

Previous to the year of the revolution by which California was separated from old Spain (1823), the whole country may be said to have been under the rule of the missions, and the padres who were at their head had acquired a vast influence over the Indians, as well as amongst the soldiery who were placed in the presidios as the guards and protectors of the missions. There were twenty-one missions, and only four presidios. The power of the governors was usually rather nominal than real, and the troops, from being totally neglected, were dependent upon the missions almost for their daily bread. Fortunately for the country, the padres and rulers of the missions were men well adapted for their calling: good managers, sincere Christians, they exerted a salutary influence over all in any way connected with them, practising at the same time the proper virtues of their calling, in order more effectually to inculcate them upon others. These reverend men were all old Spaniards, and greatly attached to their king and country. When the revolution broke out, they declined taking the oath to the new government: many, in consequence, left their missions and retired from the country, and some of the others have since died.

Thus, at the same time with a change of rulers, the country was deprived of the religious establishments upon which its society and good order were founded. Anarchy and confusion began to reign, and the want of authority was every where felt. Some of the missions were deserted; the property which had been amassed in them was dissipated, and the Indians turned off to seek their native wilds.

At the time of the separation from Spain, a Californian, by name Arguello, was governor. On his being appointed to that office, one Noniga, a Spanish officer, disliking to be commanded by a Californian, attempted to oppose him. In order to silence this opposition, Noniga was put in command of the presidio of Santa Barbara, where, owing to his misconduct, he was soon dismissed, upon which he again sought to excite the Mexicans against the Californians, and to impress them with the same deadly hatred which he himself felt. With this intent, he omitted no opportunity to represent the actions and conduct of the Californian authorities in the most odious light.

The government of Mexico saw the evils that they had occasioned, when it was too late, and set about remedying them, as well as to fill the vacancies that had occurred. For this purpose, they were disposed to consult the old padres, and offered those who remained, the choice of the northern or southern section, that they might be united in a body. The old Spanish priests chose the southern missions; and the few establishments which lie to the north of San Miguel, were assigned to those from the college of Xacatecas, in Mexico.