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Music, Liturgy, and Devotional Piety in New Spain: Baroque
Religious Culture and the Re-evaluation of Religious Reform
during the 18th Century

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Social studies of religious life in New Spain have emphasized the importance of religious practices in colonial society, as well as the excess and elaboration permeating ritual performance.¹ Indeed, the metropolitan cathedral of Mexico—perhaps the most prominent ecclesiastical center in New Spain—constantly sought to gather the attention of lay society on the observance of religious ceremonies as primordial social activities. In this regard, the proliferation of lay acts of devotional piety is perhaps an indicator of the prominent place that religious culture had in Neo-Hispanic society.

As a primordially performative religious culture, the practice of liturgical piety was an important component of Neo-Hispanic society. One of the main forms of religious engagement for lay individuals was the establishment of rituals in perpetuity on behalf of the soul of a patron. In order to do this, a donor would first establish on his or her testament an endowment of a given amount of pesos to be delivered to an ecclesiastical institution (e.g., a parish, a convent, or the cathedral). That money ensured the practice of a specifically outlined ritual to commemorate the death of the patron. As an official procedure to establish the endowment, the donor would go to the office of *Fundaciones, Aniversarios, Capellanías y Obras Pías*² in the city where the official documents for the perpetuation of the ceremony would be drafted. In the case of the metropolitan cathedral, the *cabildo* named an administrator who handled every endowment benefiting that church. The principal amount of the endowment was given to the *cabildo*, who in turn invested the funds on real estate property, although there are several documented cases where the money was used to facilitate loans to third parties, for which the cathedral charged a five per cent interest rate.³ In any case, the interest earned every year from these investments was used to pay the individuals responsible for the celebration of the endowed and all other liturgical ceremonies, namely the priests, the chaplains, and the music chapel.⁴

Historical studies postulate that, by promoting the excess and exuberance characteristic of Tridentine religious aesthetics, such devotional acts triggered mutual interests for social religious reform in the crown and the church during the 18th century. In this regard, the study of baroque religious culture has focused on the ostensible cost in production and religious performative excess that characterized devotional piety. On the one hand, the lavish adornment of sacred spaces, ostentatious feast-day celebrations and funeral rites, are recognized not only as attributes associated with the exuberance of colonial ritual, but also as excessive financial burdens that the local congregation had to withstand.⁵ This was especially true in small towns where confraternities used most of the gross local income to sponsor ceremonies, festivities and forms of entertainment as part of religious celebrations.⁶ On the other hand, the enactment of superstitious beliefs,

common in performative acts of lay devotion, have been considered symptomatic of the excessive religious obscurantism prevalent in Neo-Hispanic religious culture.⁷ Scholars have pointed out that some of these endowed ceremonies made extensive use of numerical symbolism as a means of connecting the soul of the patron with divinity through ritual performance. For example, a patron could establish an endowment to celebrate three masses on the altar of the Holy Trinity for his soul. By using this numerical symbolism, it was believed the individual made a connection with the divine after death (in this case, with the mystery of the Holy Trinity), which in turn would take the patron's soul out of purgatory.⁸

Elaborate production of ritual performance was arguably a hallmark of baroque religious culture, and to this end, the cathedral of Mexico strived to celebrate ceremonies "with all pomposity."⁹ In the cathedral, music was the primordial element used to elevate and adorn liturgical practices.¹⁰ As one of the most important elements of religious ritual, music was always present in each ceremony, and during major festivities (like in the case of Corpus Christi) it was an essential component. To this end, the *cabildo* of the cathedral called for people, even from outside of the music chapel, to play "music with all instruments and voices willing to attend the celebration throughout the octave."¹¹

Fitting within the notion of "spectacle", embedded in Tridentine aesthetics, music was a quintessential ingredient of ritual exercise. Since the arrival of the first missionaries in the 16th-century music was recognized as an indispensable tool to teach doctrine.¹² And for religious festivities, the population in Mexico City—the largest part of which was of Indian descent—gave especial importance to music as part of the ritual. In this regard, acts of patronage to promote music performance in the cathedral were not exclusive to lay donors. In 1611 archbishop García Guerra sponsored the performance of music in between ceremonies during the festivities of Corpus Christi, in addition to the music performed as part of the liturgy for the feast.¹³ This became an incentive for a later archbishop, Juan de la Serna, who in the 17th century established an endowment to perpetually sponsor music performance during this occasion.¹⁴

In regard to the important role that music had in liturgical practices, some authors have emphasized that, in addition to the proliferation of sacred music repertory from renowned European polyphonic masters, the musicians at the cathedral enjoyed a reputation of being as proficient as some of the best musicians in the king's chapel.¹⁵ Such emphasis on music, as part of the cathedral's services, has promoted the notion that, due to the accounts about the sheer talent of chapel musicians and the quality of music repertory, the cathedral boasted a splendid religious life. In this way, the corroboration of Tridentine aesthetics as part of religious ceremony in New Spain has invariably exacerbated the notion that Mexico

City was a locality of decadent and elaborate ritual customs, a discourse that has crossed the fields of socioeconomics, cultural studies and historical musicology.

Within the context of what has been labeled Baroque Catholicism (as synonym of excess and elaboration in ritual performance) the social study of lay patronage—intrinsic to devotional piety—has received special attention. In an effort to attain salvation, patrons sponsored the celebration of diverse rituals that formed part of the Catholic liturgy. Although in many of these ceremonies lay individuals did not play an active role in the ritual (e.g., Mass, the Divine Office) processions and pilgrimages for important liturgical feasts (like for example, Holy Week and Corpus Christi) were arenas of active lay participation. These ceremonies included physical enactments that were, in the eyes of the clergy, not so much worthless as they were barbaric and grotesque, since they caused mockery and abhorrence.¹⁶

In light of the superstition, mortification and bizarre nature implicit in lay liturgy, scholars have recognized Episcopal and royal initiatives towards religious reform during the 18th century as a reaction to the performative excess displayed in acts of lay devotion. Nevertheless, historical analysis has shown that, despite criticism, the church indeed continued to endorse the practice of devotional piety, as corroborated by the number of private endowments for religious ritual established consistently throughout the 18th century, thus putting into question the effectiveness of religious reform.¹⁷

Based on this dichotomy, scholarly studies have proposed that the proliferation of lay patronage was possibly a social reaction against reform policies. However, in evaluating the impact of reform on religious life, such studies have yet to account for dynamics of ritual and ceremony. In this light, the fact that the church tolerated—or encouraged—certain acts of lay devotion was perhaps symptomatic of alternate factors affecting ritual performance. The study of ritual dynamics at the cathedral of Mexico poses an interesting case study in this regard. A historical study of political and economic issues affecting the cathedral's treasury during the early 18th century not only challenges the notion of excess and ostentation embedded in our understanding of baroque religious practices. It also illustrates the central role of devotional piety in ensuring the continuity of liturgical exercise in the cathedral.

The practice of devotional piety, as part of religious ritual, secured the celebration of ceremonies beyond those services, advocating for the souls of deceased patrons (like the celebration of a number of masses each year, or the annual commemoration of a patron's death through a vigils service). Lay endowments also supported the production of rituals that formed part of the liturgical calendar. One example would be the endowment by Antonio de Esquivel Castañeda for the celebration of the Matins Office on the feast day of Saint Peter. Every year the endowment would earn 200 pesos used

to pay the chaplains singing plainchant in the Office, the attending canons to the Office, and the chapel master for the composition of music (*villancicos*) every year.¹⁸ Another example was the endowment of the Renovation Masses of the Holy Sacrament celebrated every Thursday. Every year this endowment was used to pay the musicians performing at Thursday Mass as it was established by dean Rodrigo Flores Valdes.¹⁹

One of the main difficulties in the assessment of religious reform in New Spain is the evaluation of religious life as a social conglomerate of diverse devotional sensibilities that transpired in ecclesiastical and secular ritual practices. In New Spain, the dynamics of social exchange were deeply embedded in the dynamics of religious culture. And if it is true that Hispanic Catholicism developed a diversity of local and popular traditions²⁰ it was, perhaps, the accumulation of local custom into liturgical practice what made religious culture even more relevant to social life. The challenge of mapping out religious practices in New Spain arises not from a dichotomy between lay and standard (ecclesiastical) liturgical exercise, but from an understanding of liturgy and ritual as an arena in which both categories overlap. In this light, an assessment of religious reform in New Spain should be informed by an evaluation of different factors affecting the dynamics of ritual and ceremony, in which devotional piety emerges as an important shaping force in the observance of religious life.

If it is true that efforts towards religious reform aimed to curb acts of lay devotion, considered an abuse of liturgical practices, for the church and the crown the incentive of lay patronage largely measured the extent to which such efforts were applied to the exercise of devotional piety. In this paper I intend to show that, as dynamics of ritual and ceremony in New Spain were sensitive to political and economic forces, efforts towards religious reform were mediated not so much by an aesthetic critique of ritual performance as by financial interests that the crown and the church had to enforce reform policies. Thus, by recognizing ritual and ceremony as a social exercise affected by external factors, a historical study of religious reform positions devotional piety in a different light of analysis, not as antithetical, but as a critical agent to the continuity of liturgical exercise.

Colonial religious culture was primordially a social collective dynamic acting as a cohesive bond among different social groups. In this sense, the exercise of religious ritual was a homogenizing agent positioning the church as a leading entity in the social hierarchy in which the shared histories and values from ethnically diverse groups converged. Within this context, the continuity of ritual exercise was important to consolidate the sociopolitical presence of the church, for which the stability of the cathedral's treasury—as the central entity of the Episcopate—was essential, more so if we consider that the level of ecclesiastical income could determine the institutional weight that the church exerted in society.

As a result, the *cabildo* relied in good part on acts of lay devotion to sustain ritual performance within the global context of the cathedral's liturgical practices. The private sponsorship of religious ceremonies was, by no means, limited to the establishment of requiem services and masses to commemorate deceased patrons. Endowments also provided important subsidies for the celebration of festivities that formed part of the liturgical calendar. These funds covered a substantial portion of the annual cost of producing religious rituals, which included a variety of expenses, from payments to officiating priests in the Mass, to wax, wine, and oil. Although the church had a constant concern towards the spiritual role it was supposed to fulfill in society, this issue was reflected in the clergy's constant preoccupation with financial matters. And in this regard, the financial solidity of the church resulted from a relationship between the need for income by the Episcopate and the popular manifestations of piety that blossomed in New Spain during the 18th century. If it is true that the cathedral clergy considered the endowments of religious celebrations as deeds that fostered the spiritual growth of their patrons, clerics also received important financial benefits from such subsidies. At the turn of the 18th century lay sponsorship became especially significant for the cathedral, since the official source of revenue, the annual collection of tithes, was severely affected due to shifts in the local economy.

By the end of the Hapsburg rule in 1700 New Spain was depleted of resources for economic growth. A financial crisis affecting the agricultural economy brought a series of economic constraints to the cathedral that invariably jeopardized religious practices. One of the symptoms of a damaged local economy was the inability of the cathedral to rely on its primordial source of income—the annual collection of tithes—to cover internal finances. Information from treasury records is especially important in this regard:

... from the year of 1650 through December of 1698 ... the treasury shows losses of 78,956 pesos, 3 tomines y 6 granos, and also 10,864 pesos from [tithes] documents that are being prepared for collection. The treasury's regular income of one ninth and a half is not enough to pay regular expenses for chapel ministers, choir singers, wax, wine, and oil, and although recent years have shown growth [in the collection of tithes], the treasury shows losses of 39,518 pesos, 3 tomines, and 3 granos.²¹

Of the annual gross collection of tithes, one ninth and a half would go directly to the treasury of the cathedral to pay expenses related to ritual and ceremony, and roughly the same was given to the crown. However, in the cathedral of Mexico this allocated income had proven insufficient and the *cabildo* requested assistance from the king on several occasions.

Specifically, they asked him to donate his portion from the tithes collection, as a document from 1700 shows:

... His majesty, as head [of the church] could assist her in order to function, and give her the complete amount of the two royal ninths to spend it on the divine cult.²²

If the royal portion from tithes was so important for the proper functioning of the church income generated from private endowments was more essential to ritual and ceremony. These endowments not only provided important complements to the salaries of chaplains, members of the music chapel, and priests, but also accrued annual revenue to the treasury.

Marking the beginning of the Bourbon era, the first decades of the 18th century show a period of economic crisis and adjustment within the cathedral. Primary documents such as acts, treasury books and correspondence are important sources of information about salaries and expenditures related to ritual and ceremony, and an important reference for an assessment of financial issues related to the enforcement of Episcopal reform policy. This internal auscultation of financial and ritual dynamics in the cathedral will hopefully shed new light on the interests of the church in curbing acts of lay devotion contrasting with the incentives of the crown to endorse religious reform.

In order to understand the role of devotional piety in religious practices we must first consider the functioning of liturgical ritual. Religious celebrations gravitated around the observance of festivities as part of the liturgical calendar. Such celebrations included primordially a group of ceremonies performed by members of the clergy and employees of the cathedral, namely chaplains, and musicians. All ceremonies were set to be performed entirely through music (except for processions), for which this was considered to be an essential element of ritual performance.²³ In this regard, the chaplains and the music chapel were the individuals immediately responsible for ritual celebrations through the performance of psalms, antiphons, hymns, motets and villancicos in each service.

As one of the main festivities of the liturgical calendar the feast of Corpus Christi was one of the most elaborate liturgical events, and as such, the canons aimed for a celebration "with all pomposity, rejoice and solemnity."²⁴ In this sense, the exercise of religious ritual during the feast of Corpus Christi was something that went beyond the social spectacle depicted by the procession in the secular space. It encompassed the performance of a complex alignment of ceremonies observed in the liturgical calendar and obeying Episcopal guidelines for their celebration. During the feast of Corpus Christi the music chapel and the chaplains were involved in diverse ceremonies and rituals that included the Divine Office, the Mass, the procession,

the Circular Jubilee (a ritual venerating the exhibit of the Holy Sacrament in the monstrance on the main altar), and private anniversaries.²⁵

The Divine Office denoted a ritual that sometimes honored other saints during the week of Corpus. As one of the movable feasts of the liturgical calendar the celebration of the octave of Corpus Christi (which lasts eight days) occurred in different weeks each year during the month of May or June. Consequently, the eight days could coincide with the celebration of different feasts for other saints and martyrs that had fixed days in the calendar. Thus, other festivities that aligned with the Corpus octave could include saints like John the Baptist and Peter, as well as other Hispanic and local saints like Ferdinand.

During the 18th century numerous patrons, who attended the cathedral as a place for worship, endowed liturgical ceremonies beyond the mere Requiem Mass rituals in advocacy for their own souls (a type of ceremony that has received the most attention in scholarship studying devotional piety). Private endowments also accounted for the celebration of different feasts throughout the liturgical year. And beyond the canon of Episcopal rules established by the Council of Trent, liturgical practices in New Spain were shaped, in large part, by social customs and sensibilities expressed in the exercise of devotional acts of piety. The continued establishment of an aristocratic society in the city, the establishment of the church not as a church of conquest and evangelization, but as a true Neo-Hispanic Episcopate responding to the local demands and needs of its local congregation, and the enforcement of Episcopal law based less on the embrace of Roman policy as on the preservation of local custom, were factors that promoted the private sponsorship of ceremonies that, in the end, would ensure the practice of ritual and ceremony throughout the liturgical calendar.

The endowment of liturgical feasts was definitely a financial boon for the cabildo in securing the celebration of ceremonies that entitled a substantial expense in their production. This was especially true during the first half of the 18th century, a period marked by acute financial deficit in the cathedral. In effect, it is during this time that the exuberance of ritual performance comes into question, since the individuals immediately affected were those responsible for ritual performance, namely the music chapel and the choir chaplains.

The chaplains were assigned, above all else, to sing in the choir during the Divine Office. Officially, the founding act of the cathedral established a number of six.²⁶ A private endowment, created in the 17th century by Álvaro de Lorenzana, had donated to the cabildo the amount of 36,000 gold pesos as a principal to be invested in real estate. The interest earned by this endowment was to guarantee the funding of eight additional choir positions for the observance of the Divine Office. These endowed positions, known as the Capellanías de Lorenzana, helped not only to secure an enlarged

choir but also encouraged aspiring chaplains to serve at the cathedral in the lowest ecclesiastical ranks, which were prime requisites to be considered for one of these chaplaincies, which were loftier positions within the church hierarchy.²⁷

However, due to economic conditions affecting the cathedral's treasury at the end of the 17th century, the Lorenzana endowment was affected, and by 1691 salaries for these chaplaincies ended. In a letter written on December 11, 1691, the chaplains complained to the cabildo that they had not received any payments for the past three years; they were in extreme need and asked for charity until their salaries were released.²⁸ Poor conditions persisted well into the 18th century, nonetheless, and the chaplains continued their work without pay. In 1700, once again they petitioned the cabildo for a charity donation. In a cabildo meeting that took place on June 18, 1700, the dean agreed on the necessity to release funds to the chaplains. The chantre (the individual in charge with leading the choir by showing the proper intonation of plainchant melodies) further mentioned that, although the dispensed charities were just and needed, the farms on which the principal of the Lorenzana endowment was invested were in very bad condition and it was likely that those properties would be lost in less than a year.²⁹ Therefore, due to a reduced earned interest from the endowment the canons were forced to lower the salary of the chaplains from 200 to 175 pesos per year.³⁰

But even with reduced salaries the canons were not able to collect promptly interests from their investments every year, therefore, payment of salaries was seriously delayed. Moreover, the canons were not sure if the endowment would be able to lend any further support to all eight Lorenzana chaplaincies. Thus, on June 18, 1700, the cabildo agreed that from then on all individuals aspiring to a Lorenzana chaplaincy should be able to look after their needs with just the reduced salary that the endowment could offer at that time, in order to avoid further charities to the chaplains.³¹ After all, the treasury of the cathedral was already suffering losses due to a deficit in the collection of tithes from previous years, as mentioned above. And as salaries for all positions were not guaranteed, the canons were forced to suppress two of the eight chaplaincies. On the same meeting of June 18, two such positions were vacant and the canons were pondering whether to open a call for applicants or to eliminate vacancies. The author has not yet been able to find a document mentioning the date when these positions were actually suppressed. What is certain is that by 1735 these two chaplaincies had already been eliminated.³²

If it is true that the Capellanías de Lorenzana were conceived as an incentive for young clerics to hold a post with a guaranteed income, the recession of the first two decades of the 18th century eroded the appeal of those positions. In documents from the decade of 1720 it is indeed very common

to find requests from chaplains to switch from a *Capellanía de Lorenzana* to a *Capellanía de Erección*, or vice versa, depending on which chaplaincies seemed to be more financially stable in a given year.³³

By the turn of the 18th century the deficit affecting the internal economy of the cathedral forced the *cabildo* to take strict measures in the supervision of debits derived from salaries. And along with the chaplains, the music chapel was affected by internal financial changes. One of the new measures adopted by the canons called for the regular evaluation of all musicians with the aim of dismissing a few or cutting back on the salaries of others. However, during the early 18th century the music chapel had just the necessary individuals for the celebration of ceremonies and their salaries were a little shy from fair, as attested by the *chantre*.³⁴

With their assigned salaries being as low as possible, musicians also had needs of their own which they attempted to cover. On several occasions more than a handful of individuals approached the *cabildo* for a salary increase, a loan, or charity only to be turned away. And as much as the canons felt an obligation to help the musicians of the cathedral, the treasury was not strong enough to cover that burden.³⁵ Due to the delicate condition of the cathedral's treasury the canons could either grant small and extraordinary raises through channels that did not affect the treasury or simply denied requests. On May 14, 1700, for example, Juan Domingo Castañeda was granted a small raise that came directly from the dean's private funds as to "not aggravate the treasury."³⁶ The cathedral also had to stop providing loans to musicians and other patrons, funds that came directly from the treasury. On June 18, 1700, one of the organists, Juan Esquivel, was denied his request for a loan for the second time since the dean thought that this would mean opening the door for all musicians to ask for loans or salary supplements, something that had never happened before, at least according to him.³⁷ In this way, the dean decreed on December 10, 1700, that the *cabildo* would no longer accept petitions for either loans or salary increases.³⁸

Symptomatic of tight finances were also disputes regarding the right of compensation among musicians for their performance during religious rituals. On February 16, 1700, for example, another organist, Juan Téllez, petitioned to have 50 pesos assigned to him permanently out of the salary of Francisco Orsuschil, the oldest organist of the cathedral for whom Téllez had been covering ceremonies for some time. The *cabildo* denied the petition and called a meeting to decide whether or not Orsuschil, who had served the cathedral for forty years and was too old to perform, should retire.³⁹ The *cabildo* voted against retirement since this would mean issuing pension payments to Orsuschil. Moreover, other musicians would be likely encouraged to retire as well. This represented a potential burden, for not only would the canons be accountable for pensions, but they also would have

to look for means to hire new musicians for the chapel. Thus, on February 19, the cabildo decided that retirement was perhaps not the best course of action. The canons agreed that it was more convenient to continue paying Orsuschil his salary of 240 pesos, saying that if he could not attend services due to his age it would pass unnoticed.⁴⁰

As a further strategy to cope with financial constraints, the dismissal of unnecessary individuals was also a channel that did not pass unnoticed by the cabildo. On March 9, 1700, Joseph Tovar, who was a choir assistant, wrote a petition for a salary increase, as he had only 50 pesos allocated and this amount was insufficient for his needs. After hearing the petition the dean asked the secretary about that individual and what position he had in the choir. The secretary responded that he was a mere assistant in hopes of someday being appointed to a vacancy in the music chapel. The dean replied that this was "a good reform," since there was no need to have any such assistants in the choir. Therefore, the dean rescinded the 50 pesos assigned as salary and Joseph Tovar was dismissed from the choir.⁴¹

The termination of individuals deemed unnecessary was a measure constantly enforced from 1700 to 1712 in order to improve the treasury, and in this respect, the music chapel was kept in continuous oversight. Not only were new admissions to the chapel denied but the cabildo constantly looked for individuals that could be spared from the group as well. Toward this end, in 1709, the canons once again asked the chapel master, Antonio de Salazar, to evaluate the music chapel. Shortly after, Salazar wrote a letter to the canons mentioning which individuals had not shown any progress in their instruments. In his letter of November 21, Salazar gave the names of at least three men without which the chapel could have done very well. These were singers Joseph de Guevara and Manuel de Cardenas, and the harpist Diego Suárez.⁴²

In a continued effort to improve internal financial conditions the cabildo kept close surveillance of the music chapel looking for individuals to dismiss again in 1711 and 1712. In 1711 the canons asked the accountant to revise the list of chapel members in order to recognize those who had died and note their salaries.⁴³ But as deteriorating conditions prevailed in 1712 the cabildo once again asked the accountant to revise the list of chapel members and their salaries. In a meeting on April 18, after the accountant had informed the cabildo of current salaries and vacancies in the chapel, the canons called for the chapel master, Antonio de Salazar, and asked him if all listed musicians were strictly necessary for the celebration of ceremonies. To this Salazar responded that at that point all of the musicians were just enough to cover the cathedral's needs.⁴⁴

Due to the economic collapse of the agricultural economy during the late 17th and early 18th century, the treasury of the cathedral could not rely on the official source of income to pay for ritual practices (i.e., the annual

collection of tithes). To this end, the subsidy derived from private endowments provided not only financial support to the treasury but also extra incentives to musicians, chaplains, and priests to perform in religious celebrations. In this respect the feast of Corpus Christi poses an interesting example. As one of the most important religious celebrations the festivity caught the favor of wealthy patrons who, through their donations, attempted to perpetuate the observance of the most important ceremonies for the feast, namely, the Matins Office, and the Circular Jubilee. However, these endowments were not exempt from political disputes and, as important financial incentives for the church, the *cabildo* made every effort to secure these funds, since they benefited the cathedral's personnel.

The Corpus feast never received so much attention at the metropolitan cathedral of Mexico as it did in 1710. On December 16 the *cabildo* received a private endowment to cover the cost of celebrating the Matins Office throughout the entire octave. On that day, a member of the *cabildo* named Costela is recorded to have met an individual, Francisco Orozco, who was interested in donating 20,000 gold pesos. This sum, invested in real estate, would produce 1,000 pesos a year, which would be sufficient to finance the ritual for each of the eight days of the Corpus octave.⁴⁵ Orozco's endowment is of deep historical significance since the main purpose of the endowment was to fund all Matins Offices during the octave of Corpus Christi every year. This would include the coincidental feasts of saints and martyrs outside of the Corpus liturgy but which, nonetheless, were important locally. Clauses in the endowment documents, thus, called for the compilation of music for all Matins Offices of saints and martyrs that occurred during the octave. However, not all celebrations that coincided with the octave were of equal category, since the rituals for some saints (like Petronilla) were of lesser rank than major feast rituals (i.e., Corpus Christi), and thus, these were performed with less elaboration. By sponsoring all Matins Offices Orozco was not only guaranteeing the celebration of the octave ritual. The endowment was ultimately shaping the performance of liturgy by elevating the performance and category of rituals for lower-ranked feast days. And in this regard, the *cabildo* gave special priority to the stipulations of the donor on how to celebrate endowed rituals, for which the canons had agreed to "observe the conditions placed on the endowment documents . . . for being a legitimate right [of the donor]."⁴⁶

Following the acceptance of the endowment Costela mentioned on January 13, 1711, that, since the Matins Offices of the Corpus octave were to be celebrated as specified in documents tied to Orozco's donation, the *cabildo* should notify the chapel master, Antonio de Salazar, to gather and organize all plainchant melodies for the Matins Offices of all saints that coincided with the octave that year, and consequently, that the same be done in all subsequent years.⁴⁷ Although Salazar complied with this, his compilation

of music (comprising polyphonic motets and villancicos) seems to have contradicted Orozco's expectations. On June 23, 1711, the cabildo received notice that no funds were to be given to the cathedral since the Matins Offices were not celebrated according to Francisco Orozco's stipulations.⁴⁸ The following year, even though the canons had corrected the chapel master in his choice of music, Orozco was not to make the donation either, since Salazar again that year had failed to gather the chant repertory for all Matins Offices.⁴⁹ Therefore, in order to secure funds for the celebration of the Corpus Matins in 1712 the cabildo acted quickly and just days before the feast, Joseph Perez de Guzman had already written the plainchant melodies for the Matins Office of Saint Ferdinand, the only saint that coincided with the octave that year.⁵⁰

As illustrated by the case of Francisco Orozco, the endowment of festivities was no simple matter. Then as now, patrons had very specific guidelines under which a donation was made. Also, before an endowment was accepted by the cathedral, a majority of the members of the cabildo had to agree with these guidelines. Furthermore, if the specific guidelines stipulated by the donor were not observed, the cathedral ran the risk of losing the patron's favor. The endowment of the Circular Jubilee is another example of the complexities involved in the dynamics of patronage. In 1745 the cabildo received information that Don Juan Etanislao de Meñaca, one of the canons, had agreed to donate 9,000 gold pesos as endowment to celebrate the Circular Jubilee. Meñaca officially made his intentions known to the cabildo on April 13, 1745, and all canons present at that meeting accepted the offer. On April 30, however, a member of the cabildo said that official voting to accept Meñaca's endowment had not taken place according to cabildo regulations, since only the dean and a few individuals were present during the session, which means a majority vote was not given. Moreover, it was stated that during that session Meñaca himself was present when voting took place and this was against cabildo rules. The dean called then for a new vote, but it took almost a year for the canons to reconvene on the matter.

Why the delay? An act from March 17, 1746, shows that there were further interests involved in the distribution of revenue generated by the 9,000 pesos among the canons. The Matins Offices, during the octave of Corpus Christi, required the singing of the chaplains—both de Erección and Lorenzana—who were entitled to a specially allocated amount for their performance in the choir. However, in Meñaca's stipulations for the ritual of the Jubilee no provisions were considered for those choir singers. The canons pointed out that since the chaplains were the ones doing most of the work during the Office, it was necessary to acknowledge them with an appropriate allocation, as it had been done with the Matins Offices for the Corpus octave. Moreover, the cabildo maintained that, in order to welcome

Meñaca's endowment, it was necessary to observe the Jubilee ritual at two different times: one, during Matins, and the other when the Holy Sacrament was deposited in custodia. Funds from the endowment would be allocated in two parts: one for the chaplains who attended Matins and the other for the ones who attended during the deposit of the Sacrament. This way, payments were not exclusive to the chaplains singing Matins. The dean was prompted by all members of the cabildo to meet with Meñaca and adjust the endowment documents to include these new provisions, if the anniversary was to be accepted by the cathedral.⁵¹

Other endowments that were important to the celebration of the Corpus octave included 1,800 gold pesos donated by archbishop Don Juan de la Serna, that generated an annual profit of 90 pesos. This income paid the musicians of the chapel for the performance of villancicos inside the choir before the hour of Vespers.⁵² Also, the civil government of Mexico City donated an annual amount of 100 gold pesos to be distributed among the musicians of the chapel who attended throughout the octave to perform in the choir, from the time when the procession ended until noon. This donation was made in order to stop the performance of the Indian dances that usually took place during this time:

The Dean mentioned that the Noble City had requested the musicians from the chapel to perform and sing after Mass throughout the Corpus octave instead on the habitual dances of Moctezuma, which had caused some indecencies and lack of decorum for the Holy Sacrament.⁵³

The establishment of endowments was important to gather funds for the celebration of religious rituals. In this respect, private donations secured the payment of things as basic as incense and as significant as complementary payments to the salaries of chaplains and musicians in charge of performing hymns, antiphons, responsories, and villancicos for different ceremonies. The ritual of Corpus Christi, celebrated at the cathedral of Mexico during the first half of the 18th century, was sensitive to the influx of capital acquired by the cabildo. And although smaller endowments existed to sponsor the expense of basic items like wax and candles, it was donations like Francisco Orozco's, Juan de Meñaca's, Juan de la Serna's, and the city government's that ensured the most essential items for the Corpus ritual, that is, the performance of the chaplains and the music chapel.

In our final assessment of economic conditions in the cathedral's treasury we are faced with the inquiry about a wider socio-economic context to these conditions. In fact, the financial constraints of the cathedral are parallel to events occurring in the local agricultural economy during the first half of the 18th century, the basis of New Spain's colonial economic system. This obeyed in part to the fact that the drain of liquid assets was pervasive during

the 1700s. Spanish coined metal suffered a devaluation throughout the 18th century with respect to the currency arrived from the New World.⁵⁴ Seemingly, Spain held a system of double monetary circulation, which aimed to guarantee the prestige of American currency, highly in demand by European nations and used in commercial transactions with Asia. Thus, the praised coined metals from the New World were always destined to leave the imperial economic system. Although, the production of silver tripled throughout the 18th century in New Spain—shipping enormous quantities of coined metal to Spain—only one third of the gross production remained in the peninsula. Paradoxically, the more silver that was produced in New Spain the less currency was available for internal circulation as a result of this export.

Scholars have pointed out that the lack of productivity in the New Spain's internal economy triggered an inflation of prices in the agricultural sector during periods that coincide with financial deficits in the cathedral's treasury.⁵⁵ As I mentioned above, the devaluation in the price of grains taxed as tithes payments prompted the cabildo to ask the king for assistance to the treasury by lending his royal ninths. In turn, the devaluation of 1700 triggered a deficit that the canons sought to compensate by cutting expenses and salaries. Studies also show that the agricultural economy in the valley of Mexico experienced a period of crisis from 1710 to 1714.⁵⁶ This further suggests that there are external factors pertinent to the local economy of New Spain that need to be considered in order to account for fluctuations in the value of investments on real estate property by the church and their impact on the financing of religious practices.

The economic inflation in New Spain was not the product of an increment of circulating currency, the enormous production of silver notwithstanding. This was rather a consequence of the low productivity of the internal economy vis à vis increasing prices in the international market.⁵⁷ Scholars propose that 18th-century economic policies in New Spain aimed for the appropriation of local wealth, thus withholding resources necessary for the operation of industries like haciendas and ingenios,⁵⁸ and further impacting the market of property sublease. In this way, the impact on real estate invariably affected investments on properties supposed to produce annual revenue, like in the case of the property on which the Lorenzana endowment was invested.

Given the above economic scenario it is interesting to observe the corresponding parallels between the local economy in New Spain and financial conditions at the cathedral of Mexico. In addition to the devaluation of grain prices in 1700—reciprocal to the reduction of salaries for chaplains, the cancellation of two chaplaincies from the Lorenzana endowment, and the possibility of losing the property on which the endowment was invested—the agricultural crisis of 1710–1714 coincides with the cabildo's

interests to shorten personnel in the music chapel in 1700, 1709, 1711, and 1712. In addition, it was during this time when the cabildo held a tight oversight on expenditures derived from loans and salary increases released to musicians.

This information is perhaps very telling not only of the role that devotional piety played in the subsidy of religious practices, but of investment activities on real property by the church. In this regard, the proliferation of acts of lay devotion during the 18th century may not be a reaction against reform policies, but rather indicators of Episcopal approaches towards religious reform. On the one hand, Episcopal efforts towards reform were primordially driven by a critique of the excessive and superstitious nature of lay devotion. However, such censorship was mostly directed towards performative acts of physical mortification that took place outside the church. For although funeral rituals endowed by deceased individuals usually incorporated practices regarded as superstitious and liturgically abusive, the clergy did not seem to put a halt to these acts of lay piety. In this regard, it is important to consider that, compared to the annual average 20,000 pesos income derived from the collection of tithes, the cathedral's treasury received roughly the same amount every year from investments on real estate property derived from lay endowments, which amounted in 1751 to 376,455 pesos.⁵⁹

Ecclesiastical initiatives towards religious reform in New Spain invariably show a process mediated less by aesthetic issues, pertinent to Baroque Catholicism, as by financial incentives derived from practices in devotional piety. As such practices were symptomatic of the importance of liturgy and ritual in Neo-Hispanic society, by seeking and promoting investments on acts of lay devotion the church strived to retain its position as epicenter of religious culture, and thus, as a central social institution, a position consolidated in New Spain during the Hapsburg period. In contrast to this, the Bourbon monarchy attempted to rebuild the nation state from the political and economic ruin left by the preceding dynasty. In order to do this, the crown aimed to establish a new political and economic infrastructure that required a social reconfiguration in which the church was not the center.

The Bourbon attack on devotional piety was primarily a reaction against the burden that religious practices placed on the financial assets of some localities, since by gearing all resources towards ritual performance individuals were not able to pay tribute to the royal treasury. In large part, this was due to devotional rituals sponsored by civil groups and performed in the church. Confraternities were civil groups that provided financial means necessary for liturgical celebrations, and in the case of small localities most of the capital, derived from ranching and farming activities, was channeled to sponsor the celebration of religious festivities in the liturgical calendar.⁶⁰

As the Spanish crown was eager to promote the advances of science and learning of the enlightenment, ecclesiastical excess and superstition was one of the main targets of Bourbon social reform. Such concerns were no less reinforced by the active economic role that the church played in society. In addition to controlling a substantial amount of financial capital derived from private endowments, the clergy also participated and controlled the circulation of liquid currency through the annual collection of tithes, invested on local industries (e.g., haciendas, ingenios) and the real estate market, and received an important subsidy from the crown to sustain religious life.⁶¹

Bourbon policies on religious reform advocated for a poor and humble church limited to a life of prayer and penance. Stripping the clergy of its large economic position in society would emancipate the secular social sphere from religious obscurantism, thus allowing the use of financial assets to reconstruct the economy of the state. After almost two centuries of perpetual strife, in 1700 the new Bourbon monarchy aimed to bolster its war-depleted treasury. Protective duties and subsidies for new industries, the reduction of internal customs between constituent kingdoms, and the reliance on the American colonies—most specifically New Spain and Peru—for the production of silver to support new financial strategies in the circulation of coined currency, were important measures for the economic upturn of the state.⁶² New reforms contemplated the use of ecclesiastical assets to foster the national economy, which led to discourses questioning the right of the church to possess real property.

To this end, regalists evaluated the resources that church property could contribute to the state economy. Not only could the crown redirect the payment of decimal tribute to the royal treasury (which also meant the stop of royal subsidy through the royal ninths granted since the early 17th century). Ultimately, the vast ecclesiastical assets derived from lay patronage could likely foster the economic growth of the state. Until today there is no precise information on the gross annual income of the church during the 18th century. However, there is information that by 1801 the church earned 4.6 million pesos per year, of which 2.2 million were derived from lay endowments invested on property, a strong incentive for the crown to decree a desamortization of all ecclesiastical property in 1804.⁶³

Initiatives towards religious reform during the 18th century depict institutional interests clearly informed by financial interests. On the one hand, the crown efforts did not envision an aesthetic change in religious life as they aimed to appropriate ecclesiastical resources supporting ritual exercise. On the other, if the church censured performative excess in devotional piety—an issue understood as a point of critique of Baroque Catholicism, as current studies propose—it certainly did not discourage lay sponsorship of liturgical practices throughout the 18th century. The role of devotional

piety as an important agent of colonial religious life derives not only from providing a basis to sustain liturgical exercise (and therefore, an important foundation for the clergy to exert its social weight), but ultimately from its capacity to shape liturgical practice. Not surprisingly, it also became one of the main incentives for the crown to enforce new social and economic policies towards religious reform.

The dynamics of ritual and ceremony during the early 18th century are not so much a testimony of the excessive and elaborate nature of Neo-Hispanic religious culture as they are an illustration of the complex relationship and positioning of lay devotion in regard to the continuity of liturgical exercise. In this light, the study of religious reform as a critique of Baroque Catholicism ought to go beyond the evaluation of aesthetic principles in ritual practices in order to assess larger political and economic diacritics, thus putting devotional piety in a new light for further consideration.

Notes

1. Linda A. Curcio-Nagy, "Giants and Gypsies: *Corpus Christi* in Colonial Mexico City" in William H. Beezley, Cheryl English Martin, and William French eds., *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1994).

2. A rough translation would be "foundations, anniversaries, chaplaincies, and acts of piety" (or charity). This office controlled every endowment established in the city and oversaw that the church selected by the donor received, every year, the money for celebrating the endowed ritual.

3. Jesus A. Ramos-Kittrell, *Dynamics of Ritual and Ceremony at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Mexico, 1700–1750* (PhD diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2006), 82–5.

4. Led by the chapel master, the music chapel was the group of musicians hired by the cabildo to perform some of the most important parts of the liturgy for the Mass, the Divine Office, and the processions, which have been traditionally set to music since the middle ages.

5. Brian Larkin, "Liturgy, Devotion, and Religious Reform in Eighteenth-Century Mexico City," *The Americas*, 60, no. 4 (April, 2004), 494.

6. David Brading, "Tridentine Catholicism and Enlightened Despotism in Bourbon Mexico," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 15, no. 1 (May, 1983), 12, 14.

7. Larkin, "Liturgy, Devotion, and Religious Reform," 495; also Brading, "Tridentine Catholicism," 6.

8. Larkin, "Liturgy, Devotion and Religious Reform," 494; see also *Baroque and Reformed Catholicism: Religious and Cultural Change in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (PhD diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 1999).

9. *Archivo del Cabildo* (henceforth abbreviated as AC), *Actas*, book 4, 262v.

10. AC, *Edictos*, box 5, document 30, 1.

11. The feast of *Corpus Christi* was one of the highest ranked feasts in the Catholic liturgical calendar. As such, it was a feast celebrated through eight days, hence the celebration throughout the octave. AC, *Actas*, book 5, 122v.

12. Steven Barwick, *Sacred Vocal Polyphony in Early Colonial Mexico* (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1949).
13. Robert Stevenson, "Mexico City Cathedral Music: 1600–1750," *The Americas*, 21, no. 2 (October, 1964), 111–35.
14. Ramos-Kittrell, *Dynamics of Ritual and Ceremony*, 56.
15. For an introduction to the study of music as part of ritual and ceremony at the cathedral of Mexico see Lota Spell, "Music in the Cathedral of Mexico in the Sixteenth Century," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 26, no. 3 (August, 1946); also Gabriel Saldívar, *Historia de la Música en México—Épocas Pre-cortesiana y Colonial* (Mexico: Editorial Cultura, 1934); also Stevenson, "Mexico City Cathedral Music."
16. Some of these acts involved some type of self-inflicted physical abuse, like flagellation and the cutting of flesh. Nicolás León and Rafael Sabas Camacho eds., *Concilio Provincial Mexicano IV. Celebrado en la Ciudad de Mexico el año de 1771. Se imprime completo por vez primera de orden del illmo. y rmo. Sr. Dr. D. Rafael Sabas Camacho, IIIer. Obispo de Querétaro* (Querétaro: Imprenta de la Escuela de Artes, 1898), 161.
17. Larkin, "Liturgy, Devotion, and Religious Reform," 517–18.
18. AC, Ordo, book 4, 144r.
19. AC, Ordo, book 4, 123r. For more information on private endowments as part of ritual and ceremony at the cathedral of Mexico see Ramos-Kittrell, *Dynamics of Ritual and Ceremony*.
20. Brian Larkin, "Confraternities and Community: The Decline of the Communal Quest for Salvation in Eighteenth-Century Mexico City," in Martin Austin Nesvig, ed., *Local Religion in Colonial Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 189–213.
21. Desde el año de 1650 hasta fin de diciembre de 1698 hay [78,956 pesos, 3 tomines y 6 granos] de quiebras y pérdidas de escrituras que ha tenido la fábrica espiritual, y [10,864 pesos] de escrituras retardadas de que se están haciendo diligencias para sus cobranzas . . . A la renta regular de la fábrica espiritual de casas y su noveno y medio no alcanza a los gastos regulares de ministros de capilla, capellanes de choro, cera, vino y aceite, pues por la certificación consta que, aún siendo estos últimos diez años crecidos, tiene de empeño la dicha fábrica espiritual 39,518 pesos, 3 tomines y 3 granos. AC, *Actas*, book 25, 193v.
22. Vuestra majestad como su patrón [de esta santa iglesia] le socorriese y diera para desempeñarse [los dos Reales Novenos] . . . y vuestra majestad, con su piadoso celo y liberal mano lo había de librar, o en su Real Caja, o donando (como tantas veces lo hicieron los gloriosos progenitores de vuestra majestad) todo el monto de los dos Reales Novenos para que se gaste en el culto divino. Although acts consistently point out that the crown received two ninths from the collection of tithes the few surviving treasury books show that the amount given to the king was roughly a little shy above one ninth and a half. Ibid.
23. AC, Ordo, book 4, 3r–4v.
24. AC, *Actas*, book 4, 262v.
25. The term "anniversaries" denoted privately endowed rituals celebrated each year to commemorate the death of a patron.
26. The act of foundation of the cathedral clearly states that the choir was to have six official chaplains: ordinamus Capellanos in super sex, quorum quilibet, tam in

nocturnes horis, quam in diurnis, ac etiam Missas ad facistolium personaliter interesse, et in unoquoque mense Missas viginti, nisi justa infirmitate, vel impedimento fuerit impeditus, celebrare teneatur. Statuta Ecclesiae Mexicanae necnon Ordo in Chorus Servandus (Mexico: Mariano Zúñiga, 1748), 18–9.

27. The actual act of foundation for these chaplaincies seems to be lost and has not been located thus far, despite attempts from several scholars. Cabildo acts, however, often cite clause 9 of such act, especially when individuals were being considered for appointment to one of these positions. This clause states the requirements that aspiring chaplains had to fulfill in order to be considered for appointment. I was able to find an abstract outlining clause 9 of the act in the branch of capellanías in the cathedral archives dating from March 17, 1767. AC, Capellanías, box 1, document 3, 1.

28. AC, Correspondencia, box 23, document 2, 1.

29. AC, *Actas*, book 32, 206v.

30. Ibid.

31. AC, *Actas*, book 25, 202v.

32. AC, *Actas*, book 33, 74r.

33. *Capellanías de Erección* was the official name for the original six chaplaincies established by the cathedral's foundation act. Since these were positions established by the Episcopate their salaries derived from the annual collection of tithes. AC, Edictos, box 2.

34. AC, *Actas*, book 25, 156v.

35. AC, *Actas*, book 25, 195r.

36. AC, *Actas*, book 25, 187v.

37. AC, *Actas*, book 25, 203r.

38. AC, *Actas*, book 25, 239v.

39. AC, *Actas*, book 25, 154r.

40. AC, *Actas*, book 25, 155r.

41. AC, *Actas*, book 25, 160r.

42. AC, Correspondencia, box 23, document 2, 2.

43. AC, *Actas*, book 27, 26r.

44. AC, *Actas*, book 27, 51r.

45. AC, *Actas*, book 27, 22v.

46. AC, *Actas*, book 25, 212v.

47. AC, *Actas*, book 27, 28v.

48. AC, *Actas*, book 27, 62r.

49. AC, *Actas*, book 27, 165r.

50. AC, *Actas*, book 27, 166v.

51. AC, *Actas*, book 38, 59v.

52. AC, Ordo, book 2, 38r.

53. Propuso el señor Dean que por parte de la nobilísima ciudad se había solicitado a los músicos de la capilla de esta santa iglesia para que pagándoseles cantasen y tocasen después de acabada la misa mayor de toda la octava de Corpus hasta las doce en lugar de las danzas de Moctezuma que por su cuenta danzaban de antes en dicho tiempo y lo que habían experimentado ceder en indecencia e indecoro del santísimo sacramento por lo que totalmente habían determinado el quitarlas perpetuamente. AC, *Actas*, book 37, 40v; also Ordo, book 2, 87v.

54. Ricardo García Cárcel, *Historia de España Siglo XVIII. La España de los Borbones* (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2002), 316.
55. John Coatsworth, "The Limits of Colonial Absolutism: The State in Eighteenth-Century Mexico," in K. Spalding, ed., *Essays in political, economical, and social History of colonial Latin America*, University of Delaware, Latin American Studies Program, Occasional Papers and Monographs, no. 3, 1982, 32–4.
56. Richard Garner, "Precios y Salarios en México durante el Siglo XVIII," in Lyman Johnson and Enrique Tandeter, eds., *Economías Coloniales – Precios y Salarios en América Latina, Siglo XVIII* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1992), 95–6; also "Further Considerations of 'Facts and Figments in Bourbon Mexico,'" *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 6, no. 1 (1987), 55–63.
57. Garner, "Precios y Salarios," 84.
58. These were places with appropriate equipment for the treatment and production of specific products like wool, sugar or silk.
59. AC, Ordo, book 4, 145v.
60. Brading, "Tridentine Catholicism," 12, 14.
61. Primary sources show that the cathedral received the subsidy of the *Reales Novenos* (royal ninths) from the collection of tithes to pay for religious activities from as far back as 1621 and at least until 1752, this being the last date that the author encountered such subsidy. The cathedral also actively provided loans to individuals for diverse purposes, charging a five percent interest rate. Moreover, the cabildo kept tight control on the payment of tithes by threats of excommunication, a tactic that proved to be quite effective during the last decade of the 17th century, when the church was going through a difficult financial period. AC, *Actas*, book 25, 193v. For information on the cathedral's financial activities regarding loans and the collection of tithes see Ramos-Kittrell, *Dynamics of Ritual and Ceremony*, 82–5.
62. An important author dealing with economic reform during the 18th century was Pedro Rodríguez Campomanes through his treatise *Tratado de la regalía de la amortización* (Madrid, 1765); Iris W. H. Engstrand, "The Enlightenment in Spain: Influences upon New World Policy," *The Americas*, 41, no. 4 (April, 1985) 439.
63. N. M. Farriss, *La Corona y el Clero en el México Colonial 1579–1821. La Crisis del Privilegio Eclesiástico* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1995), 146.

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