

“The Virgin of Remedies and the Politics of Precedence: Mercedarian Accounts of the “Spiritual Conquest,” paper presented for *Revising Texts in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century New Spain*, Conference of the Rocky Mountain Council for Latin American Studies, Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA, April 6, 2013.

Through sacred history the religious orders cultivated corporate identities and promoted their Christian ministries in New Spain. Selected members of the regular clergy wrote provincial chronicles of their apostolic labours, many of them providing an account of their origins in the viceroyalty. For most religious chroniclers the arrival to Mexico City was fundamental to their narratives because their order of arrival to the capital was an important factor in their spiritual and social capital. In this paper I analyze the vision of the “spiritual conquest” that Mercedarians put forward in their sacred histories, most specifically the seventeenth-century writers Luis de Cisneros and Francisco de Pareja. Given that the Franciscans highlighted their encounter with Hernán Cortés to establish “apostolic antiquity,” Cisneros and Pareja invented their own meeting with the conquistador through a unique interpretation of the apparition story of the Virgin of Remedies. By making Bartolomé de Olmedo a co-founder of the first make-shift altar to the Conquistadora in Tenochtitlan, they carved out a rhetoric space for the Mercedarians in the foundation of the church in New Spain. Their pious engagement with the literary conventions of sacred history provides an interesting look at the political power of Catholic images in the Spanish world during the baroque period.