic model of business elites with Catholic ideology is summarized by José Ignacio Mariscal Toroella, COPARMEX's national counselor, ex-president of USEM, and current president of the International Christian Union of Business Executives¹²: "as much business as possible and as much State as necessary" (Oppenheim:2006).

In the early 80's many of those entrepreneurs with Social-Christian ideology entered the National Action Party (Partido Acción Nacional -PAN-)¹³ and formed a political group which using electoral processes, searched for the establishment in Mexico of a competitive party system and to deploy its own socio-economic project into the government¹⁴.

11 The ideology of Statism holds that sovereignty is vested not in the people but in the national State, and that all individual and associations exist only to enhance the power, the prestige, and the well-being of the State. The concept of Statism, which is seen as synonymous with the concept of nation and corporatism repudiates individualism and exalts the nation as an organic body headed by the supreme leader or a single party and nurtured by unity, force, and discipline (Mitchell, 1991)

12 In its English name, The International Christian Union of Business Executives does not specifically refer to the Catholic Church, but it does so in its French and official name: Union Internationales des Associations Patronales Catholiques (Uniapac). Its statutes and doctrinal principles point out that its main purpose is to promote and spread CST ideas inside the business community, according to pontifical guidelines emanating from *Rerum Novarum* (Uniapac: s/f).

13 In spite of the fact that the PAN was a party formed by a majority of members from Catholic lay organizations, as a consequence of the Vatican policy trying to avoid a new confrontation with the State in *Modus Vivendi* times; Mexican Hierarchy has always distanced itself from everything that PAN's speakers said, did or wrote, especially critics of the Mexican political system. That position changed in the decade of the 80's.

14 Manuel de Jesús Clouthier del Rincón (1934-1989) was an emblematic case of these new Catholic business members of the

It is very important to clarify that those party and business groups were not a simple secular weapon of the Hierarchy to be politically mobilized. The aforementioned lay Catholic organizations had a high grade of autonomy from the Hierarchy, but were natural allies because the roots of their doctrinal scaffolding came from CST.

At the same time, the Mexican Episcopal Conference, along with the abovementioned organization with social-Catholic doctrine, created a common front against the government with the purpose of establishing its own program to transform Mexico. An example of this is the electoral facts of Chihuahua during the administration of President Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988), during the voting process to elect the governor of that state in July of 1985. That electoral journey was plagued by fraudulent practices to deny victory to PAN's candidate, Francisco Barrio Terrazas. The irregularities were so evident that the Mexican Episcopate openly denounced them, even in international forums. The critique of the Catholic Hierarchy included the threat to close churches in protest, as the Church did in the 20's during the Cristeros War. The Vatican watched with concern as its guidelines were carried to the extreme, and only its direct intervention could prevent worse conflicts.

The fact that the Catholic Hierarchy entered the political field was an elite project and not a demand of the Church in general. The majority of Catholics were against the participation of the clergy in politics, and also against religious associations having property rights¹⁵.

The rearrangement with the Mexican State

To counter dissident priests and bishops linked closely to revolutionary movements and guerrilla insurgency, in 1978 the prelate Girolamo Prigione arrived in Mexico, as the Vatican's Apostolic Nuncio. As a consequence this event provoked a change in the way to recruit and promote the personnel who are integrated into the Mexican Hierarchy, strengthening the tendency to rapidly promote the bishops with the highest academic preparation and administrative ex-

PAN. He was a wealthy entrepreneur, co-founder of the Christian Family Movement, and a loyal and devoted follower of Catholic doctrine in all its aspects. For example, he had eleven children, reflecting his attachment to the Catholic doctrine on birth control. During his presidential campaign (1988), Clouthier made a lot of references to an economic model based on CST named "Social Market Economy", in opposition to the "neoliberalism" deployed by PRI's governments since 1982. Since the modification of doctrinal principles in 2002, Social Market Economy is currently the PAN's official program. To know more about this economic model, see: (Von Nell-Breuning, 1946; Kösters, 1989).

- 15 In data from opinion polls taken by Mexican Republican Presidency in 1992, 58.4% of the respondents declared a disagreement with the participation in politics by the Church, and 61.9% were against property rights for churches (Lamadrid, 1994:319). In addition, on other topics where the Hierarchy has very strong and clear positions, the Mexican population self-identified as Catholic does not necessarily share the same opinions. In a survey done in 1990, 85% of the population said it was Catholic, but 47% agreed with abortion, 8.4% disagreed, and almost 42% answered "depends on the case". This data shows a Mexican Catholic population with high levels of secularizations, after decades of anti-clerical education in public schools (Blancarte, 1994:168).

perience. He sought to detect the most intellectually remarkable profiles among the young members of the Clergy, but also with orthodox and ultramontane doctrinal tendencies, for the purpose of being sent to Rome's Pontifical Colleges and then come back to Mexico to take the highest positions inside the ecclesial administration.

Throughout the 80's, the Apostolic Nuncio named 10 of the 14 Archbishops and 80% of the new bishops in Mexico. But the Primate Archbishop of Mexico, the Cardinal Ernesto Corripio Ahumada, was the counterbalance of Prigione, serving as mediator between Mexican bishops who sympathized with Liberation Theology and the Holy See; Corripio disagreed with the revolutionary path, but he tried to increase the strength of the Mexican Hierarchy in the face of Vatican guidelines; besides, in the progress of negotiations, he became a privileged interlocutor with Mexican government. Cardinal Ernesto amassed very useful political capital during the administration of President Carlos Salinas (1988-1994). He used that to negotiate the constitutional modification that the Church had always wanted.

In 1990, preceded by the second papal visit to Mexico, the constitutional reform of December of 1991 modified the relationship between the State and all the Churches, especially the Catholic one. The constitutional articles 3th, 5th, 24th, 27th, and specially the 130th were reformed, and a new Law of Religious Associations and Public Worship was published¹⁶. As a corollary, the diplomatic relationships between the Holy See and the Mexican State, suspended since July 8 of 1865, were restored on November 24 of 1992, restarting the exchange of ambassadors¹⁷.

If the constitutional reforms on Church-State matters intended to achieve a reduction in intensity of the criticisms and attacks from Hierarchy on the Mexican political system, especially on corruption, it did not because the modifications were insufficient. However the clergy thought that Salinas's reforms were positive and represented an advancement and modernization of the relationships between the civil and ecclesial powers. Since then, the Hierarchy has taken advantage of the new openness not only to express its opinion about public issues, but also trying to influence, or even intervene, in many controversies that belong to the wide spectrum of public policy.

In the IV Latin American Episcopal Conference, celebrated in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, on October of 1992, the Mexican Hierarchy, with the rest of the bishops that belong to the region, elaborated a document that, loyally following the guideline of the John Paul II's Encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, heavily and aggressively attacked the economy-based-free market, calling that econom-

16 It was published in the Official Diary of the Federation on July 15 of 1992.

17 The nuncios sent by the Vatican to Mexico have been: Girolamo Prigione, Justo Mullor, Leonardo Sandri, Giuseppe Bertello and Christophe Pierre.

ic model “neoliberalism”. Of course the Hierarchy has not developed a left-wing political position; on the contrary, the bishops have only followed and respected the CST that, since XIX century, has considered capitalism as the “black beast”, guilty of all the evils of human kind (in CST’s vision, socialism is only an spawn and a consequence of liberal capitalism). The prelates of the Mexican Catholic Church think that the “neoliberalism” (new liberalism) is no more than a continuation of the “old liberalism” that stresses the poverty and miserable conditions of the population, destroying the traditional communities, the links of solidarity, the trade unions and opposes legislation to protect the working class (Blancarte, 2000).

Since the aforementioned Episcopal Conference and until the Mexican transition to democracy, with the arrival of PAN to the Mexican presidency in 2000, the Catholic Hierarchy has been one of the biggest opponents of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)¹⁸, and in general to all the public policies to open the markets. The Hierarchy’s condemnation of the development model which was based on the free market deployed by the administrations of the Presidents Carlos Salinas y Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000), has deep roots. It is due, to a large degree, to the recuperation of old models and perspectives of Catholic thought against the liberal political economy.

Conclusions

In opposition to the Marxist vision of the Church that considers it an instrument of the State to preserve the regime, we can see that, throughout Mexican history in the 20th century, the characteristic position of the institutional Church in the Mexican political spectrum has been that of the opposition to the Mexican State, even if that opposition has changed across time.

The Church is not an “ideological apparatus” of the State used to uphold the *status quo*. Although is true that, in many occasions, the Hierarchy has partnered with other elites, for example, the business and party elites; its purpose has been to fight for its own socio-Christian project and defend its own interests (such as obtaining legal recognition). The clergy supports lay groups to pressure the government, but when the objective is to negotiate with it, instead of using intermediates, the Hierarchy always prefers to deal directly with the Presidents of the Republic¹⁹. The Church did that in the arrangements to finish the Cristeros War, and with each and every one of the governments of the institutionalized revolution, even with the ultraliberal Salinas, to achieve constitutional modifications.

18 The NAFTA is an agreement signed by the governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States, creating a trilateral trade bloc in North America. The agreement came into force on January 1, 1994.

19 “For a long time, the Church preferred the intervention of bishops and prelates with the Head of State, heir of the Christian Prince, instead an action of the parliamentary parties controlled by catholic laics” (Mayeur, 2005: 1145).

The Hierarchy in Mexico has been the hardest critic of the liberal and socialist ideologies, but paradoxically, at the same time it has been an important actor in opening the politics in Mexico, because of its role of counterbalance to PRI's governments, in the context of an authoritarian and hegemonic party system.

The collaboration of the Church with the post-revolutionary governments, known as *Modus Vivendi*, never was a Hierarchy's identification with or submission to the State; but a period to recover energy after Cristeros War, and the coincidence of a common enemy of the Church and the State: communism. In addition, in the same period, the Church made itself into an important actor able to indict the government. That fact, along with many other factors and actors, managed to undermine the PRI's hegemony and, as a consequence, being an indubitable ingredient for Mexican democratization.

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УЛОГА КАТОЛИЧКЕ ЦРКВЕ У ПОЛИТИЧКОМ РАЗВОЈУ МЕКСИКА

Резиме

Овај чланак приказује и објашњава различите политичке позиције и дела Католичке цркве у Мексику током двадесетог века, кулминирајући транзицијом ка демократији коју је нација искусила 2000. године. Чланак се односи на савремену историју односа цркве и државе у Мексику. Главно становиште аутора је да Католичка црква у Мексику није била „идеолошки државни апарат“; напротив, она је одиграла улогу ревизора јавног живота као снажни критичар пост-револуционарног политичког система, поставши фактор који је помогао да се у Мексику успостави конкурентни и вишепартијски систем.

Кључне речи: Односи цркве и државе, мексичка религија, конзервативизам, демократизација.

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