FRANCISCO JAVIER CLAVIJERO, S. J.; A CLERIC
AND THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENLIGHTENMENT
IN MEXICO

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CHAPTER

INTRODUCTION

Following the seventeenth-century scientific revolution, the eighteenth-century Enlightenment stands out as a significant epoch in the Western World. The scientific revolution had stressed reason and nature in dealing with the universe and physical world. Such thinkers as Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant, Smith, Beccaria, and Diderot then began applying the same gods--nature and reason--to human problems--to education, economics, society, religion, and morality to inculcate the idea of progress in Western Europe.

Enlightenment ideas also reached all parts of the New World. In North America, such giants as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson led the way. To the south in Hispanic America, the same trends were evident in the colonial universities and in the work of savants like José Celestino Mutis in New Granada, Narciso Esparragosa y Gallardo in Guatamala, and Hipólito Unánue in Peru.

Enlightenment ideas were more widespread in Hispanic America than is generally known. Spain actually encouraged
many of these ideas and promoted advanced thinking, particularly in scientific matters. According to one expert, John Tate Lanning:

The Spanish crown promoted every objective of the Enlightenment that did not challenge regalism. Experimentation, improving universities and textbooks, giving courses incorporating the new discoveries, and improving taste in letters became royal policy.¹

More specifically:

It is a well-established fact that Diego Cisneros, the censor of the Inquisition in Callao, not only permitted seventeenth and eighteenth century philosophical treatises to pass, but that he personally collected and made them available to a few select intellectuals and then to students of Lima.²

The Catholic Church in Hispanic America was not a significant obstacle to the spread of Enlightenment ideas. Salvador de Madariaga believes the Catholic Church was the chief and only obstacle to intellectual progress in Europe;³ this was only partly true in Hispanic America where clergymen were, in large number, the instigators of such progress.


In New Spain the Society of Jesus was particularly strong in promoting the Enlightenment. The brothers had learned and read new European ideas and often taught them in their colleges. The Jesuit Francisco Javier Clavijero (1731-1787) provides one of the best examples of an enlightened cleric, who became an active promoter of the Enlightenment and went on to achieve fame as the foremost Mexican historian of his day. His famous book, *The History of Mexico*, in which he presents a history of the Aztec peoples and defends the New World against European literary attacks, remains as a tribute to his brilliance and advanced thinking. The study of his life and an analysis of his greatest work shows the Enlightenment at its best in New Spain.
CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The third child of Don Blas Clavijero and Doña María Isabel de Echeagaray, Francisco Javier Mariano Clavijero was born in the port of Veracruz on September 6, 1731. A native of León, Spain, Don Blas received his education in Paris during Louis XIV's reign. Upon completion of his schooling, he was patronized by the Duke of Medinaceli in Madrid.¹ Through the Duke's courtly influence, Don Blas received a royal commission as mayor of Tetzuitlán in the province of New Spain.² The date of his departure from Spain is unknown, but was probably around 1720. On April 27, 1726, Don Blas wed Doña María in Veracruz.³ Of a distinguished family of Biscay, Doña María had among her relatives many government officials, military leaders,

¹José Mariano Beristáin de Souza, Biblioteca hispano americana setentrional, (Atemecameca: Tipografía de Colegio Católico, 1883), p. 312.


and prominent socialites. One such relative, a niece Doña
Francisca Javiera Echeagaray, became the wife of General
Don Pedro Garibay, viceroy of New Spain, 1806-1809.4

Don Blas apparently was either an absentee mayor or
did not assume his duties for several years after his
arrival in New Spain. Not until 1733, at the time of the
birth of his fourth child, Manuel Joseph Ramón Clavijero,
did Don Blas move his growing family from Veracruz to
Tetzuiatlán.5 They remained here only one year, however,
and then moved to Jamiltepec in 1734, when Don Blas
received a commission as mayor of that Mixtecan district.

The family was large—there were to be eleven
children—but Don Blas and Doña María spent much time with
each one, developing individual talents. Guided by such
sympathetic and capable hands, young Francisco became
proficient in French and developed a great interest in the
natural world and natural science. From his father he
received his first notions of history, geography, and
cosmography, and from his mother instruction in music.6

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5Flores, "Documentos para la biografía," P. 308,
(assumed from the birth places and dates of first four children mentioned in first document).

The family moved to Puebla (Angelopólis) in 1741 when Don Blas received another commission. Francisco received his first formal schooling there in the colegio of St. Jerome and later in the colegio of St. Ignatius. His curriculum emphasized grammar at the former and philosophy at the latter. This was his first introduction to philosophy, a subject which brought him both reknown and disappointment in later years. Besides philosophy, he also studied Latin, rhetoric, humanities, and theology. Francisco was a serious student, and from the outset of his school days, demonstrated a rare grasp of the philosophical concepts taught him. One of his contemporaries, the Jesuit Félix Sebastián, has discussed Clavijero’s first years of study:

Noting his youthful innocence in these first studies, one saw and had to admire him that he had no other thought nor idea than that of being a scholar; and that his vast comprehension and great talent recognized no limit in trying, with much curiosity, to inform himself of everything.

There is no record of how long Clavijero pursued his studies at the colegios in Puebla, just that he entered

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7Ibid.

(referring probably to the colegio of St. Ignatius) at the age of thirteen. While there he received high honors for scholastic achievements and excelled in the studies of mathematics and the classics. By his seventeenth birthday, he was able to recite from memory many of the works of Francisco Villegas de Quevedo, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Benito Jerónimo Feijóo y Montenegro, Jean Racine, Francois de Salignac de la Mothe Fénélon, Cicero, and Tacitus. Skillful in the study of the classics, Clavijero also took special interest in natural philosophy and theology. By this time he had written twelve theological treatises and supposedly had defended twenty-four theses on scholastic and canonical theology in one day.

Clavijero had an obsession for learning and developed wide tastes. On his own, he diligently studied Nahuatl and assiduously read history, poetry, and novels. Often he went to the house of his father, who, having a royal commission, had access to many of the books recently shipped to New Spain. Clavijero would pick the ones

9Ibid.
10García, Bio-bibliografía, p. 5.
12Maneiro, Vidas de mexicanos, p. 126.
that interested him, take them to the colegio, and keep up as much as possible with contemporary European letters. His interest in mathematics, for example, led him to a deep study of the works of Tomás Vicente Tosca (1651-1733), the famous Spanish mathematician, architect, and philosopher. Tosca was one of the few Spanish philosophers of his time that supported the new physics and wrote on a great many subjects, his most notable work being the Compendio matemático of 1670.

Young Clavijero had to decide upon his life's work. The three fields open to youths of his class were the church, commerce, and the government. The exemplary lives of the Jesuits in the seminary, his sincere dedication to the study of theology, and his appreciation for scholarship in all fields left Clavijero with but one choice—the church. There he could dedicate his life to God, serve others less fortunate, and continue his studies. For eight days he retired to a house next to the Seminary of the Holy Spirit to meditate. While there he, by chance, saw his father serving food in the seminary. This seemed to Clavijero a very humble and admirable thing.

13 Ibid.
14 García, Bio-bibliografía, p. 4.
for so great a person and undoubtedly aided in his decision to enter the church. ¹⁵

The Jesuit order had apparently been the choice of most of Clavijero's brothers who entered the religious orders, and Francisco took the same path. Clavijero entered as noviciate of the Society of Jesus in the Seminary and Noviciate of Tepozotlán on February 13, 1748, at the age of sixteen years and seven months. As a brother in the order he greatly intensified his training and studies. Theology and humanities dominated the curriculum, and his teachers soon recognized and encouraged his skill in languages. A German Jesuit taught him Hebrew and Greek, and Clavijero soon mastered the reading and writing of French and Portuguese. ¹⁶ In a short time he had achieved modest success as a scholar; the local Jesuits called him the "Polyglot". ¹⁷ His rare ability with languages brought him even more fame in later life when he translated poetic compositions and doctrines of Christian faith into more than thirty languages.

¹⁵ Maneiro, Vidas de mexicanos, p. 127.
¹⁶ Ibid., p. 129.
In 1750, Clavijero went to Puebla to study philosophy. With Feijóo and Tosca as guides, he favored what was then called modern philosophy. Feijóo and Tosca, both Spanish philosophers, supported the new science and the scientific philosophy of Descartes, and the influence of their thought was to be most important in Clavijero’s later studies and writings.

The exact dates of his stay in Puebla are not known, but range sometime in 1750 and 1751. During this time he read the works of Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657-1757), a seventeenth-century French author and science popularist, which in turn led Clavijero to study the writings of Jean Baptiste Duhamel (1624-1706), French theologian and moral philosopher, Juan Saquens, French mathematician, theologian, and supporter of Descartes, Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655), French scientist and philosophical critic, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz (1646-1716), German philosopher, mathematician, and statesman, and Newton and Descartes. The examinations at the end of the year presented little difficulty and Francisco Javier Clavijero was rapidly becoming known as one of the most erudite of the young Jesuits that Puebla had seen.

18 Maneiro, Vidas de mexicanos, p. 132.
19 Flores, "Documentos para la biografía," p. 312.
After his sojourn in Puebla, Clavijero traveled next to the seminary of St. Peter and St. Paul in Mexico City. He was to study theology and canon law there for one year. This year, probably 1752, proved most fruitful for the young Jesuit, for José Rafael Campoy, an exceptional Jesuit scholar, lived and taught in Mexico City. From Campoy, a man famous for the introduction of scientific studies in Mexico, Clavijero began his first serious study of Aztec history. On the advice of Campoy, he acquainted himself with the superb seminary library, which housed the works and collection of the famous Mexican historian and compiler, Don Carlos de Sigüenza y Gongora. This valuable collection, including indigenous histories in Spanish script and native hieroglyphics, had been lying on the library shelves for over half a century practically unnoticed.

While able to maintain his high standards in theological studies, Clavijero also devoted a great deal of time and analysis to those documents in the library. With a vast background in the knowledge and use of languages, and familiar with the Indian hieroglyphics, he was able to read and analyze the many native histories.

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20 Ibid.
21 Maneiro, Vidas de mexicanos, p. 135.
By 1752, the many talents of young Clavijero impressed the superiors of the seminary. In recognition of his scholarship and their confidence, they appointed him Prefect in the seminary of St. Ildefonso, a small school in Mexico City. For a young man of twenty-one, this was a great responsibility and, a few months after he had assumed his duties, Clavijero encountered serious difficulties with the traditional coursework in philosophy. The peripateticism of Aristotle, with all its trivialities, was the main target of his criticisms and he sought vigorously to introduce reforms, giving recognition to the new physics and the work of recent philosophers. He sent a letter to the superior of the province, Juan Antonio Baltasar, and explained his plight. Clavijero remarked that he was not able to teach what he judged correct, but was obligated to continue in the outdated tradition of peripateticism.\(^{22}\) Baltasar, a mature and prudent German, answered Clavijero with these words:

> There is no doubt that these ideas of yours will obtain favorable success in their time...\(^{23}\) You are correct in all that you explain; but it is not the time to make these changes: I am relieving you of your duties so that you do not violate your sentiments, or torment your conscience.\(^{24}\)


\(^{24}\) *Beristáin de Souza, Biblioteca*, p. 313.
Having won a moral victory but failing to have his views prevail, Clavijero returned to the seminary of St. Peter and St. Paul and passed the second and third examinations in theology. All of this transpired in less than one year, before he reached the age of twenty-two.

In 1754, the year he received his license to preach and confess, Clavijero celebrated his ordination into the Jesuit priesthood. After serving the next year—the probation of piety—at the seminary of the Holy Spirit in Mexico City, he definitely decided to dedicate his life to the service of the poor and underprivileged and asked to be assigned to the service of Indians.

Despite his requests, from 1756 to 1762, Mexico City remained his principal residence. Assigned to the Seminary of St. Gregory, he suffered from poor health much of the time but managed to study and write a great deal. It was during these years that he undertook an extensive analysis of the writings of the Aztecs at the Seminary of St. Peter and St. Paul and increased his faculty with the various native tongues.

26 Fosskuhl, Francisco Xavier Clavijero, p. 108.
28 See appendix for a list of these works.
From Mexico City Clavijero went to Puebla in 1762 and, after a year or so there, he received a professorship in the seminary at Guadalajara. He spent 1764 and 1765 in Valladolid (Morelia) at the Seminary of St. Xavier as professor of natural philosophy, and 1766 and part of 1767 in Guadalajara again, teaching the second year of philosophy at the Seminary of St. Thomas. Overwork certainly contributed to his health difficulties; in his own words:

These people of Guadalajara ignore completely how much I worked in that position (teaching) and the effects on my health in teaching the children, a great deal of philosophy in such a short time.

By this time, his superiors had given Clavijero license to teach modern physics, and in 1765 Francisco Zevallos, the Supreme Rector of the province, visited Valladolid, went to Clavijero's lectures, and approved of what he heard. Clavijero's freedom to teach Newtonian physics lasted less than two more years until the expulsion decree.

On February 27, 1767, Charles III commanded all Jesuits banished from Spain and her provinces. Jesuit power and wealth and their apparent connections with recent riots against the crown convinced Charles that the

29 García, Bio-bibliografía, p. 6.
30 Maneiro, Vidas de mexicanos, p. 148.
31 Ibid., p. 147.
decree was necessary. Scholars still debate concerning his motives. The decree affected the immediate confiscation of all Jesuit lands and inflicted innumerable hardships on the brothers. They were to be exiled as soon as possible and a mercenary force of two thousand soldiers landed in Veracruz to expel them in an orderly manner.

Surprised as his other brothers, Clavijero was teaching in Guadalajara, where he was also the director of the congregation of the Buena Muerta and the confessor of the noviciates. The proclamation reached New Spain on June 25, but could not be effectively enforced for several months. Problems of communication and the trip to Veracruz, the port of departure, forced the delay. All in all, 628 Jesuits left the province that year.

With twenty-nine fellow priests, Clavijero embarked on the mail boat Nuestra Señora del Rosario de Torrensequi on the 25th of October. His ill health forced a layover in Havana until November 13. His ship docked in the papal state of Ferrara, Italy, a port friendly to the exiled Jesuits, on September 26, 1763. During the voyages Clavijero made friends with the crews and busied himself with astronomical calculations of navigation.

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32 Rafael Zelis, Catálogo de la Compañía de Jesús, (Mexico: Imprenta de I. Escalante y Ca, 1871), p. 120.
33 Ibid., p. 12.
34 Ibid., p. 193.
35 García, Bio-bibliografía, p. 10.
Clavijero busied himself in Ferrara and Bologna, two cities teeming with exiled Jesuits. Remaining in Ferrara by order of the Duke of Parma, he became fast friends with the Count Aquiles Crispo and his son Bonito. Their house and library were open to him while a small pension (from the sale of former Jesuit property) was available from the Spanish crown. Ferrara offered much to the scholar, but strong was the attraction of Bologna, a city famous for its public library and already crowded with homeless Jesuit scholars.

In Bologna Clavijero conceived the plan of his *History of Mexico*. He decided to write not only a history of the Aztec peoples but also a defense of the New World. He spared no effort in the next ten years touring Italy and other parts of Europe in search of documents, paintings, and books on, or related to the pre-Columbian history and conquest of New Spain (specifically, that part under Aztec control). Clavijero completed the work in 1778 which, after settlement of financial matters, he had published in Cassena in 1780-1781.

The *History of Mexico*, printed in Italian as the *Storia antica del Messico*, was an immediate success, and


37 Quoted from a letter to Mariano Veytia in Veytia's *Historia Antigua de México*, (Mexico: Imprenta a Cargo de Juan Ojeda, 1836), p. xxx.
Clavijero received recognition and praise from both European and American scholars. A dedicated researcher, Clavijero continued writing and in the next seven years turned out a number of articles and a little-known but well-wrought *History of (Lower) California*. This last work was published in 1789, after Clavijero's death, by his brother, Ignacio, also a Jesuit.

The rapid pace of researching and his own fragile health proved too much for the talented Jesuit, and by September, 1786, his condition noticeably worsened. In that month, for the first time, he consented to a physician's examination and care. Clavijero was in the process of writing another definitive history, *The Ecclesiastical History of New Spain*, which, unfortunately, was never completed.

On April 2, 1787, Francisco Javier Clavijero succumbed to a urinary disorder and was pronounced dead at three in the afternoon. After a funeral at the church of St. Cosme and St. Damian, his remains were placed in a common crypt of Jesuits in the Temple of Santa Lucía.

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38 Fosskuhl, *Francisco Xavier Clavijero*, p. 131.
CHAPTER III

DEFENDER OF THE NEW WORLD

Francisco Javier Clavijero was, first and foremost, a Mexican, a product of the New World—a creole. His identification with his native land was often emphasized in personal writings, "I began this work in order to serve my country in the way which I would be able."¹ Mexican patriots frequently link his name with those Jesuits who worked toward the independence of their country after the expulsion,² though there is no concrete evidence for such an assertion.

Clavijero was both an Americanist and a nationalist. Nationalism can be a term of varying interpretations. Labeling Clavijero a nationalist, as many impassioned writers have done, does not necessarily mean that he worked directly for the independence of Mexico. He was a patriot, but not in the militaristic sense of the word.

¹Letter to Mariano Fernández de Echeverría y Veytia from Clavijero, March 25, 1778 (see appendix) in Veytia’s Historia antigua de México, (Mexico: Cargo de Juan Ojeda, 1836), p. xxviii.

While he was a patriot of Mexico, he was also a patriot of the New World. Clavijero was an Americanist, a label more fitting than nationalist. His defense of the New World encompassed good features of many countries in Hispanic America. Most of his examples toward refuting popular misconceptions dealt with Mexico, to be sure; he was personally familiar with the people and the soil, but many of his arguments considered other countries as well.

To the three-volume history, Clavijero appended a volume of nine dissertations with his arguments in defense of European attacks. He originally had intended to write only a brief history of Mexico, acquainting unsuspecting Europeans with the little known splendors of the indigenous civilizations and correcting glowing errors of preceding authors. In 1768, a publication entitled *Philosophical Researches on the Americans* by the Prussian philosopher Corneille de Pauw came to the fore in literary circles. In the book, De Pauw attacked everything connected with the American environment—the land, air, birds, animals and people. He dismissed them all as barren and degenerate. The Prussian was not alone in his assault; previous

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works by the great French scientist, Georges Louis Leclerc Buffon—the *Natural History*,\(^4\) and the Abbe' William Thomas Raynal—the *Philosophical History*,\(^5\) lent support to the indictment. A later work, the *History of America*\(^6\) by William Robertson, a Scottish historian, also utilized De Pauw's arguments.

The gauntlet had been thrown down and Clavijero eagerly picked it up. The New World had a champion, who introduced his dissertations in this way:

> The dissertations... are equally important, to guard incautious readers from the mistakes and deceptions they would otherwise be led into, by the crowd of modern authors, who, without possessing sufficient knowledge, have not been ashamed to write on the land, the animals, and inhabitants of America.\(^7\)

Basic in de Pauw's book is the acceptance that the New World underwent a different, more recent, inundation than that of the Old World, the one described in the Scriptures. "From this recent inundation arises," says M. Buffon, "the malignity of the climate of America, the

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\(^5\) *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, (Amsterdam, 1770), 6 vols.

\(^6\) *History of America*. 1772.

\(^7\) Clavijero, *History*, II, p. 197.
sterility of its soil, the imperfection of its animals, and the coldness of the Americans." Clavijero countered this flood theory with the more plausible supposition that the lakes and marshes are the result of the great rivers and plentiful rainfall of this hemisphere. Not content with just advancing another theory, he systematically and logically undermined all of de Pauw's and Buffon's bases of arguments. If, for example, this recent flood created the lakes and marshes, why have they not dried up, especially those in the torrid zone? And what of the lakes of the Old World? Are they less numerous or smaller than those of the New? If the lands of Peru and Mexico were indeed covered with water, would not also have been those of Europe, which are so much lower in elevation? What of the many marine deposits found in the Alps and Tourain? "We would, on the contrary, say,

8 (continuing) The lakes and the marshes left by that inundation, according to the affirmation of M. de Pauw, occasion the excessive humidity of the air which is the cause of its insalubrity, of the extraordinary multiplication of insects, of the irregularity and smallness of the quadrupeds, of the sterility of the soil, of the barrenness of the women, of the abundance of milk in the breasts of men, of the stupidity of the Americans... Quoted by Clavijero, History, II, p. 245.

9 Ibid., p. 247.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., p. 248.
12 Ibid.
that if it was true that the deluge of Noah did not overflow the whole earth, no country might be sooner supposed to have been exempted from that calamity than Mexico; for besides its great elevation above the level of the sea, there is no inland country where petrified marine bodies are more rare."

Immediately obvious in Clavijero’s dissertations is his frequent use of counterargument. The Old World is no better off than the New, in terms of land, climate, and people, and, in some ways, inferior:

But to show that those philosophers, while exerting themselves to fix the character of malignity on the climate of the new world, had totally lost recollection of the miseries of their own continent...

What grows in the lands of Europe, but much smaller, and not so good as that of America.

.....We do not know that one twentieth part of those poisonous plants which are produced in the old continent have been discovered in New Spain.

What quadruped is there in America which can be compared, in the deformity and disproportion of its limbs, with the elephant, called by the Count de Buffon a monster of matter.

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13 Ibid., p. 253-254.
14 Ibid., p. 291.
15 Ibid., p. 271.
16 Ibid., p. 272.
17 Ibid., p. 297.
These arguments of Clavijero are a negative approach in the refutation of De Pauw's criticisms. Most of his statements were purely defensive and point out inaccuracies of De Pauw, but the counter-arguments are most revealing of Clavijero's nature. He recognized that he had to contend with two types of adversaries: those, with good intents and purposes, who had simply committed errors in the researching and verification of so-called evidence, as Count de Buffon and William Robertson, and those, who, because of their lack of scholarship, willingly deceived their readers, as did Corneille de Pauw. His criticism of each and his work proceeded accordingly.

Clavijero had the utmost respect for the great naturalist, Buffon, and far from according him the treatment reserved for de Pauw, excused his mistakes:

We have the utmost esteem for this celebrated author, and consider him the most diligent, the most accurate, and most eloquent naturalist of the age; perhaps there never was in the world, one who made such progress in the knowledge of animals as he has done; but as the subject of the work he has undertaken is so vast and so various, it is not wonderful that he has sometimes erred, or forgot what he has written with respect to America, where nature is so inexhaustible, the mistakes, therefore, or proofs we may adduce of his errors, can have no influence on the reputation of one so deservedly respected by the learned world.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., p. 199.
If one considers Clavijero's background in Mexico, there is yet another reason for his vituperative-like censure of De Pauw. Being a disciple of modern philosophy, or the new natural science, 19 he was naturally opposed to the results of a work where observation or a diligent search for truth had not occurred. As seen by Clavijero, De Pauw "undertook at Berlin to review the Americans without knowing them... (and)... was not bent on forming any system, but only on writing what he judged to be true." 20 The conclusions derived from such reasoning would differ little from the methods utilized in peripateticism. De Pauw analyzed few accounts of the history and geography of the New World, but from them found enough evidence to base hemispheric conclusions. 21 That universal norms cannot, in this case be derived from particular situations is basic in Clavijero's refutations; this, however, does not answer why Clavijero relentlessly criticized De Pauw—the man and his book.


21 "...he is continually forming arguments against the whole of the New World, from what has been observed in some particular people, or possibly only in some individuals." Clavijero, History, II, p. 338.
M. de Pauw shows his ignorance throughout here, and from thence proceeds his forwardness in writing.  

But here we have another piece of insult from the ignorance of M. de Pauw. 

…but M. de Pauw is in a great mistake, or rather he asserts without truth, and condemns without reason. 

M. de Pauw..., whose brain seems to have a particular organization to understand things in a manner contrary to all other men. 

De Pauw even directed some of his remarks against the Catholic Church in America, and Clavigero, as a Jesuit, felt especially injured. But here Clavigero's arguments against de Pauw, interesting and thought provoking as they are, lose some of their effectiveness, and reflect a self-imposed obligation to punish this heretic, who had blasphemed himself against the true events of history. 

He minglest insults and buffonery in his discourses; enters without respect into the house of God, and sheds malevolence and invective from his pen, without reverence for truth or feelings for innocence. 

...the implacable hatred which M. de Pauw bears to the ecclesiastics of the Roman church, and to the Jesuits in particular... 

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22 Ibid., p. 373.  
23 Ibid., p. 375.  
24 Ibid., p. 385.  
25 Ibid., p. 400.  
26 Ibid., p. 197.  
27 Ibid., p. 344.
Aside from his vendetta-like attitude toward De Fauw, Clavijero does present a reasonably accurate picture of the New World, or "America". Critics can credit some stirring descriptions of unsurpassed scenery and fertility to a sincere love and pride of country. Where faults and misgivings are evident, he admits them honestly and unashamedly—in some places there are too many gnats, the climate is uncomfortable in others, etc. The point brought out clearly and emphatically is that the Old World really enjoys no advantage over the New; both have their good and bad features. In spite of occasional overstatements, Clavijero suffered mostly from enthusiasm, understandable in view of his love for Mexico.

If Clavijero loved the land in which he lived, he loved no less the Indians that populated its mountains and countryside. His History of Mexico is a treatment of the land, animals, and indigenous peoples. Besides the geographical and biological discussions comprising the first book (of ten), the remaining nine are devoted to the Aztec peoples, from their predecessors to their eventual conquerors.

Few men at the time were better prepared to initiate such a study. From his childhood, Clavijero enjoyed contact with the Indians and, as mentioned before, he was so moved as to request later assignment to their
service. As a young boy he used to listen to the household cook for stories and superstitions of the pre-
Columbian Indians. These subjects of his father:

...offered him the most beautiful flowers, gave him the rarest animals, and took him to the most pleasant places of the territory so he could enjoy the enchanting landscapes; since his childhood, there excited in him the pleasure of the beauty of his country, the desire to know her ancient history, and a pure and sincere love for his countrymen.

The contact with the Indians undoubtedly encouraged his desire to learn their languages. The first three were Mixtecan, Otomí, and Nahualan, but he was able eventually to communicate in more than twenty native tongues. He translated doctrines of Christian faith and poetry into these languages and enjoyed a close association with the Indians in the various colegios and seminaries. Speaking of such association, he states:

We have had intimate commerce with the Americans, have lived for some years in a seminary destined for their instruction, saw the erection and progress of the royal college of Guadalupe, founded in Mexico, by a Mexican Jesuit, for the education of Indian children, had afterwards some Indians amongst our

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28 See page 8, note 26.
29 García, Bio-bibliografía, p. 4.
30 González Obregón in introduction of 1917 ed. of Historia antigua de México, quoted by Foaskuhl, Francisco Xavier Clavijero, p. 95.
31 Flores, "Documentos para la biografía," p. 309.
pupils, had particular knowledge of many American rectors, and numerous artists; attentively observed their character, their genius, their disposition, and manner of thinking; and have examined besides with the utmost diligence their ancient history, their religion, their government, their laws and their customs. 32

After studying the people and their history, Clavijero came up with some significant conclusions about the early Indians. In the History, Clavijero portrayed the Aztecs as a magnificent civilization, misled in religious beliefs and practices, to be sure, but in many ways more advanced than those nations of Europe. Their architecture and large cities, as large as any in Spain, were truly marvelous; their dedication and fortitude equalled that of any peoples in the Old World. 33 He reported upon every aspect of their life from the care of babies to battle tactics. Along with interesting native legends, he also cited information including other peoples, especially those of Acolhuacan, and some as distant as Guatemala.

A chronological discussion of the Aztec kings and their accomplishments encompassed books three through five. As any historian writing on a series of leaders,


33 Referring to the courageous, though obviously hopeless, defense of Tenochtitlán in 1521.
Clavijero believed some more deserving of merit than others. Montezuma Ilhuicamina,\(^{34}\) fifth king of Mexico (1436-1464), was a monarch of unmatched wisdom and foresight. The Aztec Empire was greatly extended during his reign and "by his justice and prudence, and the propriety of his actions, he made his subjects fear and love him."\(^{35}\) A powerful contemporary, Nezahualcoyotl, king of Acolhuacan, allied with the Aztecs of Tenochtitlan and insured their national growth and development. These two powerful kings represented a peak in responsible leadership, though they are practically unknown except to Mexican antiquarians.

Dissertation Five, "On the Physical and Moral Constitution of the Mexicans," is a particularly interesting discussion of the qualities, different from and similar to those of Europeans, of indigenous peoples. The obvious purpose was to combat the erroneous remarks of both De Pauw and Robertson. De Pauw and Robertson believed the Indians to be physically weaker and less intelligent than their Spanish invaders. Robertson subscribed to a number of errors in his *History of America* and Clavijero was quick to point them out. Essentially,

\(^{34}\) Clavijero, *History*, I, p. 176-186. Not to be confused with Montezuma II (or Xocojotzin), the ninth king (1502-1520).

Clavijero disproved the following assertions of Robertson:

1) that a council of Lima had excluded the Indians from the sacrament of the Eucharist, on account of their imbecility of mind.

2) that Paul III declared the Indians rational creatures.

3) that very few Indians possess such a portion of spiritual discernment as to be judged worthy to approach the sacred table.

4) that no Indian is ever ordained a priest.\(^{36}\)

Clavijero argued that the Lima assembly (not a council) of 1552 ruled that the Eucharist not be administered to the Indians until they were instructed in matters of faith, and not because they "were esteemed weak of understanding".\(^{37}\) The bull of Paul III, issued in 1537, declared the Indians' rights to all the privileges of men,\(^ {38}\) significantly different from Robertson's interpretation. Concerning Robertson's third charge, Clavijero states, "that in all New Spain the Indians are obliged as much as the Spaniards to receive the Eucharist at Easter, except those of remote countries, who are admitted or not to the sacred table according to the judgment of the missionaries.\(^ {39}\)"

\(^{36}\) Ibid., II, p. 349.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., pp. 349-350.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., p. 351.

\(^{39}\) Ibid.
Finally, regarding the charge of a non-Indian priesthood, Clavijero answered, "the American priests have been so numerous in New Spain, that they might be counted by hundreds: among those there have been many hundreds of rectors, several canons and doctors, and as report goes, even a very learned bishop." Clavijero even concluded that:

...the mental qualities of the Americans are not the least inferior to those of the Europeans... if they were brought up from childhood in seminaries under good masters, were protected and stimulated by rewards, we should see rise among the Americans, philosophers, mathematicians, and devines who would rival the first in Europe.

Dissertation Six dealt with the culture of the Mexicans and Clavijero presented here descriptive examples of native use of money, the use of iron, building of ships and bridges, arts, languages (written and spoken) and laws. The compiled evidence dispelled all the illusions of De Pauw and Dr. Robertson while crediting the natives with a sophisticated, principaled civilization. Anticipating the era of the Mexican Republic in which "Indianism" was to be a dominant theme, Clavijero earned the title of "Indianist" in the Eighteenth century, following in the footsteps of Bartolomé de los Casas and Don Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora.

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40 Ibid., p. 352.
41 Ibid., pp. 352-353.
42 Though their careers and motives had few similarities.
CHAPTER IV

HISTORIAN OF THE AZTECS

In this history, nothing has been more anxiously studied than fidelity; I might have abridged my labors and, perhaps, rendered my work more acceptable to many, if all the diligence which I used to investigate facts, had been employed to strew the relation with philosophical and political reflections, or fictions of capricious invention, after the example of many authors in this boasted age; but to me, as to those who are the sworn enemies of deceit, falsehood, or affectation, truth appears a beauty whose charms increase in proportion to her simplicity of dress. In recounting the events of the conquest made by the Spaniards, I have equally abstained from the panegyric of Solis, or the invidious of Las Casas; being unwilling either to flatter or cullimate my countrymen; I have left facts in the same degree of certainty, or probability in which I found them; wherever I could not ascertain an event on account of the disagreement among authors, as, for example, the death of Montezuma, I have faithfully reported their different opinions, without having omitted, however, such additional conjectures or reflections on the subject has suggested. In short, I have always had before my eyes the two sacred laws of history; not to dare to speak what is false; nor to fear to speak what is true: and I flatter myself I have violated neither. ¹

This statement from Clavijero's introduction explains his methodology and principles in writing the History of Mexico. How well has he adhered to these statements?

¹Clavijero, History, I, p. viii-ix.
For his work, Clavijero had at his disposal a wealth of source materials and secondary works. He planned and researched his *History in Mexico* in Italy between 1770 and 1778, but his study at the seminary of St. Peter and St. Paul in 1756 anticipated his formal investigations by ten to fifteen years. Sigüenza y Góngora's collection of indigenous histories and his own writings provided Clavijero a solid base from which to launch more persistent studies of Mexican history. Whether or not he had inclinations about writing histories at this time is debatable, but his diligent study at the seminary proved to be invaluable later on. His "language proficiency helped in translation of hieroglyphics and his discipline as a philosopher permitted him to methodize and order his investigation."\(^2\)

At the time of the expulsion, in 1767, it is not known what he took on the trip as personal belongings. Some clothes and some books accompanied him,\(^3\) but there is no evidence that he might have had some of his papers or notes also. If not, he had to rely upon his memory when the *History* was written. This is rather significant when one considers the amount of secondary work cited in


\(^3\)Maneiro, *Vidas de mexicanos*, p. 151.
the History; i.e., where he did not rely on previous authors, he relied on his memory of the materials in the seminary library.

In Italy, and throughout Southern and Western Europe, books on Mexico were readily available in public and private libraries. With the help of companions Clavijero received access to many documents in Rome, Florence, Genoa, Venice, Milan, etc. In the Institute of the Sciences, Bologna and in Florence, for example, he was fortunate in finding original Mexican manuscripts. According to his letter to Mariano Veytia, Clavijero also went to some libraries in France and Spain to find relative material and, as he said, went without food on occasion in order to procure the necessary books and documents. His work was rewarding, he reported to Veytia, the author of another history of Mexico:

My diligence has been such that there has been scarcely a book concerning ancient Mexico, by our countrymen or by foreigners, that I have not studied.

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4 Beristáin de Souza, Biblioteca, p. 314.

5 They had been placed there (including an original writing on Montezuma) by order of the Duchess Beatrix de Toledo. Ibid., p. 314.

6 Veytia, Historia, p. xxviii-xxix.

7 Ibid., p. xxix.
Clavijero examined and commented on various Aztec painting collections. He mentioned five exemplary collections, of which he had studied four. Those of Mendoza, Boturini, and Sigüenza y Góngora were the most valuable, having been painted by Indians during or before the early sixteenth century. These paintings not destroyed by the early missionaries told a history in pictures of how the Indians lived before the conquest. He found illustrations on the founding of the empire, the kings, alien cities and tributes, civil government, education, penal law and others. 8

The secondary works cited in the bibliography of the History included twenty-nine authors from the sixteenth century, nine from the seventeenth, and two from the eighteenth. They were mostly Spanish or Indian authors, with a few exceptions. Clavijero dealt critically not only with Corneille de Pauw and William Robertson, but with Thomas Gage and William Thomas Raynal. The English Gage, a Dominican turned protestant, traveled Central America and wrote The English-American: His Travail by Sea and Land (1649). Gage's book proclaimed a strong anti-Spanish sentiment and was, in large measure, responsible for the development of the Black Legend. The Frenchman

8 Clavijero, History, I, p. xxix-xxx.
Raynal wrote *The Philosophical and Political History of the Indies* (1770) which, "though a product of the Enlightenment," according to John Tate Lanning, "this work was only a continuation of the anti-Spanish bias in western culture." Clavijero dealt with both of these writers critically also:

On Gage ...there is no writer on America more addicted to falsehood. 9

On Raynal... besides several gross delusions...
(he) doubts of everything which is said concerning the founding of Mexico. 10

Clavijero rates as a critically minded historian in the modern sense. That he synthesized the works of earlier writers is not denied, but his rich background in the analysis of original codices and the oral legends heard in Mexico cannot be ignored. The line cannot be accurately drawn between the amounts, or percentages, of source materials that should be utilized to rate the status of "historian". Standards and definitions change from era to era, but only the completed work remains unaltered. That the *History of Mexico* was the most scholarly and the most accurate history of the pre-Columbian Indians up to that time merits its author a place in the annals of great historians.


The format of the History appears modern, considering Clavijero's subject and chapter headings. Recognizing a general ignorance of readers concerning Mexican affairs, Clavijero devoted the first parts to discussions of the land, climate, and animals (mammals, reptiles, birds, fish, and insects). This provides a reasonable background for the treatment of the complexities of Aztec life later on. Topical discussions of the qualities and customs of the peoples follow the political and military chronology, while the story of the conquest itself is relegated to the last few books.

The History contains many documents. Clavijero often quoted his sources verbatim when he thought necessary. The many footnotes also contain valuable references. For example, he quotes exhortations of a father to his son and a mother to her daughter along with remarks of Antonio de Ulloa, an eighteenth-century royal official in Peru and Louisiana, Juan de Zumárraga, first bishop of Mexico, Christopher Columbus, and Pope Paul III (Pope 1534 to 1550).

11 Ibid., p. 331-336.
12 Ibid., II, p. 329.
13 Ibid., p. 342-343.
14 Ibid., p. 347.
Primary in any analysis of a historic work is its objectivity. Much disagreement exists on this point concerning Clavijero and his History. He favored the Indians, of that there is no doubt, but his treatment of the Spaniards and of the Conquest, in particular, has been hotly contested. According to one view, "his major merit is his impartiality, especially in reference to the history of the conquest by Cortes."\(^\text{16}\) Completely opposite is the view of Adolph F. Bandelier, a pioneer in American Indian studies, "While other Jesuit writers on America... after the expulsion of the order...maintained in their books an attitude of dignified impartiality, Clavijero has not been able to conceal his resentment against the Spaniards for that measure (the conquest)."\(^\text{17}\)

What does Clavijero himself say about the conquest? Actually there is very little in the History to show that Clavijero wrote against the Spaniards and the conquest. His Indianist bias does not necessarily make him anti-Spanish or a proponent of the "Black Legend." Two men, responsible in good part for the development of the legend, Bartolomé de Las Casas and Thomas Gage, already

\(^{16}\)Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europeo-Americana, XIII, (Barcelona, 192-), p. 727.

mentioned, merited criticism from Clavijero for their supposed exaggerations and falsehoods.

On Las Casas ... We cannot rely on the authority of the author, however, otherwise respectable. The excessive fire of his zeal sent forth light and smoke together ... he mixed truth with falsehood... because... he trusted too much to the information of others... 18

On Gage ... Gage appears to have delighted in the invention of falsehoods. 19

The fact that the former was a Dominican and the latter a former English Catholic converted to Protestantism could very well also have influenced Clavijero's judgment and accounted for his animosity.

Clavijero regarded the fall of the Aztec Empire to the Spaniards as destiny, designed by providence, rather than just the result of gold-hunting Iberians.

Our readers will probably, on reading and considering all the circumstances of this extraordinary event (the kidnapping of Montezuma), feel the same displeasure we felt in giving the relation; as the Spaniards cannot but appear to have been the severest instruments fate ever made use of to farther the ends of providence in the discovery and connection of the new with the old continent. 20

Another case in point, Alvarado's surprise attack on the Mexican lords, is another example of Clavijero's policy of restraint in making judgments. The deed was

18 Clavijero, History, I, p. xix.
19 Ibid., p. xxv.
20 Ibid., II, p. 80, (my emphasis).
uncalled for, perhaps, but he admits that there might have been a reasonable motive for Alvarado’s actions:

The motive is not known which induced Alvarado to commit an action so abominably inhuman. Some have said he was influenced alone by his insatiable thirst for gold. Others affirm, and which is more probable, that it’s having been whispered that the Mexicans designed at this festival to strike a decisive blow on the Spaniards...he prevented them thinking, according to the vulgar adage, he who attacks, conquers.

Alvarado was certainly not the typical Spaniard, at least not in Clavijero’s eyes, for the lieutenant’s blunders gave Cortes more than a fair share of worry.

Clavijero’s description of Cortes provides other insights into Clavijero as a dispassionate observer. If Clavijero was indeed anti-Spanish, then Cortes would have provided an excellent object of attack. But the learned Jesuit desists, and deals with Hernán Cortés impartially. In Clavijero’s own words:

With respect to what M. de Pauw adds against Cortes, we do not mean to make the apology of this conqueror, neither can we endure the panegyric which Solis has written in place of a history; but as an impartial person, well-informed of all his military prudence, he rivals the most famous generals; and that he possessed that species of heroism which we acknowledged in Alexander and the Caesars, in whom we praise their magnanimity in spite of the vices with which it was blended.  

\[21\] *Ibid.*, p. 100. Clavijero believed that this was a fable, invented by the Tlaxcalans, to induce Alvarado to attack the Aztec lords.

...His pious zeal made him frequently repeat to Montezuma his arguments for the truth of his religion. 23

While Clavijero was not anti-Spanish, per se, he assumed an anti-European attitude toward the conquest. As a cleric, he disapproved of the seeming inhumanity of the conquerors and of the ignoble destruction of a magnificent civilization, but this is not necessarily indicative of an anti-Spanish sentiment. Clavijero saw Cortés and his soldiers as mere instruments of fate, and the holocaust would have occurred regardless of the nationality of the invaders. His pro-Indian sentiment is all too easily, though not accurately, connected with the "Black Legend". According to one recent writer, Luis Villoro, "he was directed by a concrete interest: freeing his country of the black legend." 24 But other writers, such as Adolph F. Bandelier and Julio Le Riverend Brusone, a twentieth-century Cuban historian, 25 hold opposing views.

Many critics have considered Clavijero a modern historian in every sense of the word. The History is

interspersed throughout with numerous footnotes. In his introduction he also considered the works of previous authors. Not only did Clavijero seek out and investigate all previous works but he also gave them full credit in notes where necessary. Most often cited were Bernal Díaz del Castillo and Juan de Torquemada, though for entirely different reasons. Díaz, one of Cortés' officers during the conquest, supplied Clavijero with an eye-witness account of the conquest in his The True Story of the Conquest of Mexico, while the Indian Monarchy of Torquemada, a Franciscan historian of the seventeenth century, demanded rectification much more than revision.

...I was under the necessity to do with this history what Virgil did with works of Ennius, to search for the gems amongst the rubbish. 26 Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, seldom quoted in footnotes, was mentioned often in the main text, possibly because Clavijero retained from memory many passages and ideas.

Some Indian legends or stories found their way into the History, but not without having been classified as such by the author. Where there was no ground for verification, Clavijero discounted myths. As an example, he refused to accept the testimony of a Mr. Dumont, 27 who claimed that

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26 Clavijero, History, I, p. xxi.
27 Ibid., II, Quotes a citation of De Pauw's.
some Louisiana frogs reached thirty-seven pounds in weight and bellowed like cows, and called this statement a ridiculous exaggeration. Clavijero did concede that some abnormally large creatures had existed in nature. He cited particularly the testimonies of Livy and Pliny concerning the capture of a serpent 120 feet in length, which was killed during the first Punic War.\textsuperscript{28} The point to be made here is not that Clavijero might have been gullible enough to accept such an apparent "tall tale"; but that his investigations seek verification of events by more than one source in order to present a reasonably accurate picture. One-hundred and twenty foot serpents are certainly rare today and were in Clavijero's time, but he was anxious to find a number of sources from which to verify the story. In a like manner, Clavijero occasionally quoted or paraphrased sections of the writings of Joseph d'Acosta, a literary Jesuit of the sixteenth century,\textsuperscript{29} along with those of De Pauw, when they reported on similar events, and left the reader to decide which was the more accurate and trustworthy. There was never any

\textsuperscript{28}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 259.

\textsuperscript{29}\textit{Ibid.}, I, p. xvi. "Joseph d'Acosta, a most celebrated Spanish Jesuit, well known in the literary world... this great man...wrote the \textit{Natural and Moral History of the Indians} (1589).
doubt in Clavijero's mind. Clavijero had a great deal of respect for Acosta's writings.

More evidence of this modernism in the History lies in Clavijero's treatment of the origins of the American Indians, a favorite topic of many colonial writers. He theorized that man came to America from the Old World, an opinion shared by most experts today. His reasons were rooted in his clericalism and ideas of the eighteenth century; the New World or its people were not mentioned in the Scriptures, and because the "polished nations of the New World, and particularly those of Mexico, preserve in their traditions and in their paintings the memory of the creation of the world, the building of the tower of Babel, the confusion of languages, and the dispersion of the people."30

Significant is Clavijero's weeding out of the fabled explanations of peopling, and presentation of three opinions which are most acceptable to anthropologists and archaeologists of today:

I. The men and animals of America passed there from the old continent. This is confirmed by Sacred Writings.

II. The first peoples of America might pass there in vessels by sea, or travel by land or by

ice...they might pass there by land on the supposition of the union of the two continents.

III. The ancestors of the nations which peopled the country of Anahuac...might pass from the northern countries of Europe into the northern parts of America, or rather from the most eastern parts of Asia to the most westerly part of America. 31

These advanced nations of Clavijero further attested to his ability to arrive at the truth (or the probable truth) by the weighing of available evidence. Even the Count de Buffon, great scientist that he was, did not discuss the possibility of the continents being connected. 32

In many ways, Clavijero was a great historian. His methods and results were very similar to those of competent writers today. Where he could not rely on original sources, he assimilated and synthesized the works of others, weeding out discrepancies and presenting all sides in controversial matters. He also refrained from stern moral judgments, all the more remarkable because of his training as a Jesuit. He could not claim complete impartiality because of his great attachment to all things Indian, but he was just in presenting the features of Spaniard and Indian life in the New World. His task was not an easy one, but he presaged the historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with his quest for objectivity and use of empirical data to verify his interpretations.

31 Ibid., p. 212-213.
32 Ibid., p. 212.
CHAPTER V

JESUIT CHRISTIAN-HUMANIST

Throughout Clavijero's life the church and the Jesuit order molded his opinions and guided his career. There was some conflict between his modern ideas and the church hierarchy, but Clavijero's refusal to change his methods concerning the instruction of the modern philosophy was indicative of a character admirably suited to face the questions posed by De Pauw and Robertson.

In his youth he had either enrolled or taught in Jesuit institutions. This clearly was his father's wish; Don Blas had sent forth two other sons to preach and confess in the followers of St. Ignatius. Being a brilliant student, Clavijero eagerly read everything he could find and soon developed a mind of his own. This led to what the church superiors probably considered obstinacy, though one recent writer judged it to be conduct a little less than incorrigible.² Forty-three days after entering the Noviciate at Tepozotlán, Clavijero received a letter from the Provincial Antonio Javier.

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¹ See pages 12,13, notes 22-24.
García, who reprimanded him for his melancholy ways and accused him of being touched by demons.³ Thus began his difficulties with the hierarchy in the Jesuit order, lasting until the expulsion in 1767.

Enlightened thought and teaching, unexpected in one so seriously devoted to the church, is not strange in light of eighteenth-century attitudes and ideas. In the middle of that century there appeared in New Spain the first characteristics of a change in the attitude of the intellligencia, Jesuits not excluded.⁴ Secular scientists, botanists and other men of letters contributed a great deal, but the Mexican Enlightenment came into being on the other hand with that generation of young Jesuits who, against the wishes of their superiors, had adopted the modern philosophy and began spreading it in their schools. The superiors of the order, especially the provincials, objected mainly to the too-rapid change in coursework proposed by the younger Jesuits. These superiors did not object to the modern philosophy itself and predicted its eventual triumph.⁵

Clavijero, with his stress on scholastic methodology and attack on peripateticism, was a good example of this

³ See appendix.


⁵ Beristáin de Souza, Biblioteca, p. 313.
so-called Catholic Enlightenment. He faced problems and opposition, it is true, but he continued his teaching nevertheless. In these matters he was certainly typical of the majority of the society members in New Spain. There were others who felt as he did, though perhaps more willing to compromise with the wishes of the superiors. Until the expulsion, scholastic methodology and the new physics existed side-by-side in the schools.

Many writers have commented on the philosophical thought and innovations of Clavijero. His position in regard to Aristotelianism, however, has never been clearly defined. José Miranda, a twentieth-century scholar, believed that Clavijero opposed Aristotelianism completely, and had a strong devotion to modern philosophy, as seen in his letters, later writings, and temperament. Mariano Cuevas, a noted expert on Clavijero, believed that these philosophical innovations of Clavijero "referred only to details in the method of teaching and in the earnest desire of discarding so many trivialities...” Cuevas went further and quoted Juan Luis Maneiro:

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He (Clavijero) demonstrated a clear and keen intelligence in the study of the philosophy taught then and of that in which he later, as a teacher, attempted to eliminate many useless parts, in order to replace it with the authentic philosophy of Aristotle.

From this statement, and considering that Maneiro was a personal friend of Clavijero's in Italy, it would seem that Clavijero was not opposed to Aristotelianism, at least in theory. This assumption is misleading, however, and not founded on logical thought. Clavijero could not have supported Aristotelianism and taught the new physics at the same time. Clavijero's correspondence with Francisco Xavier Alegre, a Jesuit contemporary in New Spain and in Italy, indicates this support of the new physics. These letters, printed by Dr. Jesús Romero Flores, a Mexican scholar of today, also show Clavijero "absorbed in reflections on the subjects which occupied most of the great thinkers of Spain and America: the experimental physics, the defense of the system of Copernicus, and the origin of the population of the New World."

After the expulsion, the Jesuits found relief from idleness through writing; their native land gave them much to write about. Clavijero was certainly not alone in discussions on the New World, although he was probably

8Ibid.
one of the most popular scholars. Concerning these
eighteenth-century Jesuit humanists, Mariano Picón Salas,
a noted twentieth-century Venezuelan writer, states:

The unusual freedom of expression and the
remarkable vigor on many pages of Alegre, Clavijero,
or Guevara cannot be explained unless one is
mindful of what was going on in the colonies, of
the symptoms of discontent, and of the dawning
nationalism, that were stirring in the viceroyalties
and capitainerías-general. The fact that the
Jesuits had lost their ascendancy in America, so
that all was left to them was to write and die
in a proper Christian manner, serves to underscore
their noble effort to be truthful and their nearly
always detached line of thought.10

The exiled Jesuits were deeply attached to their
Mexican homeland and the Bourbon monarchy often came under
fire in their writings. Many actively wrote to encourage
the revolutionary feeling within the colonies.11 Clavijero,
however, showed no traces of animosity or bitterness, at
least not in the History of Mexico. Except for a few
lines, he ignored Spanish administration of Indian affairs
or Indian lands. His theme was more anti-European:

Thus, it has been said, in conducting the
Spaniards, a polished nation of Europe to overturn
the rude monarchy of the Mexicans, in America, did
Providence punish the latter for the injustice,
cruelty, and superstition of their ancestors. But
there the victors, in one year of merciless mass-
acre, sacrificed more human victims to avarice and

10 Mariano Picón-Salas, A Cultural History of Spanish
   America from Conquest to Independence, trans. by Irving A.
   Leonard, (Berkeley: University of California Press,

ambition than the Indians during the existence of their empire devoted in chaste worship to their nature gods: there the legislative art of Europe corrected the bloody policy of American tribes, and introduced the ministry of justice, by despoiling Indians caziques of their territories and tributes, torturing them for gold, and enslaving their posterity: and there the mild parental voice of the Christian religion was suborned to terrify confounded savages with the malice of a strange, and by them impovoked, God; and her gentle arm in violence lifted up, to raze their temples and hospitable habitations, to ruin every fond relic and revered monument of their ancestry and origin and divorce them in anguish from the bosom of their country. 12

As soon as Clavijero arrived in Italy, he found it easy to meet fellow Mexican brothers with similar views and discuss affairs openly with them. These meetings gave liberal-minded Jesuits a chance to exchange views and discover their identity with the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. It is difficult to say what might have happened had they continued uninterrupted in the New World, for their sojourn in Europe gave them time for contemplation, research, and writing. In fact, the names of Clavijero, Alegre, and Maneiro might well have passed unnoticed. The "Casa de la Sabiduría," the literary academy organized by Clavijero in Bologna, was in no small part responsible for the mutual encouragement of each’s literary talents. Unfortunately, little evidence exists

concerning the academy or its duration, but one can probably assume that it was an informal discussion group of scholars, and that Clavijero probably spent less time there later on, because of intense research and travel to the many libraries.

Clavijero may have had difficulties with the Jesuit superiors in New Spain, but he was probably not the only young priest to experience such problems. His enlightened brothers were probably more compromising with regard to their problems than Clavijero; at least it appeared to be this way in New Spain. These young men were a new generation of brothers and were able, thanks to the exile, to display their literary talents and show their strong predilection for the Enlightenment.
CHAPTER VI

THE INFLUENCE OF CLAVIJERO

Contemporary scholars hailed the History of Mexico, at the time of publication in 1780-1781, as the definitive history of the Aztecs. Since then, anthropologists and historians have written a great many books on the same subject. Historiographically speaking, Clavijero's History remains an excellent secondary work to students of ancient Mexico. Other works surpass his but only because they contain the recent investigations of archaeologists and anthropologists. The History remains a model of diligent research and flawless scholarship for all who would learn by it.

William H. Prescott, a titan among Latin American historians and writers, held Clavijero in great respect. He cited the Jesuit's work a number of items and praised him:

Another authority (the first was Torquemade), frequently cited in the preceding pages, is the Abbe Clavijero's Storia antica del Messico... During a residence of thirty-five years in his own country, Clavijero had made himself intimately acquainted with its antiquities, by the careful examination of paintings, manuscripts, and such other remains as were to be found in his day (implication that Prescott had found more)...
the later and more cultivated period (than Torquemada's), in which he wrote, is visible in the superior address with which he has managed his complicated subject...he has done much to rectify the chronology and the various inaccuracies of preceding writers...he has applied sound principles of criticism...In a word, the diligence of his researches has gathered into one focus the scattered lights of tradition and antiquarian lore, purified in great measure from the mists of superstition which obscure the best productions of an earlier period.

Clavijero corresponded with Mariano Fernández de Echeverría y Veytia, a secular contemporary writer, and was aware of Veytia's forthcoming work, Historia antigua de México, the same title as Clavijero's work in Spanish. While the titles were the same, the scope of the works were quite different—Veytia's included a history of New Spain in addition to one of the Indians. In an interesting letter from Clavijero to Veytia dated March 25, 1778, Clavijero praised him for his efforts and discussed his own difficulties in writing the History.

Although I have not had the fortune of knowing you except by news which has been given me of your birth, of your talents, and of your literary scholarship, it is encouraging to me to write to you over so much distance about the common devotion to the country which stirs me, and of the uniformity of the material in which we are both working.


2Veytia, p. xxiii.
Immediately the student of Mexican history wonders to what extent these two large works competed. Surprisingly enough, they complement each other. In Veytia's the period of the Indians revolved around the court of Tezcoco, the "Athens" of early Mexico; Clavijero stressed the importance of Tenochtitlán, the "Rome" or power-center of the empire. The books did not compete in the scholarly world, or in any commercial sense either. Veytia died before publication of his work, and it was not until 1836 that an edition finally appeared. Prescott cited the manuscript only and expressed regret that it was not better known to the general public. Clavijero's History is considered today by Mexican historians to be a classic on the indigenous period. Almost all native authors refer to the book and recognize its author's scholarship. Vaillant's popular The Aztecs of Mexico, however, gives one line to the History in the bibliography while Von Hagen's The Aztec Man and Tribe makes no mention of Clavijero or his work. It appears that the History of Mexico has not enjoyed the wider popularity or prestige of the eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries. Even so, in the eyes of one writer,

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4 Ibid.
Henry Stevens, an early twentieth-century bibliographer, the work is still important. "All of the other books that have been elaborated since on the same subject instead of superseding Clavijero's have tended rather to enhance its importance."  

In Mexico, the History is still in print, the last being in 1964. A few native writers have made him a national hero—a forecaster and exponent of the revolutionary movement against Spain. The praise has not been in proportion to his merits. Except for a number of publications in the last thirty years or so, there have been few original articles on Clavijero; those which have appeared were removed from the pages of Maneiro or Beristáin de Souza. Their two eulogistic works seem to have satisfied the curiosity of later writers, especially those of the nineteenth century. According to Sarah Lake, the translation of History of (Lower) California, "Spanish writers give him slight attention. Italian biographers neglect him, although he is the author of so many works in Tuscan Italian." More recently, however, (Lake’s statement is

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5 Henry Stevens, Rare Books, etc., Relating to America, London: Henry Stevens, Son and Stiles, 1926, p. 212.


from 1937) Clavijero has become the subject of increasing interest, including master's theses and scholarly journal articles. The national hero is becoming known outside of Mexico again and may be the subject of future investigations.

Clavijero's popularity has been more or less confined to two major periods. The first was immediately after the first publication of the History in Cessena in 1780-1781. This popularity continued through 1790, or until after publication of the German edition. Clavijero was alive during most of this period and received a number of accolades. His popularity was such that just seven years after publication of the Italian edition, the first English edition appeared in London. This two-volume translation by Charles Cullen now brought a significant work of Americana to all the English speaking world. It also brought more fame to its author. The next English editions of 1806, 1807, and 1817 differed only in type used.

Clavijero originally wrote the History of Mexico in Castilian, but because of the anti-Jesuitic sentiment in Spain, he translated the entire work into Tuscan Italian. To insure that the book not be printed in Spanish or circulated in Spain, "a royal cedula of persecution was issued against the book for the crime of being the work
of an ex-Jesuit." The official reasons were:

The King has found out about that (the content) in the History of Mexico that the ex-Jesuit Don Francisco Javier Clavijero published in Italian in four volumes in quarto, and that it has been translated to Castilian with the desire of having it printed in Spain, some passages are found that conform little to the truth of the history, blackening to the honor of our nation and injurious to the much glorious and just conquest.

Shortly after the first English edition, an anonymous German translated the History into German, from the English, and had it published in Leipzig, in 1789-1790 as Geschichte von Mexico. In the space of nine years, the History of Mexico had appeared in three major languages and enjoyed an unanticipated popularity.

The readers of Mexico had to wait forty-six years before they could read their history in a familiar tongue. José Joaquin de Mora, a Chilean statesman and poet, translated the History from the Italian to Spanish. This same edition was used in the 1844 edition. In 1853 a new

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11 Ibid., p. 165.

12 Ibid.
translation, that of Dr. Francisco Pablo Vázquez, a Mexican, appeared. Other editions came out in 1861-1862, 1883, and 1917 before an edition from Clavijero's original manuscript appeared in 1945.

Beristain de Souza, an oft-quoted source in Clavijero biographies, mentioned possible French and Danish editions of the History:

...proving so much his merit...having been translated and published into French, English, German, and I do not know if also in the Danish language.

Most historians of today believe these two editions never existed.

After 1931 Clavijero enjoyed the second period of his popularity. Celebrations went on in Mexico and Italy to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Clavijero's birth; a number of publications resulted. On September 8, 9, and 10 of 1931, the Office of Civil Action, Department of the Federal District, Mexico, sponsored a conference. Various scholars dedicated sculptures and paintings while Colonel Ruben Garcia received a commission to write a short biography of Clavijero.

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13 Ibid.
15 Beristain de Souza, p. 314.
The second period of Clavijero’s popularity has continued to this day. A number of scholarly articles have appeared, including one doctoral dissertation and three master’s theses. Streets and corners have been recently named after Clavijero in Mexico City and Vera-cruz.\(^{17}\) A few small busts and two portraits exist, but more are likely to be dedicated in the not too distant future. Quite possibly the words of Francisco Sosa, a nineteenth century Mexican biographer, will ring true afterall:

A great monument will perpetuate the memory of the first of our historians, the state will finance an edition of his works, worthy of such an outstanding writer, and the petty bust placed in one of the pilasters of the National Library will disappear.\(^{18}\)

Since Clavijero’s death in 1787, writers have labeled him an Americanist, an Indianist, a nationalist, a Christian-humanist, a philosopher, and an historian. Whether he fits any or all of the descriptions is a matter of interpretation. Because mere terms do not truly indicate the worth of an individual or his contribution to the whole of knowledge, it is impossible to rank him as more of an Americanist than an Indianist, or that his contribution as a historian outweighs that as a nationalist.

\(^{17}\)\textit{Ibid.}

Clavijero was some of each description. This variety of titles reigned on him by his countrymen and colleagues indicates his place among great figures of the Enlightenment. His unity of purpose and his thirst for knowledge mark him as a dedicated, though somewhat detached, writer.

Clavijero had his failings, to be sure. The influence of the church and his love for the Indians manifested themselves throughout his *History of Mexico*. His love for truth far outweighed his other bias; however, and, where the Indians were weak or the church had failed, he admitted the facts and evidence honestly, though often with regret.

His contribution as an historian has been of invaluable aid in the last 180 years. He established the most accurate chronology of the Aztec rulers, based on all the evidence available. This chronology, plus statements concerning the daily life of the people, are reliable even today and agree, in large measure, with current authorities. Native writers often cite him as the first great historian of Mexico, and there are signs of his increasing popularity, especially in university publications and statuary.

Clavijero is now known as a figure of the Enlightenment. He was part of that generation of young Jesuits
who eventually transformed their private studies of European letters and books into the Mexican Enlightenment. His devotion to the Society of Jesus, an institution in Mexico willing to accept the new ideas, makes him appear all the more remarkable in light of many attitudes concerning the role of the church in the Enlightenment. He belonged to an elite group of scholars, a group without a home but not without a memory or sense of justice. Francisco Javier Clavijero was both victim and benefactor of his time.
APPENDIX

I. Writings of Francisco Javier Clavijero. The list includes those works undated and those apparently unpublished. 63

II. Letter to Francisco Javier Clavijero from Andrés Xavier García. April 23, 1748. The Provincial reprimands Clavijero (just forty-three days a noviciate) for his melancholy ways. 65

III. Letter to Francisco Javier Clavijero from Francisco Xavier Alegre. October 2, 1764. An interesting discussion of how a course of physics should be taught. One clearly sees the influence of the Enlightenment in this letter. 67

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V. Letter to Mariano Fernández de Echeverría y Veytia from Francisco Javier Clavijero. March 25, 1778. Clavijero relates his diligence of research and efforts to print the History. He praises Veytia and his forthcoming history. 71

VI. Letter of dedication of History of Mexico to the University of Mexico. February 29, 1784. 74
I.

Writings of Clavijero

Dated:

A Poetic Contest for the Christmas Eve of 1753 (1753)

A Dialogue between Filaletes and Paleofila against the arguments of the Worth of Physics (1753)

A Philosophical Course Long Desired in American Schools (1753)

The Instructed Priest: Letters of Saint Francis de Sales to Preachers and Confessors (Translated from the French, with two Discourses on the Abuses of the Illiterate Preachers and Confessors of this Age) (1753-61) (printed in Mexico, 1771)

Edifying Memoirs of Don Manuel Clavijero, Priest of the Bishopric of Puebla, Collected by his Brother (Mexico, 1761)

A Eulogy of Saint Francis Xavier (Mexico, 1762)

A Compendium of the Life of Saint John Nepomuceno (translated from the Italian of P. Cesar Calino) (Mexico, 1762)

A Eulogy of Saint Ignatius de Loyola, Preached to the Royal Audiencia of Guadalajara (Mexico, 1766)

History of Mexico (1780-1, Cessena)

A Brief Comparison of the Marvellous and Famous Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe of Mexico (1782)

History of (Lower) California (1786)

Geographic and Ecclesiastical History of Mexico (1787-unfinished)
Undated:

A Dialogue between Filáletes and Paleofila on Physics
Plan of an Academy of Sciences and Bellas Letras
An Essay on the History of New Spain
About the Settlements of the Tlaxcaltecs
Concerning the Noble Families of New Spain
Particular Physics

Instrumental works in the compilation of this list were:

Backer and Carayon. Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jesus.

Ignacio B. del Castillo. "Biografias de veracruzanos
distinguidos," Anales del museo nacional de
arqueología, historia, y etnografía. Series 4, t.6,
(1929-1930), p. 112.

Rafael García Grandos. "Clavijero: estudio bibliográfico,"

Francisco Javier Clavijero. The History of (Lower)
California. Stanford: Stanford University Press,
1937, p. xiii-ix. Trans. and introduction by Sara
E. Lake and A. A. Gray.
II.

Letter to F. J. Clavigero from Andrés

Xavier García, April 23, 1748

Mexco y Abril 23 de 1748.

Mi am.mo H. Francisco Xavier Clavigero.

PX

Mucho se ha dejado, mi am.mo H. apoderar de la melancolía, y de las astucias del Demonio, a que lo veo tan sujeto, y rendido: y aun por eso se le rinde y sujeta, porque no conoce, que es el Demonio el que le persigue, y tira con todos sus poderios a que pierda el incomparable bien de la vocación religiosa, y con ella la salvación eterna; porqué aunque es así que entodos estados hai salvacion; pero Dios que tan claramente, y tan repetidas veces le inspiró la entrada en la Religion quiere que en ella se salve, y no sabemos, si querra eso mismo si volviéndole mi H o con desacato, y descortesía las espaldas a su Magestad sigue las sugestiones del enemigo común, y no las divinas ispiraciones. Todas las cosas a los principios se hazen dificultosas, y si a mi amantissimo se le hace insosportable la vida de la Religion, es porque está a los principios, y por que la toma con tudio, y no procura vencerse. Venzase, y aun hagasse violencia, porque el Reino de los Cielos padece violencia, y los que se la hazen son los que entran en él, como nos lo dece Christo. No ha mucho que a otro saco el Demonio de la Religion por tristezas semejantes a las suyas, pensando hallar gusto en el siglo: y lo experimenta tan al contrario, que esta pretendiéndolo con muchas ansias volver, pero no volvera, por diligencias que haga. No se deje. mi am.mo, dominar de la tentacion; resuelvase a que esto ha de ser, que esto le conviene que lo que mucho vale mucho cuesta, proceda con mucha claridad manifestando al P. Espiritual toda su conciencia, determinese a que ha de estar haj sin hablar palabra sobre esto seis meses; haciéndole a Dios este obsequio, y al cabo de esos vera las cosas con distinto color. A bien que yo he ir a la Visita, y entre
tanto no me habla mas palabra, sino vivir mui obediente y mui ajustado a la obediencia. Encomiendeme a Nro S, aquel que me gáa a mi am mo má a. México, y Abril 23 de 1748.

Provincial 3° de mi am mo Jhs.

Andrés Xav García.

Al reverso: A mi H° Franco Xavier Clavigero de la Comp°
de Jhs.
Tepozotlán.
P. Prov°.

This letter appeared in:

III.

Letter to F. J. Clavigero from Francisco

Xavier Alegre. October 2, 1764

Queretaro y Oct° 2 de 1764

Mi am°. P.F.X°. Clavigero.

P.C. Jhs.

Me hallo en esta de Queretaro, de donde no puedo remitir a VH. el curso de artes aun con las condiciones que me propone y asi diré a VH° en general lo que me parece con sinceridad, y confianza... En la Physica general fuera de las comunes cuestiones q. tratan nuestros Escolasticos solo añadi un tratado completo de el movimiento primero en general del movimiento de los cuerpos Elasticos, y no tales, y luego en particular de el perpendicular, en q. trate de la fuerza de gravedad, o centrípeta, de el circular, en q. trate de la fuerza centrífuga, y del movimiento compuesto, y vibracion de los Pendulos, o movimiento oscilatorio. En todo esto fui manifestando los principios de Statica, Hydraulica, Machinaria, y como no podian entender todo esto sin algunos principios de Geometria, les hize un compendio de aquellas proposiciones mas necesarias para la practica de semejantes operaciones.

En la Physica particular trate 1° de los Ciieos, Systema, Equaciones, Thermais de los Planetas, remendando en lo que me parecio el sistema de Tycho Brahe, Progression de Equinocios, Eclipses, division de la Esfera, con que tomaron algunos principios de Geographia, Vranologia y Chronologia. De aqui pase a los cuatro Elementos vulgares por su orden, impressiones Empaticas, fluxo de el Mar, origen de las fuentes, de los minerales y demas cosas utiles en esta materia. De ahí segui los cuerpos animados 1° las plantas, en q. segui el corriente de los Modernos, luego los Brutos con Descartes, luego el hombre, cuyo tratado diuidi en las cuatro facultades Vital, Natural, Animal y Racional, en q. inserte respectivamente los tratados de Generatione, Corruptione, un Compendio de
Anatomia. Traté difusamente los sentidos, y en el cido
les di los principios fundamentales de Musica, como en la
vista los de Optica, Dioptrica y Catoptrica, según las
tres direcciones de la Luz, en cuia explicacion seguí a
Descartes. En Generacion me pareció mejor Maupertuis, en
la Anatomia Heinster, en la Musica Erransa; en la Optica
el Abad Mollet. En lo que mira a la facultad Nacional
que lo q. llamamos Anima, seguí generalm. a Malebranch,
y Descartes.

Esto es, Padre mio, lo que puedo decir a Vd. según
el orden. Por lo quedira las particulares opiniones los
mismos Autores (que por eso los he citado) le harán
conocer a Vd. q. no me aligué a estas, ni aquellas, sino
a las que a mi pobre juicio parecieron mas ciertas y mas
coherentes con mere plan general. Vd. que ha tenido la
bondad de querer oirme, dará a todoello el peso que le
pareciere, y en lo demas puede mandarme con entera
confianza de que

Sami

Suma affto Svo

Franco. Xav. Alegre.

This letter appeared in:

Jesus Romero Flores, "Documentos para la biografía
del historiador Clavijero," Anales del Instituto de
antropología e historia, México, t.1, (1939-1940), pp.323-
324.
IV.

Proclamation of Expulsion.

Issued February 27, 1767.

"DON CARLOS FRANCISCO DE CROIX, Marqués de Croix, Cavallero del Orden de Calatrava, Comendador de Molinos, y Laguna Rota en "la misma Orden, Teniente General de los Reales Ejércitos de S.M. Virrey, Governador, y Capitan General del Reyno de Nueva - España, Presidente de fu Real Audiencia, Superintendente general de Real Hacienda, y Ramo del Tabaco de él, Presidente de la Junta, y Juez Conferrador de estas Ruckos, Subdelegado general del Establecimiento de Correos Marítimos en el mismo Reyno. Hago saber a todos los habitantes de este Imperio, que el Rey nuestro Señor por refutas de las ocurrencias pafiadas, y para cumplir la primitiva obligación con que Dios le concedió la Corona de confesar ilesos los Soberanos respetos de ella, y de mantener sus leales, y amados Pueblos en subordinación, tranquilidad y Justicia, á demás de otras gravísimas causas que referva en fu Real ánimo; ha ha dignado mandar a Consulta de fu Real Consejo, y por Decreto expedido el veinte y fierte, de Febrero último, se extrañen de todos sus Dominios de España, e Indias, Islas Filipinas, y demás adyacentes a los Religiosos de la Compañía, affi Sacerdotes, como Coadjutores ó Legos que hayan hecho la primera Profeción, y a los Novicios que quifieren seguirles; y que se ocupen todas las temporalidades de la Compañía en fu Dominios. Y haviendo S.M. para la ejecución uniforme en todos ellos, autorizado privativamente al Exmo Señor Conde de Aranda, Presidente de Castilla, y cometidome fu cumplimiento en este Reyno con la misma plenitude de facultades, asigné el día de hoy para la intimación de la Suprema Sentencia a los Expulso en sus Colegios, y Cáfas de Residencia de esta Nueva- España, y también para anunciarlo a los Pueblos de ella, con la prevención de que, estando estracehamente obligados todos los Vaffallos de cualquiera dignidad, claue, y condicián que seán, á refpetar, y obedecer las siempre justas resvoluciones de fu Soverano, deben venerar, auxiliar, y cumplir esta con la mayor exactitud y fide- lidad; porque S.M. declara incurso en fu Real indignacion a los incobedientes, o remifos en coadyuvar a ju cumpli- miento, y me veré precifado a uffar del ultimo rigor, y
de ejecución Militar contra los que en público, o secreto hizieren, con ofte motivo, conversaciones, juntas, afambeas, corrillos, o discurso de palabra, o por escrito; pues de una vez para lo venidero deben saber los Subditos de el gran Monarca que ocupa el Trono de España, que nacieron para callar, y obedecer, y no para discursir, más opinar en los altos asuntos del Gobierno. México veinte y cinco de Junio de mil setecientos setenta y fierte. -- El Marqués de Croix. -- Por mandado de su Exa".

This proclamation, with older type, appeared in:

V.

Letter to Mariano Fernández de Echeverría
y Veytia from F. J. Clavijero.

March 25, 1778.

Bolonia y marzo 25 de 1778

Muy señor mío: aunque no he tenido la fortuna de conocer a V. sino por las noticias que me han dado de su nacimiento, de sus talentos, y de sus fatigas literarias, me estimula en tan grande distancia a escribirle el común zelo de la patria que me anima, y la uniformidad de la materia en que ambos trabajamos. Uno y otro entendemos en la Historia de este Reino: V. según me han informado en la Historia General de Nueva España, y yo en la antigua de Méjico, que necesariamente estará comprendida en la de V. Emprendí esta obra por servir en lo que pudiese a mi patria, y por divertir honestamente el ocio desabrido de me destierro: el trabajo ha sido imponderable, porque primeramente fue menester solicitar los libros necesarios aquí, en Ferrara, en Venecia, en Génova, en Roma, en Francia y en España, y substraer de mis alimentos lo que había de emplear en adquirirlos; pero ha sido tal mi diligencia que apenas se ha publicado libro concerniente a las antigüedades de Méjico, o por nuestros Nacionales, o por los Extrangeros que yo no haya estudiado. A más de las obras impresas me he aprovechado de noticias adquiridas en las historiaes manuscritas de nuestros Indios, que se conservaban en la librería del Colegio Máximo de Méjico, y de sus mismas pinturas, vistas parte en ese Reino y parte aquí. Con el prolijo estudio que he hecho de estos apreciables monumentos de la antigüedad mejicana, he adquirido una competente instrucción en el método que tenían en represar sus objetos, y en conservar la memoria de los sucesos, y meليسengo de haber avanzado más en este punto que los historiadores que me han precedido. Al trabajo de allegar los materiales se sigue el de digerirlos, combiniendo las relaciones frecuentemente indigestas, y muchas veces encontradas de nuestros autores, y procurando sacar del pozo de Demócrito la verdad. V. sabrá por su propia experiencia mejor que ningún otro la dificultad que hay en esta parte por la negligencia o infidelidad de nuestros historiadores. No he omitido
diligencia alguna parala perfección de mi obra; he procurado la mayor pureza y propiedad en el lenguaje, la mayor exactitud en la ortografía, la mayor condición, la mayor claridad, el mejor orden, y sobre todo, la mayor imparcialidad y fidelidad en la narración. Si he incurrido en algunos defectos, como no lo dudo, no ha sido por falta de diligencia o malicia; sino por escasez de luces en materia tan obscura y tan difícil. Me ha sido de mucha importancia el saber la lengua mejicana, el haber andado una buena parte del Reino, y el haber tratado íntimamente a los Indios. Tengo ya perfectamente concluida la obra, y estería ya impresa una buena parte de ella, si mis facultades fueran correspondientes a mis deseos; pero la impresión con las láminas de que ya hablare, costará más de 500 pesos fuertes, y yo apenas tengo lo que basta para una vida miserable. No me pesa que no se haya impreso, porque habiendo sabido por lo que me dijo al pasar por aquí el Marqués de Moncada, de que V. tenía ya concluido un tomo en folio de su Historia, no me parece conveniente el dar un paso adelante en la impresión de la mía, sin saber antes si su asunto está perfectamente comprendido.

A los tres tomos de Historia se añadirá otro de Disertaciones interesantes, y convenientes en la mayor parte a la misma Historia. Estas Disertaciones, que tengo concluidas, son ocho. La 1.ª sobre el gran problema de la población de la América. 2.ª sobre la cronología de la Historia antigua, uno de los puntos más embrollados por nuestros Historiadores. 3.ª sobre la tierra y clima de México. 4.ª sobre los animales de México. 5.ª sobre la constitución física y moral de los Mejicanos. 6.ª sobre el número de poblaciones y habitantes del Imperio Mejicano. 7.ª sobre la Policía de los Mejicanos. 8.ª sobre la religión de los Mejicanos comparada con la de las naciones más cultas de la Europa. Éstas se dirigen especialmente a rebatir los errores de Mr. Buffón, de Mr. Fav, de Mr. Raynal y de otros célebres autores que promueven la degeneración en las plantas, animales y hombres del nuevo mundo. Aun en caso de no imprimirse mi Historia, creo que será muy provechosa la publicación de estas Disertaciones.

Espero que V. no lleve a mal esta carta aunque tan larga y mal escrita, y que se complazca en ver a un compatriota también empleado en servicio de la patria en medio de las mayores tribulaciones. Suplico a V. me
conteste y comunique, si le pareciere útil me obra, las luces necesarias para perfeccionarla. Me preparo a trabajar otras obras aun más útiles en beneficio de la misma patria, y entre tanto pido al Señor guarde a V. muchos años, y me dé vida para gozar de sus preciosas fatigas. -- Muy señor mío. B.L.M. a V. su afectísimo servidor y capellán. -- Francisco Javier Clavigero.

This letter appeared in:

Mariano Fernández de Echeverría y Veytia, Historia antigua de México, (México: Cargo de Juan Ojeda, 1836), pp. xxiii-xxxii.
VI.

Letter of dedication of History of Mexico
to the University of Mexico.

February 29, 1784.

"Ilmo. Señor,

"Habiendo yo en medio de mis tribulaciones emprendido con gran estudio, y escrito con suma diligencia y prolixidad la Historia antigua de México, me pareció que no debía consagrarla a otro que a V. S. Ilma., porque quien más acreedor a una obra detall natural que, un Cuerpo tan ilustre, a cuyas luces se ha confiado en ese Reino la Dirección de las Ciencias y la formación de los Sabios? Las circunstancias en que me hallaba cuando tome tan acertada resolución, no me permitieron el solicitar anticipadamente el beneplácito de V. S. Ilma., ni creo necesario el esperar su consentimiento para tributarle lo que por tanto le debo. Publicóse finalmente mi Historia dedicada a la Real y Pontificia Universidad de México, llev en su frente tan respetable nombre, para honra del Autor, y recomendación de su trabajo. Publicóse en Toscano, porque no se pudo más; pero el estar concebida en una lengua extranjera no basta a enagenarla de V. S. Ilma. ni puede perjudicar su derecho. Consta de tres tomos, en quarto, además de otro de Disertaciones, el cual más por efecto de generosidad, que por título de obligación u otro motivo, se dedicó a un célebre literato de Italia, que temíamalgun detrimento en su reputación por la justa crítica que en mi segundo tomó se hizo de una de sus obras. La aceptación que ha tenido mi obra en Italia, y en otros países de Europa, ha sido muy superior a su mérito y a mi expectación. No dudo que a pesar de los aplausos con que le han celebrado los Doctos de Europa, contendrá varios errores, pero tengo el consuelo de que los que descubrieran la perspicacia de V. S. Ilma., sabrá disculpar su discreción considerando la dificultad misma de la obra, y la situación poco favorable del autor.

La guerra y otros incidentes han retardado hasta ahora a mi Historia la fortuna de llegar a las manos de V. S. Ilma. D. Lino Gómez, Cura de Amecameca, y persona de mi mayor estimación y confianza, tendrá el honor de
presentar a V. S. Ilma. cincuenta exemplares, de los cuales, dos van destinados a las dos principales cabezas de ese Ilmo. Claustro a arbitrio de sus dignas Cabezas. Bien querría yo que este corto obsequio se extendiesse a todos los señores Doctores; pero la demasiada distancia, el volumen de la obra y otros dificultades que no se ocultan a la comprension de V. S. Ilma. me privan de esa satisfaccion.

"Dios N. S. prospere en todo a V. S. Ilma. para el aumento de las Ciencias y de la felicidad de ese Reino. Bolonia a 29 de febrero de 1784.

De V. S. Ilma.,

Afectísimo Servr. y Capellan,

Francisco Javier Clavijero
-Rúbrica-."

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