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THE JESUITS IN BAJA CALIFORNIA, 1697-1768

The occupation of either of the Californias by the sea route, rather than by following the line of overland progress to the junction of the Gila and Colorado rivers (thence branching out southward to the peninsula and northwestward to Monterey), represented a departure from the normal course, necessitating extraordinary efforts for a successful achievement. Yet both regions were settled and maintained as an overseas venture, and one of them, Baja California, served in some degree as a preliminary base for the acquisition of the other. Credit for the occupation of Baja California belongs jointly to the Jesuits and the Spanish government, which cooperated to bring it about and especially to maintain the initial gains made at their own expense by the Jesuits. The Jesuits, however, are entitled to principal recognition as the active agents of the crown who succeeded in an enterprise which for nearly two centuries had had an almost unbroken record of failure.

The disappointment of the government over the outcome of the Atondo colony in 1685 disposed it for the moment against incurring further expense in the Californias, but it was almost immediately reminded of the desirability of Spanish occupation by the appearance of *Pichilingues*. In this case the "deep-voiced" foreigners were English freebooters under Swan and Townley, who came up the coast in 1685-1686 in search of the Manila galleon. Swan tried to reach Cape San Lucas, but failed on account of the age-long difficulty of the contrary winds. He therefore turned about and made for the East Indies. The galleon was not taken, but the government was again roused to action. It was believed, however, that a new method of conquest should be tried, and therefore in 1686 an offer of 40,000 *pesos* a year was made to the Jesuits to undertake it; since the conversion of the Indians, rather than wealth in pearls or the development of rich lands, was their primary aim, it was hoped that they might succeed where others had not been able to do so. The royal government might indeed have commanded the Jesuits to do this work, but in the nature of things it was essential to

have their free consent. Thus when the Jesuits declined, on grounds of the wretchedness of the land and the small number of Indians, the government did not press the matter. The suggestion was soon to bear fruit, however. It was after the Jesuit refusal that the government made the already mentioned plan to finance Atondo again, a plan which came to naught.

The revival of the idea of a Jesuit conquest was due to two religious of that order, Fathers Eusebio Francisco Kino and Juan María Salvatierra. As a member of the Atondo expedition Father Kino had developed an enthusiasm for Jesuit penetration into the Californias which became one of the abiding aims of his life. Upon his return from the San Bruno colony he had been sent to Sonora, where in 1687 he had crossed the Altar River to found a mission at Dolores in Pimería Alta. It was there that he met Salvatierra, who had been sent out by the Jesuit Order as *visitador*, or inspector, of the missions in that region. Kino imbued Salvatierra with his enthusiasm, and the latter put himself at the head of a movement for a Jesuit occupation of Baja California. The time was unusually unpropitious, for Spain was then prostrate before France in a great war which was not yet finished but was virtually decided. Not only the government but also the higher Jesuit officials opposed the plan, but in 1696 help came from the fountain-head of Jesuit power. In that year Father Santaella, General of the Order, was in Mexico City. He favored the project. It was therefore not hard to procure a license from the government, which had so long desired the achievement of this very aim, but the proviso was attached to its consent that the Jesuits must find the funds. Early in 1697 Salvatierra was empowered to raise them, if he could, by private subscription. Salvatierra was assisted in his project by Father Juan de Ugarte, a member of the Jesuit college of Mexico City, and it was this individual who now began his important services on behalf of the Californias by suggesting the establishment of the Pious Fund of the Californias. This institution provided for the collection of funds from pious individuals and for their employment in the founding and maintenance of missions. The royal license to the Jesuits, dated February 5, 1697, called for the occupation of the Californias by the Jesuits at their own expense (assisted by the Pious Fund). The most striking feature of the contract was the

provision that the entire enterprise was to be under Jesuit control; not only were they to have charge of spiritual interests, but they were also to hire and command the soldiers and such other officials or helpers as they might need. This was something new in California history, though it had been tried elsewhere in Spanish dominions, notably in Paraguay, with success. The one check on Jesuit authority was the requirement that the conquest should be made in the name of the king and subject to the orders of the viceroy or other higher representatives of the crown.

Salvatierra met with many discouragements in getting his expedition under way. He found that insufficient provisions had been supplied. Then Fathers Kino and Piccolo, whom he had intended to take with him, did not appear at the rendezvous; Kino was detained permanently in Pimería Alta, but Piccolo eventually joined Salvatierra, though not until after the latter had reached Baja California. Though affairs were not in such a state as he could have wished them to be, Salvatierra resolved to go anyway; so he gathered together his "army" of six men and started. The voyage was made in two small crafts, which endeavored to cross from the Sinaloa coast to the peninsula. Salvatierra's boat got across the gulf in a single day, sailing on October 10, 1697, and arriving on the 11th. The other boat was caught in a storm, and did not reach its destination until November 15, over a month later.

On October 18, after a week's search, Salvatierra picked out a site about a third of the way up the peninsula which Captain Romero said he had visited two years before—on a voyage of which otherwise there is no record, unless Romero was in fact referring to the Itamarra voyage of 1694. At this place, to which the name Loreto was given, was now established the first permanent European settlement of the Californias. A fort was made, with the provisions as bulwarks, and a tiny swivel-gun was mounted. There were many natives in the vicinity, and they helped in the work of preparing the camp, receiving gifts of porridge and maize. Salvatierra was a very busy man in the early days of the colony. He was priest, officer, sentry, governor of the province, and cook for the army rolled into one. Yet he found time to study the native tongue and to conduct

religious services from the first. The Indians were invited to attend, and were given an extra allotment of porridge when they did. Trouble soon developed, however, on the part of the unconverted. They wanted as much porridge as the converts received, and furthermore began to steal things about the camp. Their dissatisfaction at length reached such proportions that on the first of November they issued demands for porridge. For several days the Spaniards thought it best to accede to their demands, as the second ship had not arrived, and their forces were hopelessly insufficient. Meanwhile they became exhausted with watching, for it was evident that the Indians, emboldened by their success, planned to rush the camp. At last, on November 12, the attack came. The Spaniards felt that it was time to use the swivel-gun. They did so, and one famous shot was fired—but the result was very different from what they could have hoped. The gun burst and killed two Spaniards, while the Indians received no harm. Seeing what had taken place the Indians charged. All seemed over now, but the Spaniards prepared to sell their lives dearly. They fired their muskets point-blank at the Indians, and several of the latter were killed. A new light dawned upon the Indians, and they came to a sudden unanimous, and simultaneous decision to run the other way. The battle was over. The next day the Indians sued for peace. Two days later, on the 15th, the second boat (the one which had left Sinaloa at the same time as Salvatierra's) reached Loreto, and on the 23d, the first boat (which had been sent back to New Spain) came in, bringing Father Piccolo. Success now seemed likely. All the Indians appeared to want conversion, and manifestly desired porridge, but Salvatierra insisted upon more instruction and greater proofs of their sincerity. The conquerors were now eighteen in number, two religious, seven soldiers, five sailors, and four Christian Indians from the mainland—a force that was large enough to cope with the Indians of the neighborhood, numerous as they were.

Salvatierra's rectorship, or presidency, of the Baja California missions (carrying with it the government of the province) lasted until his death, in 1717. The events of these twenty years are typical of frontier life and are representative also of the course of affairs in the later period of Jesuit rule. The first five years

were a particularly crucial period, for the entire weight of responsibility fell upon Salvatierra and his co-workers at this time, without more aid from the king than the royal good will. The Pious Fund did especially effective service in these years, with the result that the number of soldiers was increased, supplies made adequate and regular in shipment, and more buildings erected. In 1699 the mission of San Javier was founded south of Loreto, at a fertile site, and Father Piccolo went there as missionary. In the early years the Indians were occasionally hostile, being stirred to resistance by their native priests, or medicine-men, whose profession was of course frowned upon by the Jesuits. But the fiery Captain Tortolero proved himself to be a Californian Miles Standish and was able to keep the Indians in hand. They displayed no enthusiasm for conversion, however; on Palm Sunday of 1698 Salvatierra planned to represent a dinner of the twelve apostles, with Indians filling the rôle of the apostles, but only two Indians put in an appearance. There were also the inevitable quarrels of religious and military, especially between Salvatierra and Tortolero's successor, Mendoza, though in this case the Jesuits clearly had authority. Mendoza wanted to employ more summary methods against the Indians and also to use the soldiers in fishing for pearls. Despite the risk involved, Salvatierra did not hesitate to settle the matter by discharging eighteen of his thirty soldiers.

The most serious difficulty arose over the inadequacy of the Pious Fund for the needs of the colony, and furthermore the amount of gifts to the Fund fell away, due to the charges of the disappointed soldiery and the pearl-fishers. It is to be noticed that obscure seekers of pearls were a constant factor in the history of the province. The Jesuits complained against them, because they forced the Indians to dive for pearls, and consequently the religious would not sell provisions to these hunters of under-sea treasure. The government, however, encouraged the pearl-fishers, and by a decree of 1703 waived the old idea of the monopoly; the effective occupation of the Californias, by whatever means it might be brought about, was what the government wanted. When it became evident that the Jesuits could not sustain themselves without royal aid, the king and his councillors came to the rescue. Philip V himself attended a session

of the Council of the Indies in 1702 at which it was decided to grant a subsidy of 6,000 pesos a year and two additional missionaries (naturally, at royal expense). Shortly afterward an additional 7,000 pesos, thirty soldiers, and religious vestments were added by the king; and in later years the royal subsidy reached as high as 30,000 pesos a year, thus providing for the soldiers, sailors, and missionaries. With this aid the Pious Fund was able to furnish the rest. It is to be noted that there was almost no financial return on the royal investment and that expensive wars in Europe were all along taxing the treasury to its uttermost. Yet the Spanish government, though occasionally behindhand in its payments, made what was, for the times, a generous allowance to maintain and extend the conquests in the Californias, primarily because of their strategic importance with reference to the rich kingdom of New Spain.

Another important factor of a permanent variety was the difficulty of communications with the mainland. Many instances of delays and wreck occasioned by the storms of the Gulf of California have already been noted. In Salvatierra's time about one ship a year was lost by wreck. Salvatierra became convinced that it would be much better to develop a supply-route by way of Sonora, and in 1701 visited Kino in Pimería Alta to discuss the matter. As a result, plans were made for joint expeditions from Sonora and Baja California to see whether there were a practicable trail. It was impossible to do this by boat, as the number of wrecks left the Jesuits with an insufficient fleet of vessels, and the contrary winds were too difficult a factor to overcome readily. Explorations were made by land to the end of Jesuit rule, but never quite reached the Colorado from the side of Baja California or the settled part of the peninsula from the side of Sonora. It is important, however, that the need for such a route was recognized; Baja California was in fact at the extremity of an overland advance, occupied as the result of special circumstances before the intervening spaces.

The greatest of the Baja California Jesuits, undoubtedly, was Father Salvatierra, but second only to him stood Father Juan de Ugarte. It was Ugarte who organized the work of the Pious Fund, but he was not content with the task of administering that institution; he wanted to be an active toiler in the

field. So in 1701 he came to Loreto. Father Piccolo had just been driven away from San Javier by the Indians, but Ugarte went there to restore the mission. Moreover, confiding in his great strength, for he was a giant in stature, he sent back the soldiers who had gone there with him. He reestablished the mission and, as the site was fertile, put the Indians to work at agriculture. The experiment, which had not previously been tried, was a success, and in course of time San Javier was able to produce a surplus for use at the other missions. Ugarte was a man who radiated enthusiasm, and he was able to succeed where others would have failed. Patient, as a rule, he could also exhibit a picturesque wrath. On one occasion he took an Indian by the hair and swung him around his head, and on another seized by the hair two Indians who were fighting and dashed them to the ground. His bountiful courage was particularly useful in 1701, the year of his arrival. Provisions got so low that even Salvatierra was ready to abandon the province. Ugarte opposed and said that he would stay, whatever the others might do. All stayed therefore. Very soon they were reduced to eating roots, but a ship came in time to save them.

Naturally, upon the death of Salvatierra, Ugarte was appointed to succeed him, and he ruled until 1730, when he died at the age of seventy years. His term of office was one of great munificence to the Pious Fund, with the result that more missions were founded and the establishments generally placed on a secure basis. Ugarte resolved to solve the riddle of the gulf, if gulf it were. First it was necessary to build a ship, for those which plied between the mainland and Loreto had proved unequal to the northward voyage. Scouring the land for timber, Ugarte found a grove in an almost inaccessible ravine. The builder said that it was not suitable for a ship, but Ugarte cut it anyway, and hauled it for a hundred miles over mountain ranges to a mission on the coast. The ship was built, and named appropriately the *Triunfo de la Cruz* (Triumph of the Cross). In this boat the venerable rector, then sixty-one years of age, made a voyage up the gulf, in 1721, taking an Englishman, a certain William Strafford (called Guillermo Estrafort in the Spanish), as pilot. Ugarte proved that the sheet of water upon which he sailed was a gulf. Yet so persistent were the old ideas that the

voyage had to be repeated by Father Consag in 1746. Then at length the legend of California's insularity was overthrown forever.

A serious Indian revolt broke out in 1734. The Indians of the Cape San Lucas region had always been unruly, and particularly objected to the Jesuit efforts to deprive them of their institution of polygamy. There were only three Jesuits and six soldiers in the south when the rebellion began, and two of the former and four of the latter, together with many Indian converts, were killed. In 1735, when a boat from the Manila galleon put in at Cape San Lucas, thirteen Spaniards were massacred. The news of these events spread through the peninsula, and the Indians of the north seemed on the point of rising, wherefore all the missions, save that of Loreto, were temporarily abandoned in 1735. Sixty hard-fighting Yaqui Indians were brought over from Sonora, and they saved the situation for a time. Later in the year Governor Huydobro of Sonora came to the peninsula and decisively defeated the Indians of the south. As a result, the revolt in the north died before it had fairly broken out, and that of the south lost force, though the Indians of that quarter continued to drive off cattle and to commit other depredations for some ten years more. Abandonment of the province had been averted, however.

In 1768 the Jesuits were deprived of their position in the peninsula. Before relating how this came about, it is well at this point to summarize their achievements in Baja California. As a recent work puts it:

During their seventy years' sojourn in Lower [or Baja] California, the Jesuits had charted the east coast and explored the east and west coasts of the Peninsula and the islands adjacent thereto; they had explored the interior to the thirty-first parallel of north latitude¹ in a manner that has never been excelled; they had brought about the institution of the Pious Fund; they had founded twenty-three—including the chapel of Jesus del Monte—mission establishments, of which fourteen had proven successful;² they had erected structures of stone and beautified them; they had formulated a system of mission life never thereafter surpassed; they had not only instructed the Indians in religious matters, but had taught them many of the useful arts; they had made a network of open trails, con-

¹ About a hundred miles south of the present international boundary.

² Two of the fourteen were abandoned by the successors of the Jesuits.

necting the missions with each other and with Loreto; they had taken scientific and geographical notes concerning the country and prepared ethnological reports on the native races; they had cultivated and planted the arable lands and inaugurated a system of irrigation. . . . Considering the abundance of level land, the water and tens of thousands of Indians about them, the establishment by the Franciscans [at a later time] of twenty-one missions in Upper [or Alta] California during the fifty-four years preceding the passage of the Secularization Act, is no circumstance to the peninsular work of the Jesuits.

Finally, the Jesuits of California were men of high education, many of them of gentle birth; of their labors in the Peninsula it has been said with truth that 'remote as was the land and small the nation, there are few chapters in the history of the world on which the mind can turn with so sincere an admiration.'"³

Aside from the mission-presidio at Loreto and the other missions there were few settlements in Baja California where Spaniards lived. The Jesuits always resisted the entry of any whites other than themselves and their mission guards; they even opposed, with success, several royal projects for the founding of presidios on the west coast. Their idea, here as in Paraguay, was that the conversion and civilization of the native was the prime reason for their presence and that these aims would best be attained if the selfish interests of white settlers were not allowed to complicate the situation. There was a sprinkling of miners, however, in the south, and, as already noted, the pearl-fishers continued to visit the coasts. It remains to deal in somewhat more detail with the Pious Fund.

The Pious Fund of the Californias, founded by Salvatierra and Ugarte in 1697, came to be, eventually, one of the principal supports of the missions of both Baja and Alta California. The royal treasury never provided enough for the needs of the missions, which could not have been sustained without a much larger governmental grant if it had not been for the assistance of the Pious Fund; for the first few years, indeed, the Pious Fund was the sole reliance of the Jesuits. At the outset the method of handling was for the donors to pay over the interest merely, on sums that they had given but retained in their possession. Thus, a grant of 10,000 pesos, which was usually regarded as the capital required for the support of one mission,

³North, Arthur Walbridge, *The Mother of California* (San Francisco and New York [1908]), pp. 44-45.

entailed payment of 500 pesos a year as interest to the Jesuit administrator in Mexico City. One donor went bankrupt, however, and from the year 1716 the funds were paid over in entirety and reinvested, usually in ranches. The greatest benefactor was the Marques de Villapiente. In addition to providing sums for the founding of a number of missions, he gave several hundred thousand acres of land in Tamaulipas, with all the flocks and buildings upon them. A certain Josefa Paula de Argüelles gave nearly 200,000 pesos, and a member of the great Borja (or Borgia) family, María de Borja, Duquesa de Gandia, gave 62,000. The fund reached a total of from 500,000 to 1,000,000 pesos, and produced at a rate of about 5 per cent. A Jesuit procurator managed the estates and bought and shipped goods to the missionaries in the peninsula.

After the expulsion of the Jesuits had been decided upon in 1767, the Pious Fund was taken over by the government, but was managed as a separate financial institution, with a view to carrying out the objects of the original donors. It was henceforth applied to both Californias. Occasionally, too, funds were devoted to other than purely religious objects, as in the case of the expeditions of 1769 and 1775-1776 to Alta California, both of which were provided for, in part, out of the Pious Fund. In 1836, the Mexican government, which had succeeded Spain in exercise of sovereignty over the Californias, passed a law that the Fund should be applied toward the expenses of a bishopric of the Californias, which, with papal assent, it was proposed to establish. Thus the religious were deprived of any further utilization of the fund. In 1842 the Mexican government reassumed control, but announced that it would employ the proceeds to promote the civilization and conversion of the savages. Later in the same year the separate estates of the Pious Fund were sold, and the moneys obtained were incorporated in the Mexican treasury, but the government made formal acknowledgment of an indebtedness for religious objects in the Californias to the extent of 6 per cent a year on the amount it had received.

When the United States took over Alta California in 1848, Mexico ceased to make further payments on behalf of that territory, and for many years they lapsed. In 1868, a commission met to adjust claims between the United States and Mexico,

and while it was still in session the Catholic authorities of California put in a claim, in 1870, for a portion of the income of the Pious Fund—so much as would normally have been Alta California's share. The United States entered the claim, but as no agreement with Mexico could be reached the matter was submitted to an umpire in the person of Sir Edward Thornton. This gentleman rendered a decision in 1875, calling for payment by Mexico of 6 per cent annually on one-half the value of the fund, on the theory that Alta and Baja California were equally entitled. His decision covered the twenty-one year period from 1848 to 1869, and required payment by Mexico of \$904,070.99, or \$43,050.99 a year. Mexico paid, but announced that any future claim for arrears would be inadmissible, a contention with which the United States did not agree. In 1891 the United States put in a claim for the arrears since 1869, but Mexico declined to honor the claim. In 1902, however, the two countries consented to a submission of the case to the arbitral tribunal at the Hague—the first case ever acted upon by that body. The court gave a unanimous decision that Mexico should pay the accrued interest, which by that time amounted to \$1,420,682.67, and also that Mexico should forever pay over the sum of \$43,050.99 each year on the second of February. The money is payable to the United States, which of course recognizes its obligation to give the full amount to the Catholic Church in California. Mexico has again fallen in arrears, and the matter of the Pious Fund has taken its place as one of the perennial unpaid claims of this country against Mexico. As for the share due Baja California, Mexico has long since ceased to make payments. Thus strangely does the course of history take its way. Who could have foreseen such a varied career for that heritage from the missionary zeal of Salvatierra and Ugarte, the Pious Fund of the Californias!

In 1767, the Spanish government issued a decree expelling the Jesuits from all of their dominions. The causes for this action had scarcely anything to do with Jesuit activities in Baja California, though there, as elsewhere, charges were filed against them. It was merely part of a world-wide movement in Catholic countries against the Jesuits, growing largely out of a fear that the Jesuits were planning a great revolution against the absolute

monarchs of Europe. Portugal and France had already expelled the Jesuits, and Naples followed the lead of these countries and Spain in 1767; indeed the Pope was induced to suppress the Jesuit Order in 1773, though it was later restored. It is therefore futile to go into the question of the justice of this decision as affecting the Jesuits of Baja California, as the complaints of their detractors, which were in a great part false or very greatly exaggerated, had no real bearing on the case. In Baja California, as in all other Spanish domains, great secrecy was observed in carrying out the decree, and no hint of what was coming was given. In September, 1767, Captain Gaspar de Pertolá (a native of Catalonia) arrived in the province with a commission as governor. He called the Jesuits together, and on February 3, 1768, they were sent out of the peninsula. The Indians, it seems, made great manifestations of grief, and well they might, for their future in other hands was to be less happy than it had been under Salvatierra and his successors.

The Franciscans of the College of San Fernando,⁴ Mexico City, had been offered the California field in June, 1767, and had accepted, but it was not until April, 1768, that its first missionaries actually arrived in the peninsula. Meanwhile, the missions had been turned over to military commissioners, who gave very little thought to the Indians and very much to a search for the vast treasure that the Jesuits were reputed to have accumulated. As a result the missions were nearly ruined, and the Indians were left in sad straits, while little or no treasure was found. At the head of the Franciscans who arrived in the spring of 1768 was Junípero Serra, the appointee of the college as president of the missions, then in his fifty-fifth year. The conditions under which he took up his presidency were very different from those of the Jesuit era. Not only was the government of the province forever removed from mission control, but also the temporalities of the missions—that is, the flocks, crops, and economic resources

⁴ The College of San Fernando was not a "college" as that word is ordinarily understood in this country. It was one of several Franciscan institutions, such as the colleges of Queretaro, Jalisco, and Zacatecas, which served as an administrative center for missionary work and as a home for missionaries without employment or for those who had retired from active service. The College of San Fernando, which was destined to supply all of the missionaries of Alta, California, in the Spanish era and most of those in the Mexican, was founded in 1734.

in general—were left in the hands of the military commissioners. Only the church properties and spiritual authority were to be in charge of the Franciscans. The military men had proved to be self-seeking or else incompetent, so that the missions seemed doomed to fail. Not having food or clothing to give the Indians, the missionaries could not attract the unconverted or even hold the former protégés of the Jesuits. Later, in 1768, José de Gálvez, *visitador* (or royal inspector) of all New Spain, arrived in the peninsula, and one of his first reforms was to give back the temporalities to missionary control. With this, the new regime in the Californias, that of the typical frontier province, may fairly be said to have been installed.

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