Eduardo Dávila Garza –Eduardo I:
Pope and Supreme Pontiff of Mexico and the Americas

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In 1933, Eduardo Dávila Garza (1908?–1985) was elected Eduardo I, 'Pope and Supreme Pontiff of Mexico and the Americas.' Still, his plans were grander than that; he would soon replace the Roman pontiff, too, not only rule over the American double continent. Dávila is not an easy person to study. Not only is the source material fragmented, but he also had a well-developed ability to reconstruct his autobiography and fill it with contradictions.

From the late 1920s, Eduardo Dávila was part of the Iglesia Católica Apostolica Mexicana (ICAM; the Mexican Catholic Apostolic Church), founded in 1925 and also called Iglesia Católica Ortodoxa Apostólica Mexicana, which was led by Patriarch José Joquín Pérez Budar. Due to the Mexican government's enforcement of strict anti-religious laws, the Roman Catholic episcopacy decided to suspend the cult entirely. For three years, between 1926 and 1929, no public Roman Catholic services were held in the republic.

Being pro-governmental and fiercely anti-Roman, ICAM assumed a relatively strong position in indigenous villages in states like Veracruz and Puebla for a few years. However, they were present in Mexico City, too. In the first years of the 1930s, after the Patriarch's death in 1931, the Church fell apart. At that time, young Eduardo Dávila suddenly appeared on the scene and managed to achieve as the leader of one faction, though his ecclesiastical credentials were questionable. He assumed the Patriarchal office, and in the end, he was elected the Pope.

Though ICAM has been the subject of several scholarly studies, most only mention Dávila *en passant*, if at all. The only monograph on the church to date is Mario Ramírez Rancaño's *El patriarca Pérez: La Iglesia católica apostólica Mexicana* (2006), which also devotes a chapter to Pope Eduardo I. Though hardly bringing up Dávila, Matthew Butler's series of articles focused on ICAM's work in indigenous villages during the second half of the 1920s are indispensable.[1] From another direction, Luís Arturo Sánchez Domínguez's 1997 licentiate dissertation on the new version of ICAM that grew from the 1980s onwards includes many data that are helpful for the reconstruction of the later parts of Eduardo Dávila's life and ministry.[2] With some exceptions, this preliminary report is not built on a study of primary sources but on earlier research.

The Mexican Catholic Church

In mid-nineteenth-century Mexico, under President Benito Juárez (1806–1872), most of the Roman Catholic Church's traditional rights and privileges were removed, in particular. Among other things, church property was confiscated, religious orders outlawed, and the Church's influence on education drastically diminished. There were plans to establish a national Catholic Church in line with the 1857 liberal Constitution. While a Mexican Catholic Apostolic Church was founded in Tamaulipas in 1861, it did not last long.[3]

Four decades later, there were new plans towards the same end in the same geographical area. In 1896, Eduardo Sánchez Camacho (1838–1920) left his office as bishop of Tamaulipas, protesting against what he saw as the increased

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[1] Ramírez Rancaño 2006, Butler 2009a, Butler 2009b, Butler 2014, cf. Lisbona Guillén 2009 and Miller 2009.

[2] Sánchez Domínguez 1997.

[3] Téllez Aguilar 1990.

'Romanization' of the Church. He was approached by Episcopalians and radically minded Roman Catholic priests. Despite being fiercely anti-Roman, Camacho did not found any national church, and though there were independent bishops who claimed that he consecrated them, the documentation was falsified.[4]

New attempts were made in the era of the Revolution in the 1910s. Still, the first successful attempt at founding a lasting Mexican Catholic Church came in the mid-1920s, with José Joaquín Pérez Budar (1851–1931) as its leader. After an early career in the army, Pérez Budar entered the seminary and ordained a Roman Catholic priest. He was liberally inclined, became a freemason, and defended the thought that the Catholic Church should change according to the Constitution. At the end of the 1890s, he was suspended, spent time in prison, and joined the army again. However, by 1913, he was again serving as a priest.[5]

The 1917 Mexican Constitution included several articles that limited religious activities. It was not least directed against the great majority religion, Roman Catholicism. According to the Constitution, religious entities were denied legal personality. Thus, the state was in control of all church buildings. Furthermore, religious activities should be removed from the public space and be restricted to the home and inside the church buildings. It also implied that priests were not allowed to wear clerical dress outside the Church. Article 130 gave the state the power to determine the number of priests 'necessary for local needs.'

During Plutarco Elías Calle's (1877–1948) presidency (1924–1928), the anti-religious articles were actively implemented and made stricter through the so-called

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[4] Romero de Solís 1991.

[5] Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 25–41.

Calles Law of 1926. The presidential decree enforced the rules of limiting the number of priests and made it obligatory for them to register and obtain the authorities' license to function as a priest and to serve at a given place. These limitations and requirements were unacceptable to the official Roman Catholic Church. As a response, and with the support of Pope Pius XI, the Mexican bishops suspended all public cult, i.e., all religious services, until further notice. The promulgation of the law also gave rise to a violent insurrection, the Cristero revolt, which had its epicenter in Jalisco and Michoacán. In 1929, the state and Church reached a feeble *modus vivendi*, and the Roman Catholic hierarchy opened up the cult again though the state severely curtailed its activities.[6]

In this situation, Vicente Lombardo Toledo (1894–1968), the secretary of education of the CROM trade union leader closely related to the state, approached Joaquín Pérez Budár, suggesting the foundation of an independent Catholic Church. The initiative could also count on President Calles's support, though he was hardly enthusiastic. In a short time, Pérez gathered half a dozen like-minded Roman Catholic priests. The Mexican Catholic Apostolic Church (ICAM) was formally established on February 18, 1925.[7] Then, the founding fathers signed a Manifesto, which explained their fundamental beliefs. Their vision was to return to what they saw as apostolic Christianity, to a kind of Church

> … that its Divine Founder established, and which the apostles and the first Christians preached and practiced and could be read from the Sacred

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[6] Ramírez Rancaño 183–185.

[7] For details about the foundation process, see Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 57–103.

> Scripture, without the innovations, fanatism, and errors introduced by Rome.[8]

They declared the Church free from Rome and that a Mexican patriarch should lead it. According to the Manifesto, the adherents could 'freely interpret the Sacred Scriptures, Tradition and Liturgy.' They forbid sacramental fees and tithing. Latin was eradicated as a liturgical language, and all the Church's rites would be celebrated in Spanish. At the same time, they abolished clerical celibacy. The Manifesto regarded the veneration of the Virgin Mary and the saints as essential but abolished the dogma of eternal punishment in hell as well as auricular confession. Still, they endorsed the Nicene Creed and did not question fundamental doctrines such as the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. The criticism against the Roman Catholic Church was nothing but fierce. Rome had nothing to do with the Church that Christ founded and the 'pristine, early Christianity.' Not surprisingly, the Roman Catholic church authorities excommunicated the priests as schismatics and heretics and put the Mexican Catholic Apostolic Church under interdict.[9]

As the Mexican state controlled all church buildings, ICAM first got permission to use the Soledad Church in central Mexico City but soon moved to the nearby Corpus Christi Church. They claimed church buildings in other parts of the country, too. Though they tried to get access to many more churches, they had eight temples within a year, and while they counted with a dozen priests, the adherents' number remained low. The 'taking of churches' was not a smooth affair. Most often, conflict ensued, and on several occasions, led to violent confrontations. In this situation, ICAM developed the Caballeros de Guadalupe, which guarded the churches and clashed with opponents.[10]

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[8] Ramírez Rancaño 376–377.

[9] The manifest is published, Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 369–377; for a study, cf. pp. 57–96. For a perceptive analysis of ICAM's early teachings, see Butler 2009b.

However, ICAM's role and influence would change dramatically with the implementation of the Calles law and the Roman Catholic suspension of religious activities between 1926 and 1929. During that period, there was a growing demand for sacraments and other clerical services. To develop its formal organization and secure the apostolic succession, ICAM needed bishops of their own. In Chicago in October 1926, Carmel Henry Carfora (1878–1958), Supreme Primate of the North American Old Roman Catholic Church consecrated three bishops for ICAM: José Joaquín Pérez Budar, who became the archbishop and patriarch, Macario López Valdés and Antonio Benigno López Sierra. All of them were former Roman Catholic priests.[11]

As such, they represented one part of ICAM clergy. Some had left the ministry several years ago and often married, while others went directly to ICAM. The other group, which soon became the majority, did not have a clerical background. Though some had been seminarians or lay church officials, the group was very diverse. In the last years of the 1920s, ICAM had about 30–40 priests.[12] Although there were adventurers among their ranks, as a group, the Mexican Catholic clergy cannot be seen as uneducated, non-serious in religious matters, or mere political agents, which was the general image presented in older literature. Most seem to have been politically engaged, for example, by supporting the land reform while emphasizing the importance of their pastoral mission, too.

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[10] Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 127–223.

[11] On Carfora, see Anson [1964] 2006: 427–434 and Trela 1979.

[12] Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 225–283.

Though ICAM could use some church buildings in cities and towns, most priests served in small villages in the highlands of Veracruz, Puebla, Tlaxcala, and Estado de Mexico, the majority dominated by indigenous people, not least Nahuas, Totonacas, and Otomís. Still, they were also present in states like Guerrero and Chiapas. In places like that, it was of utmost importance for the village councils to have a priest present at the feasts for the local patron saints and access the sacraments. In general, the ICAM priests seem to have been much less critical to the popular ways of celebrating the feasts than the Roman Catholic curates; they were often open for accommodation.[13]

Among the Mexican Catholic clergy were two foreigners. One was Armin von Monte de Honor (1900–1988). He was an Austrian count, originally known as Armin Anton von Ehrenberg, who, after a military career in his home country, arrived in Mexico about 1923. According to some sources, he was briefly a Roman Catholic seminarian, and this might be true. Later he was a translator for the Ministry of Defence, becoming a Mexican citizen. Jorge Mariano Hank, the other foreign cleric, was a German who had arrived in Mexico in 1923. His career followed Monte de Honor's. Hank seems to have studied at the seminary and then became a teacher at the Military College. By 1929 both were affiliated to ICAM as priests.[14]

In 1929, the Mexican government and the Roman Catholic Church reached a compromise, though the Church's activities remained much curtailed. This accord opened up for the Roman Catholic cult. Though the effect was not immediate, it meant the rapid decline of ICAM as Roman Catholic clergy re-took the parishes and conflicts between the two churches centered around agrarian villages north and east of Mexico City.[15] For some time, the Patriarch and a group of others clerics established themselves in San Antonio in Texas, where they had a relatively successful mission among Mexican immigrants.[16]

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[13] Butler 2009a, Butler 2009b, and Butler 2014.

[14] Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 270–296, 305–306, 324–331. On Monte de Honor, see also Bello López 2016: 181–202.

In 1931, Patriarch Pérez returned to Mexico but was severely ill and died in October. Before that, he had convened a council to elect a successor. At least three bishops took part: López Valdés, Gómez Ruvalcaba, and José B. Emeterio Valdés. The third of the original bishops, Antonio López Sierra, was not present, as the Patriarch had expelled him. Still, López Sierra was adamant about becoming Pérez's successor and declared that the Patriarch was 'mentally incapacitated' and could not lead the Church due to his high age. After the Patriarch's demise, the Roman Catholic archdiocese made public that Pérez had abjured his earlier beliefs on his death bed and died a Roman Catholic. However, there is good reason to believe that the Patriarch was not conscious at the hospital when his fingerprint was put on the abjuration document.[17]

The years preceding the Patriarch's death had been filled with internal conflicts, and the situation only worsened afterward, as there were at least three claimants to the patriarchal office. At the Patriarch's demise, Bishop Macario López Valdés was made the Church's administrator, and in August 1932, he was elected Patriarch and wrote to the government asking to be recognized as such. However, a month later, he informed the authorities that ICAM was falling apart and had no future. He would not continue functioning as a priest. With time, he returned to the Roman Catholic Church, and though he was married, he was allowed to serve as a priest.[18]

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[15] Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 261–283. Butler 2009a, Butler 2009b, cf. Lisbona Guillén 2009.

[16] Miller 2008, cf. Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 285–296.

[17] Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 285–318.

After López Valdés's very brief patriarchate, the third of the original bishops, Antonio López Sierra, convened a council to elect a patriarch for his branch that took the original name: Iglesia Católica Apostólica Mexicana. Sixteen representatives from different parts of Mexico were present. However, it is unknown who they were, but probably no other bishops took part. The representatives unanimously elected López Sierra, who assumed Juan Crisóstomo I as his patriarchal name. He remained in office until his death in the late 1930s.[19]

If López Valdés and López Sierra both were among the founders of ICAM, this was not the case of the third person, who, in 1932, also claimed to be the valid Patriarch of the Mexican Church: Eduardo Dávila.

Eduardo Dávila–Pope Eduardo I

Eduardo Dávila, also known as Dávila Garza, was born in Mexico City, most probably in 1908 or 1909. Sometimes, however, he claimed that it was in 1905. He asserted that he attended a Roman Catholic seminary and was ordained a priest already in 1926. Apart from his assertions, there are no sources that prove the claim.

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[18] Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 318–320.

[19] Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 321–324

Even if he had been born as early as 1905, by 1926, he would not have reached the canonical age for the ordination: 24 years.[20]

By 1928, Dávila was a member of the ICAM and served as a cantor or acolyte in the Corpus Christi church. However, in 1930, he registered as a priest with the state authorities and stated that Bishop Armin von Monte de Honor had ordained him on May 5, 1930. According to another version, it was a 'Fr. Jerome Mary' who ordained him, but that is nothing more than an English version of Monte de Honor's ecclesiastical name, Hieronymus Maria. The problem with this assertion is that Monte de Honor did not receive his episcopal consecration until June 26, 1932, when Archbishop Carfora laid his hands on him at a ceremony in Chicago, where two other Mexican bishops were consecrated, too.[21]

Whether he was ordained, and in that case, by whom, in May 1931, Dávila Garza served as a priest in the Corpus Christi Cathedral. However, soon, he went away to an undisclosed place but returned, claiming that a Roman Catholic bishop had consecrated him at a secret ceremony. That any Roman Catholic prelate would have consecrated Dávila is highly implausible. According to yet another version, Archbishop Carfora consecrated him in Chicago in 1931. Still, no such data are found in the Archives of the North American Old Roman Catholic Church.[22]

On May 25, 1932, after a meeting with only laypeople present, he assumed the title of Patriarch. He also stated that Pérez Budár, shortly before his death, had assigned him his successor or that there had been a secret council that elected him. By then, two men claimed the patriarchal office: Antonio López Sierra and Eduardo

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[20] Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 336.

[21] Sánchez Domínguez 1997: 93–94, 170.

[22] Ramírez Rancaño 2006:, cf. Sánchez Domínguez 1997:94–96, 170.

Dávila. The conflict led to both harsh words and direct violence: López Sierra's son beat and tried to strangle Dávila when the latter claimed the cathedral for his use. As a result of the subsequent press reports, the government took the opportunity to remove ICAM's right to use the church building. Having made his patriarchal claims, a small group of clergy gathered around Dávila. However, in May 1933, he suddenly renounced the office and assigned his vicar-general José N. Cortés Villaseñor his successor. He made himself a missionary archbishop and went away to Tamaulipas.[23]

Nevertheless, at the end of the year, Dávila was back in Mexico City, re-taking the Church's lead. He proposed that the ICAM needed cardinals and was elected one. In the next step, he was elected the Pope. As much else, the reports on the papal election are contradictory. According to one document, Dávila was elected on April 27, 1933, before he left for Tamaulipas. The same record claims that Cortés Villaseñor was made Patriarch at the same occasion.[24] However, according to a second version, Dávila was elected on December 12, 1933. *In extenso*, this document reads.

> Realizing that the successor to the ex-patriarch had not done anything for the benefit of our holy cause, the clergy of the Mexican Orthodox Catholic Church met and decided to consecrate the Most Excellent and Reverend Archbishop don Eduardo Dávila the first pope and Supreme Pontiff of Mexico. It was not possible to have two patriarchs as their office did not end until their death. For on December 12, the feast day Our Queen and Mother, Our Lady of

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[23] Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 339–345.

[24] Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 347.

> Guadalupe, patroness of Mexico and the Mexican, [the clergy of ICAM] bestowed the fore-said ex-patriarch to the dignity of the first pope of Mexico, [taking] the ecclesiastical name Eduardo I.[25]

Dávila was coronated in a chapel in the small village of San Simón de Bravo in the Puebla highlands. Following his ascent to the papacy, Dávila reintroduced the mandatory clerical celibacy in what he now called the Iglesia Ortodoxa Católica Apostólica Nacional Mexicana, and made Latin the sole liturgical language. That meant that he contradicted two essential reforms that had constituted ICAM from its foundation.[26]

Dávila combined his ministry with an active membership in Acción Revolucionaria Mexicana, a fascist movement popularly known as Camisas Doradas, the golden shirts. Large groups of members were involved in series of violent fights with groups of Communists, including one at the Zócalo, Mexico City's main square, which resulted in several deaths and many injured, while Ávila escaped unharmed. The movement was later prohibited.[27]

After becoming the Pope, Dávila also became a freemason. As with everything else during these years, the stories about his freemasonry are hard to evaluate and somewhat contradictory. After joining a loge of the Rito Nacional Mexicano, he started several independent loges, collectively known as the Gran Logia Anahuác, which in 1937 allied with the much more prominent Mexican rite.[28]

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[25] Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 347. [My translation].

[26] Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 348.

[27] Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 349–350.

[28] Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 352.

During this time, Pope Eduardo seems to have said Mass in the San José el Obrero chapel in Mexico City and San Pedro Jalostoc, a chapel close to Villa de Guadalupe. There were state permissions for him to serve in Joquicingo (Estado de México) and San Miguelito (Toluca). He also asked for authorization to use several chapels in Mexico City for the religious cult: San Diego, Concepción Tlaxcuaque, and Monserrate.[29]

In 1938, the Mexico City press suddenly wrote a lot about Eduardo I, the Mexican Pope. Initially, it was a conflict over the mortal remains of Patriarch Pérez that attracted media attention. At this time, seven years had passed since his death. According to Mexican law, the body should be exhumed. Dávila planned to pay homage to the man he regarded as his predecessor and erect a funeral monument. There are different versions of what happened after that. According to the most probable, when Dávila oversaw the unearthing of the remains, Rebeca Gómez, a bishop's widow, who asserted to be a relative of the Patriarch's, appeared at the cemetery claiming the body. The Pope, on his side, contended that he counted with the permission of the Patriarch's adoptive daughter. In the subsequent investigation, Gómez claimed that she had presented the necessary documents to the authorities. To her, Dávila only wanted to use the memory of the Patriarch for his purposes and that there was no adoptive daughter.[30]

In 1938, Dávila decided that there would be no conclaves in the future but that the Pope directly chose his successor. Consequently, he appointed a 21-year-old man Rubén Darío Cano Ballesteros, to succeed him after his death. Still, in the same year, he was quoted in an interview as saying that he partially recognized the Pope in Rome

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[29] Sánchez Domínguez 1997: 93–94.

[30] Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 352–355.

> spiritually but not in matters of administration … I am infallible and my bishops are infallible … I have recognized Pope Pius, but he cannot recognize me because his Church would go to pieces. But the time will come when we will work out a compromise.[31]

However, at virtually the same time, he claimed that he would replace Pope Pius XI too. On a smaller scale, in 1938, and without success, Dávila tried to convince the Roman Catholic priest in Tenango del Valle (Estado de Méxio) to join his ranks. As a result, an angry group of villages chased him away.[32]

On June 8, 1939, Eduardo Dávila wrote to the government stating that they had asked for the chapel five times before and informed that without waiting for a reply, he would establish himself in the Concepción de Tlaxacoaque chapel in the Cuauhtémoc area of the Federal District. The government did not intervene. After that, the chapel became Pope Eduardo's Holy See. Though his number of followers was minuscule, Dávila claimed to have more than 700 church buildings and more than a hundred bishops and priests under his jurisdiction. According to him, ICAM was spread in central and northern Mexico and the southern parts of the United States and had more than a million members.[33]

In reality, Dávila said Mass in his chapel in Tlaxacoaque, and some priests administered the sacraments in rural Veracruz and Puebla. After the significant media interest during the last years of the 1930s, the traces of Dávila's activities are few and scattered. In the late 1940s, he wanted access to chapels on the Tehuantepec peninsula, and in 1952, there are reports that he and Armin von Monte de Honor were constructing a chapel in Ixhuatlán de Madero in the Huasteca Baja region in Veracruz. By that time, Dávila styled himself Archbishop and Primate of Mexico, not making any public papal claim anymore.[34]

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[31] Translation in Plenn 1939: 193. Cf. Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 348–358.

[32] Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 358–359.

[33] Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 350–351.

The Huasteca Baja seems to have become a kind of center for the ICAM, though it is difficult if the priests working there were part of Dávila's jurisdiction. Armin von Monte de Honor served as an 'Orthodox' priest but was foremost a political and social activist, working for road-building and electrification. He was based in the Otomi community Santa María Apipilhuasco for three decades until the 1980s and died in 1988. He ministered to Otomi, Totonac, and Tepehua villagers, who had joined his Church, but lots of conflicts between him and the Roman Catholic clergy.[35]

In 1964 Armin Monte de Honor consecrated Javier Enrique Cortés y Olmos (1923–1983). In 1968, Cortés was conditionally consecrated by a bishop of the Apostolic Catholic Church of the Americas. Cortés later established contacts with the Orthodox Church in America, and in 1972, Cortés's Church became part of the American Orthodox Exarchate of Mexico, conditionally consecrated once more.[36]

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[34] Ramírez Rancaño 2006: 355–360.

[35] Bello López 2016: 181–202.

[36] Bello López 2016: 186. For the consecrations, see www.sites.google.com/site/gnostickos/bbishopscortesyolmos

Another sign of Dávila's Church's existence is somewhat unexpected. In 1960 Dávila wrote to Fidel Castro congratulating him on the revolution's success, and the Church voiced a 'sincere and ardent desire to assist in the liberation.' He also warned Castro of a common enemy, 'the Roman Catholic Church is working tirelessly to overthrow your Government.' ICAM, therefore, offered to help the Cubans to establish an independent revolutionary Church.[37]

In late 1960, U.S. news media reported about José Javier Cortés, a former Roman Catholic priest, who joined ICAM and was Eduardo Dávila's vicar general. The article claimed that Cortés had recently returned from 'Red China,' where he had been in contact with a 'schismatic Catholic bishop' who wanted a fusion between Catholicism and Communism, but realized it could not happen through Rome but with the help of independent churches. Roman Catholic authorities in Mexico accused Cortés of close contact with Soviet and Cuban agents trying to counteract the Church's activities. At this time, both lived in Mexico City.[38]

There are even fewer notes about papal ex-claimant in the 1960s and 1970s. According to a personal testimony in 1985, Dávila regularly said Mass in the Antonio Abad chapel in Iztapalapa in the Federal District between 1960 and 1983.[39] In 1980, he, as the Archbishop Primate for the Mexican Apostolic Catholic Church, re-appeared on a larger scene and got another, new church context.

The reason for him entering into the scene was an effect of the much-publicized 'miracle of the bleeding host.' On March 23, 1978, a Roman Catholic priest José

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[37] Keller 2017: 23–24. The letter was issued from the Secretaría General de Cámara y Gobierno del Arzobispado Metropolitano, September 18, 1960.

[38] See e.g. *The Galveston Daily News*, November 28, 1960.

[39] Sánchez Domínguez 1997: 118.

Camargo Melo (b. 1942), a priest in the Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe parish church in eastern Mexico City for three years, experienced that that blood appeared on a consecrated host. Later, the host visibly transformed into body tissue and blood. Melo informed the Archdiocese of Mexico, which did not want to recognize it as a miracle, asked him neither to talk about nor to investigate it forward. After some time, Melo went public, and the Mitre publically denounced the miracle as false.[40]

In February 1979, the ecclesiastical authorities decided that Camargo should be moved from the parish, but in March, the community informed the government that they wanted Melo as their priest. On Corpus Christi June 5, 1979, a new Eucharistic miracle took place. Despite several journeys to Rome, the final response of the Holy See, in August 1980, was that the miracles were not supernatural.[41] Still, in 1979 an alternative pope, Gregory XVII (1946–2005; sed. 1978–2005) of the Palmarian Catholic Church, contacted Camargo and offered to consecrate him a bishop. The contact did not lead to any consecration. But then, after the second Eucharistic miracle, another, at least a former, papal claimant, Eduardo Dávila, suddenly established contact. Camargo Melo writes.

> In Augsut 1980, the Patriach and Arcbishop Eduardo Dávila de la Garza y Pardo came to see me. The first, he said to me, was: You have gone to search for the Pope. I have come to search for you. Immediately he offered means to defend the truth about the miracle with the Sacred Host. Understanding that I must be sure about the succession, as in reality that what mattered, he brought forward documents in which the apostolic succession becomes clear.

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[40] Sánchez Domínguez 1997: 76–87.

[41] Sánchez Domínguez 1997: 87–93.

> Without any condition's on Monseñor Dávila's part, I accepted that the Episcopal Consecration should take place on October 17, 1980, the Feast of the Martyr Bishop St. Ignatius of Antioch.[42]

The consecration was carried out according to the plans. Consequently, Carmargo informed the ecclesiastical authorities of his independence from the Roman Catholic Church. In 1982, Dávila wrote to the Department of the Federal District to formally register Camargo Melo as 'the minister in charge,' and in 1983, Camargo ordained his first priests. After this, he was officially excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church.[43]

In the next decade, the Mexican Catholic Apostolic Church and the Roman Catholic archdiocese were involved in unending conflicts regarding the right to use different church buildings, not least the sanctuary, El Santuario de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe y de la Santísima Hostia Sangrante. In May 1985, Eduardo Dávila wrote to the federal government to claim to the Church's right to the Church of San Antonio Abad, where he, as the Patriarch, said Mass between 1960 and 1983. While this process continued on September 21, 1985, Eduardo Dávila, once the Pope of Mexican and the Americas–and the whole Catholic Church–died.[44]

With the new law in 1992, religious associations could be given legal personality, and on May 31, 1993, the Mexican Catholic Apostolic Church became a registered religious association. It is led by Camargo Melo, who, in 1991, had been conditionally consecrated by a group of independent Catholic bishops, including the

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[42] Sánchez Domínguez 1997: 94–95.
[43] Sánchez Domínguez 1997: 96–104.
[44] Sánchez Domínguez 1997: 114–115.

Patriarch of the Brazilian Catholic Apostolic Church, Luis Fernando Castillo Méndez.[45]

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[45] Sánchez Domínguez 1997: 128–130.

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