

Fray Alonso de la Vera Cruz, O. S. A. (1507-1584)

A Study of His Life and His Contribution to the Religious and Intellectual Affairs of Early Mexico

INTRODUCTION

A Description of the Principal Sources

The name of Alonso de la Vera Cruz has been famous in Mexican history since the sixteenth century, especially in connection with the University of Mexico. He has been reputed to be the founder of that first University of the New World. Even though that claim cannot be verified, Vera Cruz does have other outstanding claims to fame which can be historically certified. But in spite of the fact that he was one of the great figures in the early history of Mexico, very little has been written about him up until recent years ¹⁾. In 1934, Bienvenido Junquera, O. S. A., presented a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts at the Catholic University of America, Wash., D. C., entitled : *El P. Mtro. Fr. Alonso de la Vera Cruz*. It was later published in a 67 page article in the *Archivo Agustiniiano* (El Escorial, 1935). This interesting work covers most of the printed sources, but very few of the manuscript sources were available to the author.

¹⁾ One earlier work has come to our attention. In 1894 there was published a fifty page booklet called *Rasgos biográficos de Fr. Alonso de la Veracruz*, by F. M. R. Printed in Morelia, this work contained a lithograph of Vera Cruz made from a picture that was once in the monastery of Tiripetío and is now in the Augustinian monastery in Morelia. It has not been available for this study. Cf. E. VALVERDE TELLEZ, *Apuntaciones históricas sobre la filosofía en México* (Mexico, 1896), p. 104.

As might be expected, most of the work on Vera Cruz, with the exception of the writings of the Spanish Augustinian Gregorio de Santiago Vela, has been done in Mexico, especially at the National University. The most complete work to-date is that of Amancio Bolaño e Isla, *Contribución al estudio biobibliográfico de Fray Alonso de la Vera Cruz*. It was published in Mexico City by the Antigua Librería Robredo in 1947²). In the biographical part of this work the references to the Archivo General de la Nación, especially with regard to Vera Cruz and the old University of Mexico, are valuable. At the end of the volume the author has an appendix of documents, some of which are printed for the first time.

Another work produced at the National University of Mexico is that of Oswaldo Robles, *Fray Alonso de la Vera Cruz. Investigación filosófico-natural. Los Libros del Alma*. It is printed by the Imprenta Universitaria in Mexico, 1942. This work consists of a Spanish translation, with introduction and notes, of the first two of Vera Cruz' three books *De anima*, which is a part of his philosophical work *Physica speculatio*. The brief introduction on the philosophy and style of Vera Cruz is well done. More recently Robles has published a book titled *Filósofos Mexicanos del siglo XVI* (Mexico City, 1950). In the section devoted to the philosophical writings of Alonso de la Vera Cruz one finds the most complete study and the best appraisal that has this far been made of those writings.

None of the above authors, however, has been able to make use of the materials available in European libraries and archives. The present writer hopes to be able to compose a more complete account of the life of Fray Alonso by employing these hitherto unused materials. They are letters and other writings of his that are to be found chiefly in Madrid, Seville and Paris, as well as other manuscript materials concerning him which are located principally in the archives of Rome. Very few of these sources have been published.

But before giving a description of these materials, we shall say something about the other chief source for the life and work of

²) In the introduction, Agustín Millares Carlo says that a complete editing of the works of Vera Cruz has been entrusted to Antonio Gómez Robledo, by the National University of Mexico.

Vera Cruz, that is, the Mexican Augustinian chronicles. The earliest, as well as the most valuable, extant history is that of Juan de Grijalva, *Crónica de la orden de N. S. P. Agustín en las provincias de la Nueva España, 1533-1592*. It is the basic history upon which all subsequent writers have depended to a greater or lesser degree. It was first published in Mexico City in 1624, forty years after the death of Vera Cruz ³). Its value for the history of the sixteenth century is very great even though it was written in the following century. Grijalva had the use of earlier works which have since been lost; among them were some records composed by Alonso de la Vera Cruz himself ⁴). Grijalva refers to these records a number of times ⁵). It was his intention to compose a history from the earlier sources, preserving all that he thought of importance. His work is generally carefully and accurately done, and worthy of credence. It is, however, written from the viewpoint of a Mexican-born Augustinian and he, therefore, defends the position of his confreres in the disputes that arose between the religious and the hierarchy, and between the Mexican Augustinians and those of Spain. We shall have occasion to refer to these matters in the ensuing chapters, and we shall see that some of his testimony shows evidence of bias. Juan de Grijalva divided his chronicle in four parts; a projected

³) A modern photostat copy was made in Mexico City in 1924, by the Augustinian Fathers and under the direction of Nicolás León and Federico Gómez de Orozco.

⁴) A good treatment of the sources employed by Grijalva is given by Gregorio DE SANTIAGO VELA, *Historiadores de la provincia agustiniana de México*, in *Archivo histórico hispano-agustiniano*, IX (April, 1918), 241-255. N. B. Henceforth this review will be referred to as *AHHA*. With the issue of January 1928 the title of the review was changed to *Archivo agustiniano*. It is an excellent source of material for all the history of the Spanish Augustinians, especially in the early numbers which contain many scholarly articles by Father Santiago Vela. He died on May 9, 1924; a brief sketch of his life is found in *AHHA*, XXVI (Sept.-Oct., 1926), 129-145.

For the life and work of Grijalva, cf. also Gregorio DE SANTIAGO VELA, *Ensayo de una biblioteca ibero-americana de la orden de San Agustín*, III, 301-307. N. B. Henceforth this work will be cited simply as *BIA*. It is a work of the highest value, containing eight volumes published between 1913 and 1931. Santiago Vela prepared six volumes: I, II, III, V, VI and VII. Vol. VII, published after his death, contains his biography, pp. 370-393. Vol. VIII was edited by Julián Zarco Cuevas. Vol. IV has never been published.

⁵) The following places are noted from the second printing, 1924: Edad II, chap. xiii, p. 254; chap. xxiii, p. 339; Edad III, chap. xxiii, p. 444.

fifth book, intended to bring the chronicle up to his own time was never realized. He died in 1638.

The continuation was later written by Esteban García, who composed the *Crónica de la provincia agustiniana del Santísimo Nombre de Jesús de México. Libro Quinto* ⁶⁾. It contains 134 chapters, and deals with the period from 1602 to 1638. While it is not a work of the highest quality, and does not have equal merits with the chronicle of Grijalva, it is of importance because it deals with a period about which little is known from other sources. It is of interest for the sixteenth century because of references to the problem of the separation of the Province of Mexico, Santísimo Nombre de Jesús, from that of Castile, a question in which Vera Cruz was concerned. Esteban García, who was born in Mexico, defends the position of the Mexican friars ⁷⁾.

Father Santiago Vela, in his critical study of the above chronicle, was at first inclined to believe that its author was Diego de Aguiar, but later discovered that it was substantially the work of Esteban García, with annotations and corrections by José Sicardo ⁸⁾. It is necessary to say a few words about Sicardo and his work. He was a native of Madrid, an outstanding writer, and later Archbishop of Sácer (Sassari in Sardinia), elevated in 1702. He had spent sixteen years in Mexico where he was much involved in the disputes between the Mexican and Spanish friars ⁹⁾. He returned to Spain in 1685 and brought with him an interesting collection of documents. These documents are today found in the National Archive in Madrid : MS 4349, with the title *Historia de Sn. Agustín de México / Su Autor, el Sr. Arzobispo de Sácer*. They are copies of documents made by Sicardo, or by others, in Mexico. Some of them are written in a poor hand and are incomplete. But the collection is precious because it contains many things that are not elsewhere available. Among them is the copy of the chronicle of Esteban García from

⁶⁾ It was edited for the first time by SANTIAGO VELA in the AHHA, between the years 1914 and 1918. It will be noted in the brief introductory note on p. 97 of Vol. I (1914) that the editor was not then sure of the authorship of the chronicle.

A complete edition was reprinted in Madrid, 1918, with an introduction, which is the same as the article cited above in note 4, *Historiadores*, etc.

⁷⁾ Cf. BIA, III, 61-65.

⁸⁾ Ibid. Cf. also BIA, I, 37-38.

⁹⁾ Cf. BIA, VII, 488-507.

which the above-mentioned edition was made. Some of the materials of this manuscript refer to the dispute already mentioned, and Sicardo naturally defends the position of the Spanish friars, correcting García in that regard, as we shall later see in the subsequent chapters. The following is a brief listing of the contents of the manuscript of Sicardo ¹⁰).

1. *Libro Primero / Suplemento chrónico a la Istoria Mexicana / de la Horden de Sant Agustín nro. Padre*. This contains extracts from a more complete work of Sicardo, entitled *Adiciones a la Historia del P. Grijalva*. Parts of this latter are contained in Gaspar de San Agustín, *Conquistas de las Islas Philipinas*, Part I (Madrid, 1698), which was edited and corrected by Sicardo.

2. *Apuntamientos de México*.

3. *A la Exc.ma Señora Duquesa de Habeiro*.

4. *Libro quinto de la / Crónica de la Provincia de la Orden / de nro. Padre San Agustín / en México*. This is the work of Esteban García.

5. *Apuntes o materiales coleccionados para continuar la crónica agustiniana de Méjico desde el 1638 hasta el 1684*.

6. *Noticias referentes a la Provincia de Filipinas*.

The above materials have been the source of many fine articles by Santiago Vela in *AHHA*; some of them will be employed in this study. A small but valuable part of the MS was also published by Robert Ricard, « Un document inédit sur les Augustins de la Province du Mexique en 1563 », *Etudes et documents pour l'histoire missionnaire de l'Espagne et du Portugal* (Louvain, 1930), pp. 119-154.

The next three chronicles to be considered all deal with the second Augustinian province in Mexico, that of Michoacán, dedicated to St. Nicholas of Tolentine and established in 1602. These are the chronicles of Juan González de la Puente, Diego Basalenque and Matías de Escobar ¹¹). Although written in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they deal with the beginnings of the mission in Michoacán which was founded in 1537. The work of Juan González de la Puente, *Primera parte de la crónica agustiniana de Mechoacán*, is the first in order of time. It was published in the

¹⁰) A complete description is found in *BIA*, III, 63-65.

¹¹) For a criticism of these chronicles, cf. the articles of SANTIAGO VELA, *AHHA*, XIX (March-April, 1923), 129-144 and XIX (May-June, 1923), 266-279.

same year as the chronicle of Grijalva, 1624¹²⁾). It is chiefly a work of hagiography, lives of the early missionaries in Michoacán who were outstanding for holiness¹³⁾). The second part of his chronicle, presented to the intermediate chapter at Tiripetío in 1630, is lost.

The work of Diego Basalenque, *Historia de la Provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Michoacán del orden de N. P. S. Agustín*, was written in 1644 and published in 1673¹⁴⁾). Composed of three books, only the first is of interest for the sixteenth century. Basalenque leans heavily on Grijalva, to whom he frequently refers. His work contains much interesting and reliable information, but he tends to be somewhat too general and rhetorical.

The last of the extant chronicles of the Province of Michoacán is that of Matías de Escobar, *Americana Thebaida, Vitas patrum de la provincia de S. Nicolás de Tolentino de Mechoacán*¹⁵⁾). Writing in 1729, Escobar intended to make only a compilation of the chronicles of de la Puente, Basalenque and Jacinto de Avilés¹⁶⁾). While his work contains much interesting general information, it has no great historical merit because of a lack of dates and of particular information, although it is useful as a compilation of the earlier sources. Furthermore, it is written in a very florid and artificial style, with frequent and sometimes pointless references to Scripture, mythology, etc.

Other chronicles, dealing with the general history of the Augustinian Order and the history of the Spanish Augustinians, have not been of much value for this study¹⁷⁾). The works of Tomás de

¹²⁾ A modern reprint was edited by Nicolás León in 1907.

¹³⁾ They are the following: Juan Bautista de Moya, Juan de Medina Roncon, Diego de Chávez, Fernando de San Joseph, Sebastián de Trasierra, Francisco de Acosta, Juan de Montaluo, Francisco López, Pedro de Vera, Diego de Villarubia.

¹⁴⁾ A modern print by the « Voz de México » was published in 1886.

¹⁵⁾ It was first published, in a partial and somewhat faulty edition, in 1890 by Nicolás León. He later directed a better edition published in 1924 at Mexico City. This last edition is complete but for chapter eighteen, which is left out because it contains no item of historical interest.

¹⁶⁾ Jacinto de Avilés wrote a chronicle covering the period up to 1709. It is no longer extant. Cf. brief notice in *BIA*, I, 290-291.

¹⁷⁾ Most of these chronicles have small value in themselves, except for events which occurred in the lifetime of the writers. For earlier history they usually simply copy the text of previous writers. Cf. Pedro M. VÉLEZ, « Leyendo nuestras Crónicas », a long series of articles begun in *AHHA*, XXVII (Jan.,

Herrera, however, are an exception. Some items of his *Alphabetum Augustinianum* (Madrid, 1644), and his *Historia del Convento de S. Agustín de Salamanca* (Madrid, 1652), have been of interest, chiefly because of his references to materials in the General Archives of the Augustinian Order, some of which have been lost ¹⁸).

Turning now to the contemporaneous documents and other manuscript materials, we shall first consider the unpublished sources. Naturally, one of the best sources for the history of Mexico in the sixteenth century is the Archivo General de Indias in Seville, the archive in which most of the documents dealing with the Spanish colonial empire are preserved. A number of the letters of Vera Cruz are to be found there along with those of his fellow-missionaries. There are also some letters and other documents of Philip II concerning Alonso de la Vera Cruz. A complete list of these materials can be seen in the bibliography; some of them have been published in the collections which we have mentioned there.

An important source for this study is the Ms iii K 6 of the Escorial library, a long manuscript of xiii plus 354 folios, containing two works by Vera Cruz ¹⁹). It is written in several different hands, none of which is his. It is evident, however, that he edited the manuscript before sending it from Mexico because there are many marginal notes written in his hand, especially in the second part, and the last lines of both parts are also done in his hand. The first part of the MS is a long treatise on tithes, in which Vera Cruz maintained that the Indians were not obliged to pay tithes. The full title is as follows: *Relectio de Decimis Admodum Reve / rendi Patris Fratris Alphonsi avera / cruce Sacri ordinis Eremitarum. D. / Augusti Regularis observantiae bona / rum Artium, ac Sacrae Theologiae magis / tri : Cathedrarii primarii in Mexica / na Universitate in partibus indiarum / maris Oceani : et ejusdem instituti pro / vincialis*. At the beginning of the text a shorter title is given: *Relectio de decimis habita in scholis / publice in universitate mexicana A*

1927), and later printed separately in *El Escorial*, 1932. For a brief treatment of these chronicles in so far as they deal with Mexico, cf. R. RICARD, *La « conquête spirituelle » du Mexique* (Paris, 1933), pp. 18-20.

¹⁸) Cf. Tomás de Herrera, *BIA*, III, 590-631.

¹⁹) Complete descriptions of this manuscript can be found in Guillermo ANTOLÍN, *Catálogo de los códices latinos de la Real Biblioteca del Escorial* (Madrid, 1910-1923). *BIA*, VIII, 169-170. J. TORIBIO MEDINA, *La imprenta in México* (Santiago de Chile, 1909-1911), I, 127-128.

magistro F. / Alfonso ab eodem edita Anno 1555. It is written in typical scholastic form, a series of twenty-six questions in which Vera Cruz states the arguments pro and contra, followed by conclusions and solutions of the arguments contra.

Preceding the text there are a number of separate documents. The first is a letter of approval by the Benedictine censor Rodrigo de Vadillo, to whom the book was referred. The letter is signed by him and by Antonio Hurtado, and dated Oct. 19, 1562, in the Benedictine monastery of San Martín, Madrid. There are two other letters of approval, one by Pedro de Ibarra, O. S. A., and the other by Luis de León, writing at Salamanca, Nov. 25, 1561. The prologue is written by the Augustinian Balthasar López, also at Salamanca, Jan. 5, 1562. He spoke of the qualifications of Alonso de la Vera Cruz as a canonist and theologian, and praised the books of Vera Cruz which were already printed at that time. In the introduction, addressed to Philip II, Vera Cruz stated briefly the position of the religious as champions of the neophyte Indians in the question of tithes, and he appealed for a just decision, reminding the King of his authority as heir to the powers of the Catholic Kings, who were commissioned by Alexander VI « *velut delegati* » of the Pope. He wrote from Mexico City, Jan. 1, 1560.

The second part of the Escorial MS is entitled : *Apologia pro religiosis trium ordinum men / dicantium, habitantibus in nova hispania, in / partibus indiarum maris Oceani et pro indige / nis Reverendi Patris Fratris Alphonsi a Vera / Cruce Sacri ordinis eremitarum D. Augusti / ni, moderatoris primarii in Academia Mexicana / bonarum artium, et Theologiae Magistri.* The contents are given as follows :

Indulta summorum pontificium ab inno. 4. usque ad paulum 4. pro eisdem religiosis.

Omnia indulta sub compendio, cum anotationibus.

Declaratio privilegii Leonis decimi, cum questionibus.

Declaratio privilegii Pauli tertii, cum questionibus.

Declaratio Clementinae. Religiosi de privilegiis.

In the introduction to this second part, Vera Cruz addressed himself to the Council of the Indies and spoke of the benefits brought to the Indians through the ministry of the friars. In order that the ministry may continue, he asked for approval of the papal privileges listed in his work, since those privileges were necessary for the success of the missions in the New World. Although this part of

the manuscript is not included in the letters of approval mentioned above, except the general approval of Rodrigo de Vadillo, it is certain that Alonso de la Vera Cruz intended to publish both parts, as we shall see in chapter six. Both are related to the same question of the dispute between the religious and the hierarchy. At the beginning of the manuscript there is included a letter of the printer Andrea de Portonariis. It is an autograph letter addressed to the King to request a ten year permission to print the *Relation de decimis* which Vera Cruz had sent him from Mexico City. He wrote on Jan. 3, 1562.

Neither part of the manuscript, however, was ever published. The reason appears to be that the publication of such controversial material would have caused too great a furor. We shall see that shortly afterward, in 1562, Vera Cruz himself returned to Spain recalled by the King to give a defense of his position in the controversy with the Hierarchy. His defense was successful and, consequently, there would have been no point in stirring up further trouble by publishing the above works. Furthermore, his summary of privileges, though never published, was widely distributed among the religious in Mexico ²⁰). The whole manuscript remains unedited today, except for some small passages.

Another source of manuscript materials consulted for this study is the National Archive in Madrid. There are two documents available in the Papeles de Inquisición ²¹). The first one, Leg. 4427 No. 5, is a manuscript of 19 folios containing eighty-four conclusions that must be censured in the *Relectio de decimis* of Vera Cruz. In the beginning there is a letter by Alonso de Montúfar, Archbishop of Mexico City, in which he appeals for a condemnation of the heretical and scandalous doctrines of Alonso de la Vera Cruz. The document is signed by Montúfar, Bartolomé de Ledesma, O. P., who approved the censures, and Francisco de Zárate, notary apostolic. The date is Jan. 31, 1558, Mexico City. The second document, Leg. 4442 No. 41, is a letter to the Inquisitor General by G. (Gonzalo ?) de Alarcón, a priest of the archdiocese of Mexico, writing in 1560.

²⁰) Cf. J. GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Bibliografía Mexicana del siglo XVI*, Part I (Mexico, 1886), pp. 86-87. He quotes Grijalva, *op. cit.*, fol. 188v, to that effect: «pero eran pocos los religiosos que no le tenían manuscrito».

²¹) A. PAZ Y MÉLIA, *Papeles de Inquisición* (2nd. edition; Madrid, 1947), Nos. 780 and 781.

He requested a prohibition against the scandalous books of Vera Cruz.

One of the richest sources for this study is the MS 325 of the Fondo Español in the National Library of Paris²²). It contains 360 folios and seventy-nine different documents, letters and writings. This interesting collection of materials was probably the property of Vera Cruz himself. Some of the writings are his work, others are letters addressed to him, but most of the materials are copies of the work of others. Nearly all of them concern some aspect of the dispute over tithes and privileges, and most of them are annotated in the hand of Vera Cruz. A complete list of the documents employed is given in the bibliography. Most of them remain unpublished, but those which have been edited are indicated in that list.

The archives of Rome have also rendered some interesting and valuable manuscript materials. A small, but very useful, document, the MS 958, is to be found in the Angelica library, located in the former monastery of St. Augustine in Rome²³). This sixteenth century manuscript is entitled : *Formularium pro iis qui sunt a secretis ordinis*. At the back of the volume are inserted a number of papers, one of which gives statistics on the Augustinians in Mexico ; it consists of two small folios in Latin. There is no date, but the writer, Agustín de Carvajal, became the Spanish assistant general in 1595²⁴). The document was probably composed in that year, or shortly thereafter, as a report on the friars and foundations in Mexico. This conjecture is confirmed by the contents of the manuscript. It speaks of the burial place of Pedro Suarez de Escobar, Bishop-elect

²²) No. 325 is the « classement de 1860 ». A. MOREL-FATIO, *Catalogue des manuscrits espagnols et des manuscrits portugais en la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris, 1892), employs No. 550 for this manuscript. He gives a complete description. References to this MS can be found in *BIA*, VIII, 173-174.

²³) Notice of this manuscript was found in R. STREIT, *Bibliotheca Missionum, II Americanische Missionsliteratur, 1493-1699* (Aachen, 1924), 327. For a description, cf. H. NARDUCCI, *Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum praeter Graecos et orientales in Bibliotheca Angelica*, I (Rome, 1893), 404. Here the No. of the Ms. is R.5.9.

²⁴) Agustín de Carvajal and his brother Diego, also an Augustinian, were born of a noble family in Guadalajara, and were the first novices received at the monastery in that city. Agustín later went to Spain to study at Salamanca. From there he went to Rome where he became Assistant General for the Spanish provinces. In 1605 he was made Bishop of Panama, and in 1612 he was advanced to the See of Guamanga in the Kingdom of Peru. He died around 1620. Cf. BASALENQUE, *op. cit.*, I, 413. HERRERA, *Alphabetum Augustinianum*, I, 48.

of Guadalajara, who had died in 1591. On the other hand, it refers only to the province of Mexico and, therefore, was composed before 1602, the date of the erection of the province of Michoacán.

This document is valuable, not only for statistics, but also for biographical notes on some of the outstanding Augustinians in Mexico in the sixteenth century, including Alonso de la Vera Cruz. The information given by Agustín de Carvajal can be considered as accurate in view of his position ; furthermore, he tells us that he had served as secretary to Pedro Suarez de Escobar when the latter was Provincial in Mexico.

Several small but interesting items have been taken from the Vatican Library and Archives. The Bibliotheca Barberini, MS 5835, contains a letter dated at Rome, Feb. 12, 1594, sent by Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini to Camillo Caetano, Papal Nuntio in Spain ²⁵). It concerns a complaint by the Augustinian general that the Spanish provincial refuses to recognize the separation of the Province of Mexico from that of Castile. There is also a Brief sent by Julius III to Alonso de la Vera Cruz, June 28, 1552, about his appointment to the see of León in Nicaragua. It is located in Armadio 41. tom. 64, no. 440. It is noted in Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, III, 274, note 8. Eubel refers to the schedario of Garampi, Vol. 550 (fol. 122v). A third document is found in the Archivium Brevium, Vol. 193, fols. 173-175 ²⁶). It is a Brief of Clement VIII, given at Rome, July 25, 1592, confirming the perpetual separation of the Province of Mexico from that of Castile. The supplication submitted by the Augustinian general is also to be seen in the same place.

Another archive of Rome that has been useful for this study is that of the Spanish Embassy to the Holy See ²⁷). There is a letter concerning affairs of the general chapter of 1592, sent by the provincial and definitors of Mexico to the general and dated June 2, 1590. It is found in Leg. 35, fols. 52, and 53-54. Another item of

²⁵) This manuscript is noted in C. R. FISH, *Guide to the Materials for American History in Roman and other Italian Archives*, (Wash., D. C., 1911). Cf. index, s. v. « Augustinian ».

²⁶) The location of this Brief was found in the notes of Saturnino López, in the Archive of the Augustinian Order, Rome.

²⁷) An inventory of the sixteenth century manuscripts was made by L. SERRANO, *Archivo de la Embajada de España cerca de la Santa Sede*, Vol. I, *Indice analítico de los documentos del siglo XVI* (Rome, 1915).

interest is the decree separating Mexico from Castile, drawn up by the General, Gregorio di Montelparo, in Madrid, Oct. 19, 1588. It can be seen in Leg. 35, fol. 51. There is also a letter of Philip II sent to his ambassador, Conde de Olivares, from Lisbon, Feb. 4, 1583. It concerns the appointing of an Augustinian commissary general, and is found in Leg. 7, fol. 200. All of these materials are of interest to this study because they help to determine the status of the Mexican Province during the lifetime of Vera Cruz.

In this summary of the sources for unedited manuscript materials, it remains only to say a few words about the General Archives of the Augustinian Order in Rome. This Archive, as it exists today, was organized in 1640; consequently, there is not much material pertaining to the sixteenth century. There is, however, one series of manuscript books of special value which contains material dating back as far as the fourteenth century. It is the *Dd* series, *Regesta Priorum Generalium*, which contains 267 volumes between the years 1357 and 1891. There are, unfortunately, some lacunae and missing volumes, especially in the first two hundred years. While this series does not contain many references directly pertaining to the life of Vera Cruz, it does have many notices of importance for the history of the Augustinians in Mexico. A tribute must be paid here to Father Saturnino López, O. S. A., who worked for many years in the above Archive and whose notes are of great value for locating material in this *Dd* series.

With regard to the published collections of documents, it will not be necessary to give a list of them here. Both major and minor collections have been consulted, as well as a number of monographs in which newly-edited documents have been included. Of the materials mentioned above very little has been published, with the exception of the documents of the Archivo General de Indias. A number of the latter have been edited, especially in the collections of documents by Joaquin García Icazbalceta and Mariano Cuevas. These documents, as well as all the collections consulted, are listed in the bibliography.

Lastly, there are a number of periodical articles which will be employed in the course of this study. They are listed in the bibliography. With regard to the four printed works of Alonso de la Vera Cruz, it has already been stated in the Foreword that three of them constitute the basis of a course in scholastic philosophy and it is not our intention to make a comprehensive study of them. They

are the *Recognitio summularum*, *Dialectica resolutio*, and *Physica speculatio*. The fourth work, *Speculum coniugiorum*, will be thoroughly examined and commented upon. The fourth edition, that published in Milan in 1599, is the one that has been used.

CHAPTER I

The Early Life of Alonso de la Vera Cruz

Vera Cruz' Origin, Education and Call to the Missions

Alonso de la Vera Cruz was « one of the most notable men who came to New Spain in the immediate era of the conquest »²⁸). Such is the opinion of Joaquín García Icazbalceta, the greatest of Mexican historians. The subsequent pages will attempt to show that Vera Cruz was a truly outstanding man, as a priest and religious, as a missionary, and as an educator. He was the product of the best education and culture of his age, and his work in Mexico establishes him as « one of the personages most illustrious in virtue and knowledge who have honored the American soil »²⁹). His influence is still felt and recognized in Mexico today. In recent years a statue was erected to his memory in the courtyard of the Plantel « Bachilleratos » of the National University.

Alonso de la Vera Cruz was a native of Toledo ; he was born near that city in a place called Caspueñas in 1507³⁰). His father was Francisco Gutiérrez, and his mother, Leonor Gutiérrez. The

²⁸) GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Obras, Biografías*, I (Mexico, 1897), 41.

²⁹) J. FERNANDO RAMÍREZ, *Noticias de la vida y escritos de Fray Toribio de Motolinía*, p. cli, note 55, found in GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Colección de documentos para la historia de México*, I (Mexico, 1858), xlv-cliii.

³⁰) The chief source for the early life of Vera Cruz is GRIJALVA, *Crónica de la orden de N. S. P. Agustín en las provincias de la Nueva España*, Edad IV, chap. xi, and *passim*. Almost the same material is found in the other chronicles. BASALENQUE, *Historia de la provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Michoacán* (2nd. ed.; Mexico, 1886). Bk. I, chap. viii, and *passim*. ESCOBAR, *Americana Thebaida* (Mexico, 1924), chaps. xxv-xxix. This information is found assembled in a number of places; chiefly, SANTIAGO VELA, *BIA*, VIII, 155-174, and GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Biografías* I (Mexico, 1897), 41-71. A similar account is to be seen in ICAZBALCETA's *Bibliografía mexicana del siglo XVI* (Mexico, 1886), and his edition of F. CERVANTES SALAZAR, *México en 1554* (Mexico, 1875), p. 57, note 9.

The date of his birth is usually given as 1504 because the chronicles say

family enjoyed fair means and was able to provide Alonso with a good education in some of the best schools of the time. He was sent to Alcalá de Henares to study grammar (Latin) and rhetoric. For his higher education he went to the famous University of Salamanca, where he studied arts (philosophy) and theology.

At Salamanca Alonso was both the pupil and close friend of the Dominican Francisco de Vitoria, the great political philosopher, Thomist and outstanding teacher. The influence of this learned man will be seen later on when we have occasion to speak of the philosophical writings of Vera Cruz, and his ideas on the nature and laws of empire. It was Francisco de Vitoria who inspired him with a deep love of St. Thomas and a lifelong interest in the study of the *Summa*. It is said, probably with exaggeration, that Vera Cruz knew the *Summa* by heart and could quote long passages with complete accuracy ³¹). Vitoria also introduced his students to the new scholasticism, freed from the arid and profitless disputations of other scholastics of that time. He was an expert lecturer, a man who aroused in his students a love for learning. It was under such excellent guidance that Alonso Gutiérrez earned the degree of Bachelor of Arts ³²). He then entered the school of theology, was ordained a priest, and continued his studies til he was awarded the degree of Master of Theology.

Alonso must have been a promising student because he was retained at the University to teach in the faculty of arts. His reputation soon brought him another means of livelihood and a signal honor; the Duque del Infantado, the first of the Spanish nobles, sent his two sons to Alonso to be tutored. Alonso Gutiérrez appeared to be making a fine start toward a successful, and probably prosperous, career. If, through his contacts with nobility, he could have advanced himself to the court of the Spanish King, at that time

he died in 1584 at the age of 80, but he wrote in 1565 that he was then 58; therefore, he was born in 1507. Cf. Santiago VELA, *AHHA*, XIV (Nov.-Dec., 1920), p. 302.

³¹) ESCOBAR, *op. cit.*, chap. xxvi, p. 319.

³²) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.* (2nd. print.; Mexico, 1924) Edad IV, chap. xi, p. 585. Grijalva says here that Vera Cruz earned the Master's degree, apparently referring to theology, since the degree of Master of Arts was awarded to Vera Cruz by the new University of Mexico, 1553, « in view of the fact that he is a Bachelor of the University of Salamanca, and because of his well-known ability ». Cf. *Infra*, chap. iii.

the most brilliant court in Europe, he would have accomplished what was doubtless the aim of many an ambitious ecclesiastic of his day. But Alonso Gutiérrez, though he could not have known it, stood at that moment at the turning point of his life.

Francisco de la Cruz, the « Padre Venerable » of the first Augustinian mission in Mexico, was then in Salamanca at the monastery of San Agustín. He had returned from Mexico to get new recruits, and was seeking volunteers at Salamanca. Francisco de la Cruz was a good planner ; he had in mind to obtain among his recruits a man learned in arts and theology who would be able to teach and train seminarians in Mexico. The credit for the lead that the Augustinians had in higher education in the missions must go to this far-sighted organizer. There must certainly have been a number of friars at the monastery of San Agustín who could have filled the requirements because Salamanca was at that time the center of studies for Augustinians in Spain, in a era of such illustrious men as Thomas of Villanova and Luis de León. The choice of Francisco de la Cruz went elsewhere, however. Somehow he heard of the excellence and ability of the young priest Alonso Gutiérrez, and he decided that he would try to get him to come to Mexico. It is difficult to surmise what may have been Francisco's reasons for trying to induce a diocesan priest to join a group of Augustinian missionaries. The chronicler Grijalva suggests that, apart from reasons of study and education, he also wanted a man capable of dealing with the problems arising between the religious and the Hierarchy in Mexico because of the special missionary privileges of the friars ³³). It is possible that, although these problems were not yet serious, Francisco de la Cruz could see what was coming and he felt that someone who had been educated outside of a religious order might be able to judge better and lead the way toward a more reasonable solution.

Whatever may have been his reasons, he did approach Alonso Gutiérrez to see if he could be persuaded to join the band of missionaries. This was in 1535, when Alonso was twenty-eight years of age and just getting established in a promising career. As might be expected, Alonso was not attracted by the invitation to leave a good situation and go to a foreign land with a barbarous people living in an unknown continent thousands of miles across the ocean.

³³) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.* (2nd. print.), Edad I, chap. xii, p. 23.

He told Francisco de la Cruz that he did not think it his vocation. But the missionary was not discouraged. He asked Alonso to think it over and give him a final answer at their next meeting. In the meantime, Francisco resorted to prayer, asking God to give the learned priest the grace to accept this difficult task. His persistence was rewarded; shortly afterward Alonso agreed to embrace the new and unknown life offered to him. His future greatness was foreshadowed in his generous acceptance.

He set out for Seville, the port of embarkation, early in 1536, accompanied by Francisco de la Cruz and eleven other Augustinians. Among them were some heroic and saintly men, especially Antonio de Roa, Juan Bautista de Moya and Juan de Sevilla ³⁴). The trip across the Atlantic was tedious as well as dangerous; two or three months in a small sailing vessel offered plenty of time for reflection and meditation. One day Francisco asked Alonso Gutiérrez if he had considered the possibility of becoming an Augustinian. Alonso replied that, while he had a high regard for the Augustinian Order, he did not feel that he was called to the religious life. After giving him some advice on the subject, Francisco left him to reflect. Only a few days later, Alonso brought the question up himself and said he had decided not to resist what appeared to be the clear Will of God, and he expressed his desire to join the order immediately. Francisco de la Cruz cautioned him to wait till the end of the voyage, and, in the meantime, to consider the matter further and pray for Divine guidance, so that he might make the right decision.

The ship arrived in due course at Veracruz on June 22. Alonso Gutiérrez persevered in his decision and accordingly, he was vested in the Augustinian habit after their arrival in the port city. In remembrance of the occasion and out of regard for Francisco de la Cruz, Alonso took the name of Vera Cruz. Thereafter he always called himself Alonso de la Vera Cruz and he never again employed his family name ³⁵). After a few days rest they sent out for Mexico City where they arrived on the second of July, 1536.

³⁴) For biographical notes, cf. *infra*, chap. ii, notes 50 and 62. The other eight were: Gregorio de Salazar, Diego de San Martín, Juan de Alva, Antonio de Aguilar, Diego de la Cruz, Pedro de Pareja, Agustín de Salamanca, Juan de San Martín. Cf. Jerónimo DE MENDIETA, *Historia eclesiástica indiana*, edited by García Icazbalceta (Mexico, 1870), pp. 367-368.

³⁵) The change in name caused some writers to speak of two men. For

Thus Alonso de la Vera Cruz began his new life, one in which he was destined to distinguish himself both as a priest and as an Augustinian. His first year in the missions was one of relative quiet and peace; he entered the novitiate in the monastery in Mexico City, and was the first Augustinian novice in the New World. A year later, June 20, 1537, he made his profession of vows, « usque ad mortem », in the hands of Jerónimo de San Esteban, Prior of Santa María de Gracia in Mexico City ³⁶). His is the first profession in the earliest Book of Professions of the Mexican Province ³⁷).

The Personality of Vera Cruz.

We have already noted that Vera Cruz was a man of great promise intellectually. But it was not only his ability as a student and teacher that attracted attention; his moral and spiritual qualities were also outstanding. It is very significant that he had no sooner completed his novitiate than he was made Master of novices, an office he held for three years. No doubt the missionaries were short-handed and they could not be very discriminating in choosing men for offices, but at the same time the Master of novices has a great responsibility and they gave the task to Vera Cruz when he had been an Augustinian for only one year. They must have seen in him qualities to warrant such a confidence. The chronicler from whom we have most of the information concerning Fray Alonso tells us something of these qualities ³⁸).

It appears that Vera Cruz made no compromises once he had embraced the religious life. In conformity with the strict rule of life then observed among the Spanish Augustinians, Fray Alonso always

example, J. PAMPHILUS, *Chronica ordinis fratrum eremitarum S. Augustini* (Rome, 1581). Cf. Alphonsus a vera Cruce, fols. 116v, 119 and 120. Alphonsus Gutierrez a Veracruce, fol. 130.

³⁶) GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Biografías*, I, 43, notes that the monastery in Mexico City, later known as San Agustín, is here called Santa María de Gracia. It appears, however, that both names were employed, probably from the very beginning.

³⁷) A copy of the profession of Vera Cruz can be seen in *BIA*, VIII, 156. The original Book of Professions is today preserved in the Library of the University of Texas. Cf. CASTAÑEDA and DABBS, *Guide to the Latin-American Manuscripts in the U. of Texas Library* (Cambridge, 1939).

³⁸) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.* (2nd. print.), Edad IV, chap. xi, pp. 594-595.

used only coarse cloth for his clothing and would not employ linen for his bed, even in the illness of his old age. He fasted more than the rule required. His bed was nothing but hard boards and he slept but four or five hours a day. Perhaps the characteristic most noticed in the life of Vera Cruz was his careful use of time ; one might say that he almost lived in a fear of wasting time. It was the one theme he repeated constantly in his conferences to his students and subjects — « Habete rationem temporis », he used to say over and over again. And he had a pet peeve in that regard ; he didn't like to see the friars play chess because of the time consumed.

That he himself made the best possible use of his time is evident ; he accomplished a tremendous amount of work in preaching, teaching, writing learned books, traveling, studying, administering the affairs of his Order in Mexico and in Spain, and solving the difficult cases of canon law that were frequently referred to him. Even today one finds evidence of his tireless study ; some of the books preserved from sixteenth century Augustinian libraries in Mexico are full of notes and comments in the hand of Vera Cruz ³⁹). He founded four libraries — those of San Pablo and San Agustín in Mexico City, Tiripetío and Tacámbaro — and it is said that none of the books in these libraries escaped his perusal and comment ⁴⁰). The handwriting of Alonso de la Vera Cruz further verifies that he was a busy man. He wrote in great haste and with little care for nicety of expression, sometimes mixing Spanish and Latin in the same sentence. Certainly it was not ignorance which caused him to write carelessly, but rather the haste with which his mind raced ahead of his pen.

He had a special dislike for idle conversation ; during the periods of recreation he tried to make the best use of time by discussing for the benefit of his students, an article from the *Summa theologica*, or perhaps a new book that had just arrived from Spain. It is conceivable that recreation spent in that fashion was not always agreeable to his fellow religious. But Vera Cruz was not a tyrannical man, without feeling for others. Like all profoundly honest and

³⁹) A collection of the books of Tiripetío is found in the Museo Michoacano in Morelia, Mexico. Cf. BOLAÑO E ISLA, *Contribución al estudio biobibliográfico de Fray Alonso de la Vera Cruz* (Mexico, 1947), pp. 23-24.

⁴⁰) BASALENQUE, *op. cit.*, Bk. I, chap. viii, pp. 191-192.

sincere men, he was most credulous and considerate in accepting excuses and explanations, even when they seemed incredible to others. This credulity, however, did not prevent him from being a prudent and capable superior; we shall see that he was chosen five times to lead his fellow Augustinians in Mexico. And in the matter of provincial elections he was most sensitive about correct procedure ⁴¹).

It is likely, however, that Vera Cruz' extreme studiousness and constant preoccupation with his responsibilities made him a very grave and somewhat distant man. His books are written in a typical academic style, and neither they nor his letters display any of the brilliance with which some great men are able to inspire others with a lively interest in the things they love. There is no trace of humour either in his writings or in the stories told of him; he probably had little appreciation for the lighter side of life. He was a man completely dedicated to his duties, one who never allowed himself any recreation that would take him far from his study and his work. Even during periods of vacation, while Vera Cruz was teaching in the seminary, he employed himself in traveling on foot to the Indian villages where he preached in Tarascan, and administered the Sacraments ⁴²). And that was in Tierra Caliente, a hot and insalubrious region, one of the most difficult of the mission fields. Fray Alonso must have had excellent health, for he lived to nearly eighty years under the constant pressure of cares, work and study. He was in poor health only twice in his life, as far as can be known, except for the last two years before his death when he suffered much from a urinary disorder. In his first illness, sometime during the early years of his life in Mexico, he was cured by a famous Franciscan brother, Lucas de Almodovar, who was reputed to have the gift of cures ⁴³). The second illness, we shall see later, occurred after his return from Spain, when Vera Cruz was already advanced in age.

In summary it can be said that Vera Cruz was the type of man

⁴¹) GRIJALVA, *loc. cit.*

⁴²) BASALENQUE, *op. cit.*, Bk. I, chap. viii.

⁴³) GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Los médicos de México en el siglo XVI, Opusculos varios*, I (Mexico, 1896), pp. 89-90. This story is related by Juan DE TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía indiana* (2nd. print; Madrid, 1723), III, 524, who refers to Vera Cruz as « the light of these Western Indies ».

who would have made a name in whatever field he may have chosen to dedicate himself. His tireless energy and blameless life caused him to stand out above others. His contemporaries held him in the highest respect and esteem, but he probably had very few intimate friends because he had so little time for the less important pastimes of social intercourse.

CHAPTER II

The Augustinian Scene in Mexico

The Beginning

The Augustinians, arriving in Mexico in 1533, were the last of the three mendicant orders to appear on the scene. The Franciscans had been there since about 1523, and the Dominicans arrived three years later. In spite of their relatively late appearance, the Augustinians quickly took their place with the other two orders with whom they shared the burden of the evangelization of Mexico for the greater part of the sixteenth century. The spread of the Augustinian missions was rapid as new groups continued to arrive from Spain, and they soon established themselves on a par with the other orders, as can be seen in a letter sent by the provincials of the three orders to Philip II in 1559 ⁴⁴). The Augustinians followed the pattern sent by their predecessors and were soon engaged in all aspects of the mission work. The high quality and success of this work is attested to by the Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza. The Viceroy, who was transferred to Peru in 1550, gave various instructions to his successor Luis de Velasco, including a recommendation of the Augustinians.

The religious of the Order of St. Augustine in New Spain have proved themselves and continue to prove themselves, and they have taken as great care as the others in the conversion and instruction of the Indians, and nothing is wanting in them. Because they are

⁴⁴) *Cartas de Indias* (Madrid, 1877), pp. 141-143. The three Provincials were Domingo de Santa María, O. P.; Francisco de Toral, O. F. M.; and Alonso de la Vera Cruz, O. S. A. They reported the following statistics: the Franciscans had 380 friars and 80 houses; the Dominicans, 210 with 40 houses; and the Augustinians, 212 with 40 houses.

recently arrived, Your Lordship might not hold them in the same esteem as the others. Your Lordship should honor and favor them because they merit it, and you should not recognize this Order as less than the others, because they are not of less merit than the others ⁴⁵).

The idea of joining the missions in Mexico had first been proposed and discussed among the Augustinians in Spain in 1527, especially under the leadership and urging of Juan Gallego ⁴⁶). In that same year the Augustinians of Andalusia separated from Castile to form another province in Seville, and the negotiations for the missions were delayed. The provincials of both provinces however, Juan Gallego in Andalusia, and Thomas of Villanova in Castile, continued to foster the idea ⁴⁷). Finally, in 1533, when Francisco de Nieva was Provincial of Castile, a group of eight religious was made up between the two provinces, and they chose for their leader Francisco de la Cruz, who later became universally known as « Padre Venerable » ⁴⁸). The name bears witness to the high esteem in which he was held by his confreres who relied upon his

⁴⁵) « Los religiosos de esta orden de San Agustín en esta Nueva España han aprobado y aprueban bien y han tenido gran cuidado en la conversión y doctrina de los indios tanto como los demás, y en ellos no ha habida falta. A causa de ser recién venido V. S. podría ser que los religiosos de esta orden no se tuviesen en aquella estima que los de las otras. V. S. les honre y favorezca, porque lo merecen, y no se conozca que esta orden se tiene en menos que las otras, pues no es de menos mérito que ellas ». *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organización de las posesiones españolas en América y Oceanía, sacados del Archivo de Indias*, VI (Madrid, 1866), 500-501.

This collection, edited by L. Torres de Mendoza, contains forty-two volumes published between the years 1864 and 1884. Henceforth this collection will be referred to simply as *CDI 1st*. *CDI 2nd*. will refer to a similar collection called *Colección de documentos inéditos... de las antiguas posesiones españolas de ultramar*. It contains twenty-five volumes published between the years 1885 and 1931.

⁴⁶) For an account of the preliminary negotiations, cf. D. PÉREZ DE ARRILUCEA, *Los Agustinos en México en el siglo XVI*, in *La Ciudad de Dios*, XCII (1913), 303-310, 420-428. A. SANZ PASCUAL, *Historia de los Agustinos Españoles* (Madrid, 1948), chap. vi.

⁴⁷) Thomas of Villanova died Sept. 8, 1555, and was canonized in 1659. For a sketch of his life, and bibliography, cf. Gregorio DE SANTIAGO VELA, *BIA*, VIII, 233-302.

⁴⁸) MS 958 (ca. 1595) of the Angelica Library, Rome, refers to him on fol. 106v as « primus fundator », and says that he is buried in the church of San Agustín, Mexico City. He died July 12, 1536. Cf. Biography in Tomás DE HERRERA, *Alphabetum Augustinianum* (Madrid, 1644), pp. 226-227.

guidance and inspiration in the first difficult years. To « Padre Venerable » goes the credit for having brought Alonso de la Vera Cruz to the New World ⁴⁹).

This group of eight pioneers set out from Spain on the second or third of March, 1533, and reached the New World after two and half months on the sea ⁵⁰). It was the feast of the Ascension, May 22, when they disembarked at San Juan de Ulúa, a small island in the port of Veracruz. Five days later they left Veracruz

⁴⁹) *Supra*, chap. i.

⁵⁰) Actually only seven set out because Juan Bautista de Moya turned back at Seville to make a short visit at home. When he returned, the others had left. He came in the third group in 1536. The original eight are given as follows by Juan DE GRIJALVA, *Crónica de la orden de N. S. P. Agustín en las provincias de la Nueva España* (2nd. print.; Mexico, 1924), Edad I, chap. v, p. 33.

Padre Venerable Francisco de la Cruz, cf. *supra*, note 48.

Jerónimo de San Esteban. Also known as Jerónimo Ximénez, he was born near Salamanca in 1493. His parents were Alonso Protugués and Ana López. He was professed at Salamanca, Aug. 23, 1519, when Thomas of Villanova was Prior there. In Mexico he founded convents at Ocuituco and Chilapa. In 1542 he took part in the unfortunate expedition to the Philippines led by Rui López de Villalobos, and in seven years he was back in Spain after circling the globe. He returned to Mexico, became Provincial in 1551, and died in 1570. Cf. J. GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Biografías*, IV (Mexico, 1899), 421-422. R. RICARD, *Un document inédit sur les Augustins de la Province de Mexique en 1563*, in *Etudes et documents pour l'histoire missionnaire de l'Espagne et du Portugal* (Louvain, 1930), pp. 135-151, No. 43.

Juan de San Román. His biography will be treated further on. Cf. chap. iv.

Agustín de Gormaz (de Coruña). Professed at Salamanca, June 24, 1524, he worked in the early foundations in Mexico at Tlapa, and Chilapa, and became Provincial in 1560. He returned to Spain in 1562 and was consecrated Bishop of Popayán, Nueva Granada (present day Columbia). His death occurred in 1589. Cf. GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Biografías*, IV, 445. *BIA*, II, 149-159.

Juan de Oseguera. Born near Toledo, the son of Juan de Oseguera and María de Sotomayor, he was professed in Toledo, Feb. 12, 1523. Juan de Zumárraga, Bishop of Mexico City, sent him as a representative to Mantua, but the session convoked in 1538 was not realized. He remained in Spain, filled various offices there, and died sometime shortly after 1554. Cf. *BIA*, IV, 200-202.

Juan Bautista de Moya. Born at Jaén, ca. 1504, he made his profession at Salamanca in 1523, Dec. 20. One of the most noted of the early missionaries, his memory is still revered for his work in Tierra Caliente, an insalubrious region which had been avoided by earlier missionaries. He spoke the Otomí language, one of the most difficult of the Indian tongues, and he must have known at least one other language since Otomí was not spoken in Tierra Caliente. Juan Bautista died Dec. 21, 1567, at Guayangareo (Morelia). MS 958 (ca. 1595) of the Angelica Library, Rome, mentions on folio 106v that he was noted for

and arrived in Mexico City on the seventh of June ⁵¹). These newest laborers for the vast mission field were received at San Domingo, the central monastery of the Dominican friars. Some 40 days later they took up temporary residence in Tabuca street ⁵²).

A civil commission was appointed on the 16th of June to assist the Augustinians in establishing themselves in Mexico City. Four days later two of the friars went before the cathedral chapter to ask for the appointment of a site and a grant of alms to build a monastery. At the same time a petition was presented to the Audiencia, the governing body under the Viceroy. The result is not known but it is assumed that the land later occupied by the church and monastery of San Agustín was granted at this time ⁵³). The site was not wisely chosen; the Indians called the area Zoquipan, « muddyplace » ⁵⁴). An underground spring made the ground soft and muddy, and was a cause of difficulties in the subsequent construction ⁵⁵).

The new arrivals had the good will and assistance of the first Bishop of Mexico City, Juan de Zumárraga, a Franciscan. On the

his great penances, and for the performance of several miracles. His remains are buried in the church of San Agustín in Morelia. Cf. RICARD, *Un document sur les Augustins*, in *Etudes et documents*, pp. 135-151, No. 69. *BIA*, V, 653-654. Juan GONZÁLEZ DE LA PUENTE, *Primera parte de la crónica augustiniana de Mechoacán* (2nd. ed.; Mexico, 1907). Bk. II, chaps. i-xxii. N. P. NAVARRETE, *Fray Juan Bautista Moya* (Mexico, 1938).

Jorge de Avila. The son of Francisco de Nájara and Catalina López, he made his profession at Toledo, Aug. 20, 1526. He was elected Vicar Provincial in Mexico in 1540, and three years later he accompanied his successor Juan de San Román on his journey to Spain. After successful completion of their business he set out again for Mexico, but died on route, at Puerto Rico, where he is buried in the Dominican Church. Cf. *BIA*, I, 285.

Alfonso de Borja. This distinguished missionary is especially remembered for his work in connection with the hospital of Santa Fe, founded ca. 1535 near Mexico City by Vasco de Quiroga, then a member of the Audiencia. Cf. RICARD, *La « conquête spirituelle » du Mexique* (Paris, 1933), p. 193. For a biographical sketch, cf. HERRERA, *Alphabetum Augustinianum*, pp. 19-20.

⁵¹) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.* (2nd. print.; Mexico, 1924), Edad I, chap. vi, p. 39.

⁵²) Jerónimo DE MENDIETA, *Historia eclesiástica indiana*, edited by J. García Icazbalceta (Mexico, 1870), p. 367.

⁵³) J. GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, « Los Agustinos en México », *Opusculos Varios*, II (Mexico, 1896), 415-419. Mendieta, however, says that the land was purchased by means of alms. Cf. *Historia eclesiástica*, p. 367.

⁵⁴) « El el lodo ».

⁵⁵) The history of the monastery of San Agustín will be discussed in chap. v.

8th of Feb., 1537, he wrote to the King to request assistance for the Augustinians ⁵⁶). He explained that they have come in the eleventh hour and they have no means of support with which to build their monastery. The Bishop suggested that the King grant them the rents from one of the Indian villages, as he had already been done for the Dominicans to enable them to construct their monastery. Zumárraga then gave his recommendation for the Augustinian friars in general, who « are working faithfully in this vineyard », and for Juan de Oseguera in particular, who was then on his way to Spain about this and other business. The request was granted a few years later when the Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza, acting on instructions from Prince Philip, assigned the rents of the village of Tetzco to the Augustinians ⁵⁷). Building of the monastery began on the feast of St. Augustine, Aug. 28th, 1541, with a solemn ceremony attended by all the ecclesiastical and civil dignitaries ⁵⁸).

The Growth of the Missions

In the meantime, while negotiations were going on to provide for the monastery in Mexico City, the friars were not idle. Almost immediately, the missionaries set out to find suitable sites for establishing churches and preaching to the Indians ⁵⁹).

The first objective was to lay claim to the villages that they wished to evangelize, and begin the church and monastery; the preaching could not begin until the missionaries had learned the language of the region. That is not to say, however, that no Baptisms were ministered or instruction given, because a certain amount could be done with the aid of an interpreter. The question of the languages was a most serious one; the Indian tongues were many and difficult, with a number of dialects within each language complicating the problem. The Augustinians mastered ten languages in

⁵⁶) M. CUEVAS, *Documentos inéditos del siglo XVI para la historia de México* (Mexico, 1914), p. 78.

⁵⁷) J. GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Opusculos Varios*, II (Mexico, 1896), 416.

⁵⁸) *Ibid.*

⁵⁹) A very good picture of the expansion of the Augustinian missions is found in RICARD, *La « conquête spirituelle »*, pp. 92-95. Cf. the map at the end of this dissertation for the location of the Augustinian foundations in the sixteenth century.

the various regions to which they ministered. This question will be more fully treated in the next chapter where the educational system of the missions will be considered.

The Franciscans and Dominicans, who were on the scene nearly ten years earlier, had already occupied the main routes of expansion branching out from Mexico City. The mission field was very large, however, and there were many vacant areas in the regions where the two Orders had established themselves. The Augustinians were obliged, therefore, to seek out these unoccupied areas between the established missions, and their expansion was necessarily somewhat disorganized because they could not concentrate their efforts in any one direction. In general, one can trace three routes of expansion.

The first route went directly south of Mexico City toward the eastern extremity of the present State of Guerrero, occupying the region between the Franciscan and Dominican foundations around Puebla to the east, and the Dominican mission in eastern Morelos to the west. This first route was taken immediately in 1533, when Francisco de la Cruz sent Jerónimo de San Esteban and Jorge de Avila in the direction of the villages of Tlapa and Chilapa. They also chose sites along the way ; Jorge de Avila decided to stop at Ocuituco where he was then joined by Juan de San Román. Ocuituco became the site of the first Augustinian monastery in the New World ⁶⁰). Jerónimo de San Esteban, accompanied by Agustín de Coruña, continued on to Chilapa, where they arrived in October of 1533. Within a year monasteries and churches were begun in Chilapa and Totolapan, and soon afterward foundations were established in Yecapixtla, Zacualpan, and Tlapa. This last was the southernmost point of that route of expansion for the time being, but new foundations continued to be made in the area between Tlapa and Mexico City until as late as 1570.

The second route lay to the north and east of Mexico City toward the Otomí Indians, in the present State of Hidalgo, and the Huastecs, in the region where the States of Hidalgo, San Luis Potosí and Veracruz meet. Here the Augustinians penetrated between two groups of Franciscan missions in Hidalgo, but in the region of the Huastecs they had the field to themselves and could expand until they reached the area inhabited by the Chichimecas.

⁶⁰) This monastery had an unfortunate history. It will be considered in the fifth chapter.

These latter were a hostile tribe against whom the missionaries had to seek the protection of the civil arm. This northern mission was undertaken in the chapter of 1536. Alonso de Borja was sent with two other friars to the Otomí Indians, and in the same year the monastery at Atotonilco was begun ⁶¹). Shortly afterward, another was founded at Metztitlán. In this region there is still to be seen today the grandiose monument of Acolman, one of the most outstanding of the Augustinian monasteries. The other branch of the northern mission was assigned to Juan de Sevilla and Antonio de Roa who journeyed toward the Huastecs in the Sierra Alta ⁶²). Some of the foundations there were Actopan, Tututepec, Molango and Xilitla.

The third route lay to the west, into the State of Michoacán, one of the best of the Augustinian mission fields. The chapter of 1537 commissioned Juan de San Román and Diego de Chávez to found monasteries at Tiripetío and Ocuila ⁶³). Here the Augustinians established a line of houses amidst the Franciscan foundations. The area proved very fertile for evangelization, and between the years 1550 and 1554 alone, at least six monasteries were begun, chiefly under the direction of Alonso de la Vera Cruz — Cuitzeo, Yuriapúndaro (now called Yuriria), Guayangareo (also called Valladolid, and today known as Morelia), Huango, Charo and Jacona ⁶⁴). These do not include the houses established in Tierra Caliente, where the Augustinians were the first to penetrate, founding a monastery at Tacámbaro in 1538. The apostle of that difficult mission was Juan Bautista de Moya ⁶⁵).

⁶¹) SANTIAGO VELA, *AHHA*, XV (May-June, 1921), 334.

⁶²) Juan de Sevilla. He came to Mexico in 1536, where, among other offices, he was Prior at Atotonilco for twenty years. He was a nephew of the illustrious Juan de Sevilla, noted Augustinian religious leader in Spain. His death occurred in 1563. Cf. RICARD, *Etudes et documents*, pp. 135-151, No. 65.

Antonio de Roa. Professed at Burgos in 1529, he came to Mexico in 1536, where he died Sept. 14, 1563. Cf. *ibid.*, No. 16. MS 958 (ca. 1595) of the Angelica Library, Rome, says he was a noted ascetic; during Lent he had himself bound to a pillar and scourged in the sight of thousands of Indians. He is buried in the church of San Agustín, Totolapa.

⁶³) SANTIAGO VELA, *AHHA*, XV (May-June, 1921), 334.

⁶⁴) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.*, Edad II, chap. x. Diego BASALENQUE, *Historia de la provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Michoacán* (2nd. ed.; Mexico, 1886), Bk. I, chap.s xii, xv, xvii.

⁶⁵) *Supra*, note 50.

The monasteries founded in this astounding sixteenth century mission effort were frequently built on a grandiose scale. Many of them still stand today, monuments to the great energy of the missionaries, and some are still occupied by friars of the same Order that built them. Among the Augustinian monasteries today inhabited by friars of that Order, some of the more notable are those of Cuitzeo, Morelia and Yuriria, all in Michoacán.

Many of these structures are both massive and enormous, with churches built on the same scale, and some of them sumptuously ornamented ⁶⁶). This ornamentation was sometimes excessive because it laid too heavy a burden on the Indians. The problem of providing finances and labor for construction gave rise to numerous conflicts among the ecclesiastical and civil authorities, conflicts that we shall consider in chapter five. A wrong impression can easily be created, however, by considering only the major monastic buildings, located for the most part in the larger cities, for the fact is that not all the monasteries were built in such grandiose proportions. Some were extremely poor, such as the Augustinian foundation in Pahuatlán ⁶⁷).

What is more important, however, is to know what the average monastic structure was like and what purpose it fulfilled in the evangelization of the Indians. The typical mission foundation is characterized by simplicity and strength ; its construction was limited by the amateur talents of the friars who often had to be their own architects and engineers, and by the apprentice skill of the Indians who learned the arts of building and ornamentation from the missionaries ⁶⁸). The most typical Mexican mission is composed of a large open yard called a patio, a high single-nave church, and a two-floor convent built around a cloister ⁶⁹). The massive, crenelated walls of some missions gives them a quasi-military appearance, not that they were designed as fortresses, but because at times the monastery and church had to serve as a place of refuge against hostile attack by neighboring tribes, particularly in

⁶⁶) For photos and descriptions of many of these places, cf. M. SOLÁ, *Historia del Arte hispano-americano* (Barcelona, 1935).

⁶⁷) RICARD, *La « conquête spirituelle »*, chap. iii, pp. 209-210.

⁶⁸) G. KUBLER, *Mexican Architecture of the Sixteenth Century*, 2 Vols. (New Haven, 1948), pp. 430-431.

⁶⁹) M. TOUSSAINT, *Acolman* (Mexico City, 1948), pp. 5-7.

frontier areas. Viewed against the background of a primitive Indian village, these structures even today appear to be disproportionate and excessive, but regarding them in the light of the times and bearing in mind the purpose for which they were constructed, one must admire the energy, skill and foresight of the friars. The Spanish missionaries came from a nation which was at that time experiencing a tremendous surge of energy in every field of human activity, and underlying all was a religious motivation similar to the spirit which energized the great Crusades. Coming to the New World, the friars were inspired by religious zeal and by the Renaissance forms and ideals which were then producing in Spain some of the most vital intellectual, religious and artistic achievements of the age. The activity of the missionaries was but a reflection of the more intense activities of their homeland. In carrying out their construction program in the missions of New Spain, the friars directed their efforts towards building something worthy, lasting and useful, something that would be a contribution to the civilization, as well as the evangelization, of the Indians.

The sixteenth century Mexican mission was not conceived merely as a place to carry on preaching and baptizing; it was designed as the center of a Christian community, the heart of a social organism. In founding monasteries, the friars were not simply providing homes for themselves and a place of worship; they included in their plans space suitable for carrying on works of charity, mercy and education, all of which were regarded as an integral part of the mission effort. A complete monastic building included schools for both basic education and training in technical arts and music, a hostel, infirmary, and sometimes a foundling home. The work of maintaining these activities was performed by the Indians who were expected to participate in them as an exercise of virtue and a means of formation in the Christian life ⁷⁰). The missionaries sought not only to convert the natives, but also to encourage the development of Christian customs and useful activities within the community. Two of the more noted efforts of this kind were the so-called hospitals of Santa Fe, one near Mexico City and the other in Michoacán, designed by Vasco de Quiroga around 1535, and conducted with the assistance of the Augustinians ⁷¹).

⁷⁰) KUBLER, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 221-226.

⁷¹) RICARD, *La « conquête spirituelle »*, chap. iii, pp. 191-193.

A typical mission structure of the sixteenth century and an excellent example of the best art and architecture of the period is the Augustinian monastery of Acolman, built in 1560 ⁷²). The most noteworthy single artistic element of this impressive building is the magnificent plateresque facade, a work of art comparable to any Spanish church art of the same time and style. Acolman became a model in Mexico for similar structures. The great church is of the typical single-nave design with a ribbed gothic vault over the sanctuary. Above the altar stands an elaborate seventeenth century retablo, while the sanctuary walls are decorated with marvelous frescoes. Adjoining the church is the large convent, typically constructed in two floors around a cloister, but distinctive in its beautiful Renaissance style with arches and columns of delicately hewn stone, and colorful murals on the walls of the upper cloister. Lying open in front of this architectural masterpiece is the patio, in the center of which stands a finely chiselled stone cross, one of the most beautiful in Mexico.

Mention has already been made of the fertility of Michoacán for mission work. The eventual result of the expansion there was the formation of a second Augustinian province in Mexico ⁷³). The negotiations, begun in 1583, were brought to conclusion in 1602, on March 17, by Miguel de Sosa. The new province, with the title of St. Nicholas of Tolentine, included all the houses in the bishoprics of Michoacán and Guadalajara.

It will be of interest to try to discover what was the number of foundations made by the Augustinians in the sixteenth century. We have already noted that in 1559 there were 40 houses in Mexico ⁷⁴). That figure represented an increase of two in the years intervening after 1555, when the Viceroy Luis de Velasco made a declaration defending the Augustinians' title to various foundations; he had listed 38 ⁷⁵). The next available figure is found in about the year 1573, when Juan Adriano stated that there were

⁷²) For a description and historical account, cf. M. TOUSSAINT, *Acolman*. Also SANTIAGO VELA, *AHHA*, XV (May-June, 1921), 320-334. A plan of the structure can be seen in RICARD, *La « conquête spirituelle »*, p. 197.

⁷³) ESTEBAN GARCÍA, *Crónica de la Provincia Agustiniiana del Santísimo Nombre de Jesús de México. Libro Quinto*, edited by Santiago Vela (Madrid, 1918), chap. i.

⁷⁴) *Supra*, note 44.

⁷⁵) Cf. SANTIAGO VELA, *AHHA*, XV (May-June, 1921), 335-336.

46 monasteries, each serving five or six villages ⁷⁶). He spoke of three houses in Mexico City — San Agustín, San Sebastián and San Pablo. His figure, 46, is a noticeably small increase for a period of fourteen years, that is, only 6 more houses than there were in 1559. Perhaps the reason is found in the fact that, that period of fourteen years was one of great internal disturbance among the Augustinian friars. The nature of this strife will be considered in chapter four. Whatever may have been the reason for the decrease in rate of expansion, the next statistic available indicates a great increase. On the first of April, 1579, Pedro Suarez de Escobar wrote to the King to complain of the Viceroy Martín Enríquez who had many times indicated that it was the will of the King that the Augustinians reduce the number of their monasteries from 60 to 20 ⁷⁷). This high rate of expansion is confirmed some years later in a document written *circa* 1595 ⁷⁸). Here it is stated that the number of houses was 72, all having at least four or five friars, and complete observance of cloister and the regular life. If the

⁷⁶) Cf. M. CUEVAS, *Historia de la Iglesia en México*, II (3rd. edition; El Paso, Texas, 1928), 163. His source is AGI 92-2-1.

Juan Adriano. Born at Alcázar de Consuegra and professed in Granada, he came to Mexico in 1557. He taught Scripture at the University of Mexico and served in his Order in many high offices, twice as Provincial. His death occurred on May 5, 1593. Cf. RICARD, *Etudes et documents*, pp. 135-151, No. 45. *BIA*, I, 25-26.

⁷⁷) M. CUEVAS, *Documentos inéditos*, pp. 309-312. The purpose behind the reduction in the number of monasteries was to have the religious give place to the secular clergy.

Pedro Suarez de Escobar, also called the Medellín, the place of his birth. He went to Mexico as a child, and made his profession there, June 29, 1541. He was a student of Alonso de la Vera Cruz. He became a Doctor at the University of Mexico and held the chair of Scripture there. Chosen to be Bishop of Guadalajara in 1590, he died before consecration at Tlayacapan in 1591. He spoke the Mexican language, Nahuatl. Cf. CUEVAS, *Documentos inéditos*, p. xvii. RICARD, *Etudes et documents*, pp. 135-151, No. 83. *BIA*, VII, 608-610. Agustín de Carvajal, the writer of Ms 958 (*ca.* 1595) of the Angelica Library, Rome, folio 106v, speaks of himself as secretary to Pedro Suarez de Escobar when the latter was Provincial. He relates that Fray Pedro, for twenty-eight years before his death, ate but one meal a day, and never partook of meat, fish or eggs, nor drank wine. He slept on bare board and always used a hairshirt and the discipline. Even while he was Provincial he never relaxed these mortifications.

⁷⁸) Angelica Library, Rome, MS 958, fol. 106. This document was written around the year 1595; a complete description can be seen in the introductory essay on the sources.

figures for the number of houses are accurate, and they probably are, they indicate a very rapid growth. Such a sudden expansion can be explained on several scores. After the period of internal disturbance already mentioned, there would have been a new flourish of energy after good order was re-established. Furthermore, Alonso de la Vera Cruz returned from Spain in 1573, and his presence no doubt brought greater vitality to the Province ⁷⁹).

The potentialities for expansion also became greater as the manpower increased — reinforcements continued to arrive regularly from Spain. When Thomas of Villanova was again elected Provincial of Castile in 1534, he immediately began to make arrangements for the second group of missionaries for Mexico. He chose seven friars and sent them off with regret that his office prevented him from joining them; one of the members of the group was a former novitiate companion of his, Francisco Rodríguez ⁸⁰). They arrived at San Juan de Ulúa on the 7th of Sept. or Oct. in 1535. The saintly Provincial sent out the third group less than a year later; among them was Alonso de la Vera Cruz ⁸¹). Besides the addition in manpower coming from Spain, the Province in Mexico gained recruits from the population in Mexico itself. The Creoles, that is, Mexicans born of Spanish parents, were readily received into the Order, while the mestizos, those of mixed blood, were not as a rule considered as suitable candidates. The attitude with regard to the Indians is less clear; it appears that they were accepted into the seminary and there is record of two Indian members of the Augustinian Order ⁸²). The first Creole Provincial was Antonio de Mendoza, elected in 1581 ⁸³).

⁷⁹) Cf. GRIJALVA, *op. cit.* (2nd. print.; Mexico, 1924), Edad III, chap. xxxiii, p. 157. He speaks of the foundations made by Vera Cruz in his fourth term as Vicar-Provincial in 1575. Cf. also Matías DE ESCOBAR, *Americana Thebaida* (Mexico, 1924), chap. xxix, pp. 344-346.

⁸⁰) SANTIAGO VELA, *Capítulo de la segunda misión que pasó a México, AHHA*, XIV (July-Aug., 1920), 62-67.

⁸¹) *Supra*, chap. i.

⁸²) BASALENQUE, *op. cit.*, Bk. I, chap. v, pp. 130-131. He speaks of the ability of many of the Indian students. He had seen this himself among the students in San Agustín, Mexico City, and in Tiripetío. Some of them had been ordained priests. « Los Naturales... se han ordenado de Sacerdotes, siendo muy capaces ». It is not clear whether he means secular priests or Augustinians, but we shall see later in Chapter III that these were some Indian Augustinians.

⁸³) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.* (2nd. edition; Mexico, 1924), Edad IV, chap. ii, p. 531. Antonio de Mendoza, Born in Mexico City, his parents were Luis Marín

It is difficult to discover exactly how many friars there were in the province of Mexico at the end of the sixteenth century, but it appears that the number given in 1559, that is, 212, was nearly tripled ⁸⁴). The basis for calculation is the manuscript of the Angelica Library already mentioned in this chapter. The number of religious given for San Agustín in Mexico City alone is 150. In that monastery and six other major houses the total is 345 friars ⁸⁵). The writer of the manuscript adds that all the other monasteries had four or five friars, according to the number of Indians to be cared for. Such being the case, the sum total for the whole province would have been about 605 ⁸⁶). Even allowing for some degree of exaggeration, especially in the statement that every monastery had four or five religious, and remembering that these numbers include professed students, the figures still indicate a remarkable growth for a mission land.

The Spirit of the Missionaries

It is significant that a saint, Thomas of Villanova, had much to do with the beginnings of the missions to the New World. It is of particular interest that, at a time when the Church in Europe was suffering wholesale defection, the Augustinian missionaries, setting out to win new lands for the Church, had the advantage of the guidance and assistance of a man so much interested in the preservation of orthodoxy and good discipline. That Thomas of Villanova was largely responsible for the success of the missions is attested to by the missionaries themselves. Alonso de la Vera Cruz, publishing one of his philosophical works, the *Physica speculatio*, in 1557, dedicated it to Thomas, then Archbishop of Va-

and Doña María de Mendoza. He was professed in Mexico City, March 15, 1551. Two brothers of his were Augustinians also, Jerónimo Marín and Luis Marín. Antonio spoke both the Mexican and the Chichimecan languages. He died in July of 1581. Cf. RICARD, *Etudes et documents*, pp. 135-151. No. 15.

⁸⁴) *Supra*, note 44.

⁸⁵) MS 958 (ca. 1595) of the Angelica Library, Rome, fol. 106. The figures are given as follows: San Agustín, Mexico City — 150; San Agustín, Puebla — 60; Guayangareo (Morelia) 40; Santa María de Gracia, Guadalajara — 25; San Agustín, Oaxaca — 20; Zacatecas — 20; Colegio San Pablo — 30 professed students of theology.

⁸⁶) 65 (houses) times 4 (friars) = 260; plus 345 = 605.

lencia ⁸⁷⁾. In the dedication, he recalled how Thomas of Villanova, as Provincial of Castile, had guided by his letters the formation of the new province of Mexico, and how he had been interested in the establishment of studies there.

An earlier and more interesting testimony is provided in a letter written to Thomas of Villanova by Jerónimo de San Esteban, Oct. 9, 1539 ⁸⁸⁾. The letter is a kind of report written with almost a boyish enthusiasm for the new mission field. He began by thanking Thomas for his interest in and help to the missions, saying that their thanks should be written in letters of gold, or even in the missionaries' own blood, if that were proper, in order to show that they came « from the heart ». He spoke of the progress already made and of the discovery of new lands to evangelize. Then he gave a curious account of a distant land described to him by a French Franciscan who, the year previous, had travelled 165 miles across the country and another 198 miles through desert to arrive at :

a very populous land with a refined people who have enclosed cities and large houses, who wear shoes and leather buskins, and many wear cloth of silk reaching to the feet. I do not write about the richness of the land because he says so much that does not seem credible ; this the friar himself told me, that he saw a temple of their gods whose walls both inside and out were covered with precious stones ; I think he said emeralds. They say too, that in the land further in, there are camels and elephants : men whom the greed of gold has caused to wander along the South Sea (the Pacific) say that near that land they have come upon very rich islands of the same people and refinement ⁸⁹⁾.

⁸⁷⁾ This book was actually composed some years earlier; Thomas of Villanova had died two years before the publication. The Latin text of the dedication is found in A. BOLAÑO E ISLA, *Contribución al estudio biobibliográfico de Fray Alonso de la Vera Cruz* (Mexico, 1947), pp. 127-129.

⁸⁸⁾ J. GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Nueva colección de documentos para la historia de México*, I (Mexico, 1886), 194-195. For a biographical note of Jerónimo de San Esteban, cf. *supra*, note 50.

⁸⁹⁾ « tierra muy poblada y de gente de mucha policía que tiene ciudades cercadas, y grandes casas, y calzan zapatos y barcequies de cuero, y muchos vesten ropas de seda hasta los pies. De la riqueza de la tierra no escribo, porque dice tanto que no parece creible; esto me dijo el mismo fraile, que vió templo de sus ídolos que dentro y fuera tenía cubiertas las paredes de piedras preciosas; pienso me dijo esmeraldas. También dicen que en la tierra más adentro hay camelos y elefantes; hombres á quien la codicia del oro ha traído vagos por este Mar del sur dicen haber topado junto á aquella tierra islas muy ricas y de

Jerónimo de San Esteban explained that he related these things in order to show Thomas of Villanova how pleasing to God it was to procure missionaries to work in a land so blessed. Many more were needed ; the new group, just arrived a month before he wrote, were already assigned to their posts ⁹⁰).

What sort of men were these Augustinian friars, and what motives did they have in going to the distant mission lands in the New World ? Seeing that they were inspired by a saintly leader in Spain, one might suppose that they were motivated by the highest spiritual ideals. And there is ample evidence to show that such was the case.

The friars in Mexico were under the influence of a movement of reform which was then enveloping all of the Augustinian monasteries in Spain. It was a movement which had been set on foot nearly a hundred years previously by Juan de Alarcón, who, in 1431, was given permission by the General of the Order to establish a monastery dedicated to a stricter rule of life, referred to as the « observance ». This monastery, later called Los Santos, was founded at Villanubla, about six and half miles from Valladolid ⁹¹). The reform gradually spread out to form a congregation embracing Dueñas, Valladolid and Arenas. By degrees the movement grew, and enveloped, after some difficulties, the monastery at Salamanca, the heart of the Augustinian Order in Spain in the sixteenth century ⁹²). Throughout that century the reform continued to spread and to absorb nearly all the houses in Spain. The movement was not always peaceful and unopposed ; on July 13, 1568, Pope Pius V sent a brief to authorize the reform of the Province of Aragon ⁹³).

la misma policía y gente ». This letter is taken from Miguel SALON, *Vida y milagros del Padre de los pobres, Santo Tomás de Villanueva*, reprinted by Benito de Aste (Madrid, 1670), chap. xiv.

⁹⁰) The memory of the influence of St. Thomas de Villanova is still preserved in Mexico today. The saintly friar had fostered devotion to the Blessed Mother in the missions, especially under the titles of Our Lady of Grace, and Our Lady of Divine Succour. Today, in the church of San Agustín, Morelia, there is venerated a statue of the Madonna, with the latter title, believed to have been sent to Mexico four hundred years ago by Thomas of Villanova.

⁹¹) Tomás DE HERRERA, *Historia del convento de San Agustín de Salamanca* (Madrid, 1652), chaps. iii and iv.

⁹²) SANZ PASCUAL, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-57, 305 ff.

⁹³) A printed copy is found in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS 325 of the Fondo Español, fols. 226-227.

Roderico de Solis, Prior of San Agustín in Seville, was to take fifty friars of Castile and Andalusia to preach the « observance » in Aragon and appoint new superiors, and recourse was to be had to the secular arm if necessary. The religious of the Province of Aragon, who had resisted all previous efforts of reform, were thus brought into line with the help of a Papal mandate.

The same spirit of reform was brought to Mexico by the missionaries. A year after their arrival, Francisco de la Cruz called the first meeting of the friars at Ocuituco, on the feast of Corpus Christi, June 8, 1534⁹⁴). They drew up some rules to regulate both religious discipline and the mission work. In spite of the obvious difficulties of observing regular discipline, they decreed that Office should be recited in common, and even when only one religious was in the house, he should recite the Office in choir. Matins were to be chanted at midnight, the Hours in the morning, and Vespers and Compline at three in the afternoon. Two hours of mental prayer were prescribed for every day, one after Matins, the other after evening prayers. Mass was to be celebrated only when a clean and decent place was available, and the full rites of Baptism and the Eucharist were to be observed with care. Most interesting of all was the regulation stating that as soon as the Indians had finished saying the Hours, the priest was to begin Mass. How great must have been the desire of those pious men to integrate the life of the Indian community into the liturgical worship, when they proposed to teach the natives how to recite the Office ! The Augustinians were especially noted for their solicitude for the spiritual welfare of the Indians. They « are perhaps, of the three Orders, those who had the most confidence in the spiritual capacities of the Indians »⁹⁵). They not only advocated the administration of all the Sacraments, especially in the disputes about whether or not the

⁹⁴) D. PÉREZ DE ARRILUCEA, *Los Agustinos en México en el siglo XVI*, in *La Ciudad de Dios*, 98 (1917), 265-268. His source is the Chronicle of Grijalva, Edad I, chap. iv.

⁹⁵) « ... sont peut-être, des trois Ordres, celui qui a fait la plus confiance aux capacités spirituelles des Indiens ». RICARD, *La « conquête spirituelle »*, p. 132. Ricard notes, however, that, like the other religious, the Augustinians never accepted the Indians for the priesthood or religious life. Cf. Bk. I, chap. v, and Bk. II, chap. vii. His statement, however, is not true, as we have already seen above, note 82, where it is indicated that Indian students were trained in Augustinian seminaries, and probably also professed in the Augustinian Order.

Eucharist and Extreme Unction should be given to the natives, but they even initiated the Indians in the doctrine of the mystical life.

The superiors in Spain were interested in preserving the reform movement not only at home, but in Mexico as well. On May 6, 1540, the Provincial of Castile, Antonio de Villasandino, and his four Definitors sent a copy of the decrees of the Chapter of Dueñas to the friars in Mexico ⁹⁶). They were directed to use coarse cloth for all their garments, even those next the skin, to employ the discipline three days a week, not to use a mattress on their beds without special permission, to travel on foot and wear only shoes of hemp or sandals, and to meditate for two half-hour periods a day. We have seen that the missionaries had already adopted some stricter rules than these, when, for example, they decided on two full hours of meditation daily. The directives from Castile contained also decrees on studies and lengthy instructions in regard to the office of vicar-provincial, the superior in Mexico. Another item of particular interest was the decree stating that the missionaries were not to accept or hold rents, or anything similar. An obvious difficulty arose almost immediately in regard to that ; it has already been mentioned that the Viceroy assigned the rents of the village of Tetzco to the Augustinian Order for the building of San Agustín in Mexico City. The question comes to mind — did the missionaries choose to ignore the decree from Spain, seeing that they could not survive without the rents ? The fact is just the opposite.

Just ten years later, April 14, 1550, the Provincial of Castile, Francisco Serrano, wrote a reply to a difficulty submitted by Alonso de la Vera Cruz on June 1, 1549, when Vera Cruz was Vicar-Provincial in Mexico ⁹⁷). The difficulty was that the missionaries were troubled over the fact that they held the encomienda of Tetzco ; they wanted to know if they could let the rents go and resort to begging for their sustenance. The Spanish provincial, after consulting his definitors, advised them to abide by the decision approved at the Chapter of Toledo, that is, to accept the rents, and follow the example of the Dominicans in that respect. The friars should live according to the strict common life, but not add any novelties in the way of begging. The Provincial added further that a certain

⁹⁶) SANTIAGO VELA, *Acerca de observancias en la Provincia de México*, AHHA, XIV (July-Aug., 1920), 69-78.

⁹⁷) SANTIAGO VELA, AHHA, XVI (Sept.-Oct., 1921), 216-219.

alms sought of the King by the missionaries had been granted, and in view of the fact that in spite of holding the rents, they still had to seek extra aid of the King, it would be doubly unwise to relinquish the *encomienda*. Then as a kind of compensation for this refusal of the wishes of the missionaries, the Provincial granted Vera Cruz the permission he had requested to advance three lay brothers to the priesthood. But such a permission was not to be sought in the future ⁹⁸).

It is amply clear from the above that the Augustinian friars in Mexico were inspired by the highest religious ideals and disinterested motives. Their participation in the missions cannot be ascribed to baser motives of selfishness or desire of material gain, although in the subsequent chapters, there will be occasion to speak of some grave indiscretions and individual faults which might cast doubts on the integrity of the missionaries. It is a fair and accurate judgment to say that these religious were inspired solely by the desire to serve God, the Church, and their King, in the conversion of the Indians.

CHAPTER III

The Contribution of Alonso de la Vera Cruz to the Intellectual Life of Early Mexico

Vera Cruz as an Educator

If one were to single out any one aspect of the work of the Augustinians as characteristic of their missionary effort in sixteenth century Mexico, it would be the aspect of education. We have already mentioned briefly in the second chapter something of the training given to the Indians in christian doctrine, in the liturgical and spiritual life, but here we are concerned with formal education,

⁹⁸) An interesting item in this letter, and a subsequent one by the same Provincial, Francisco Serrano, dated June 22, 1550, is his comment about Alonso de Orozco. This celebrated religious, later beatified, had set out to join his confreres in Mexico. While he was awaiting, at Tenerife, in the Canary Islands, the ship that was to convey him to the New World, he fell ill and was forced to return to Spain where doctors advised him that he could not again attempt the journey. This occurred probably in 1547. Cf. SANTIAGO VELA, *ibid.*

Alonso de Orozco died in 1591, and was beatified in 1882. Cf. BIA, VI, 96-169,

even higher education. Their contribution in this field is summed up by a recent writer, when he says that :

The religious hermits of the Augustinian Order served in a most important way the cause of civilization in New Spain, for not only were they ardent workers in the evangelization of the natives of uninstructed lands, but also they made themselves diffusors of Spanish culture and venerable masters of schools which they founded to care for the education of the natives ⁹⁹).

The importance of education had been clear in the mind of the « Padre Venerable », Francisco de la Cruz, when he persuaded Alonso Gutiérrez, then professor at Salamanca, to join the Augustinian missionaries. This work of Alonso de la Vera Cruz, for which his name would be most revered in future ages, must have begun shortly after his arrival in Mexico City in 1536. He was a novice at the time, but he was already employed in teaching both candidates for the Augustinian Order, and probably other students as well. As soon as he completed his year of novitiate, he was made Master of novices, an office which he held for three years ¹⁰⁰).

Apart from the novitiate, there existed a school in the monastery of San Agustín, doubtless the first of its kind in Mexico. This school was founded on a plan of education much wider than that of the Franciscan missionaries, who reserved education, apart from religious instruction, to the sons of the noble Indian families. The school in San Agustín, called Colegio del Nombre de Jesús, offered courses in reading, writing, and Latin to all who wished to come, whether Spanish, Creoles or Indians ¹⁰¹). It is not known in what year the school was founded, or what part Vera Cruz may have played in its establishment. It probably came into existence not long before

⁹⁹) O. ROBLES, *Fray Alonso de la Vera Cruz. Los libros del alma* (Mexico, 1942), p. vii. « De manera importantísima sirvieron a la causa a la civilización en Nueva España los religiosos eremitas de la Orden Agustiniiana, ya que no solamente fueron los operarios fervorosos en la evangelización de los naturales de tierras no indoctrinadas, sino que tambien se constituyeron en los difusores de la cultura hispana y en los maestros venerables de las escuelas que fundaron para atender a la educación de los aborígenes ».

¹⁰⁰) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.* (2nd print.; Mexico, 1924), Edad IV, chap. xi, p. 588.

¹⁰¹) RICARD, *La « conquête spirituelle »*, pp. 261-262. We do not mean to contest the fact that the Franciscans founded the first colegio in Mexico. Cf. F. B. STECK, O. F. M., *El primer colegio de América — Santa Cruz de Tlaltelolco* (Mexico City, 1944).

1537, in which year the Augustinians addressed a petition to Emperor Charles V on behalf of the new school ¹⁰²). They explained that a certain Bartolomé de Morales had left a legacy to found a school at San Agustín, but because the legacy was very small and there was need to expand this important project, a Confraternity of the Holy Name of Jesus was founded to sponsor the school. Furthermore, they requested a grant from the royal rents to assist them. The statutes of the Confraternity are listed at the end of the petition, and one of them specifies that the funds were to be managed by the lay officials of the Confraternity. Among the signers of this letter are Alonso de la Vera Cruz, Master of Theology, and the famous Miguel López de Legazpi.

The exact nature of the school is not known. Was it intended to be a general educational project for lay students, or did it have the more particular aim of providing a seminary, especially for aspirants to the Augustinian Order? Perhaps both purposes were combined in the same school, as was the case at Tiripetío in Michoacán, founded a few years later. This much at least is certain: there was a seminary in Mexico City, at San Agustín, and Indians attended class there. The chronicler Basalenque, in speaking of the natives as students, says, « I knew in my time other students in Mexico (San Agustín), who gave a very good account of themselves... And being very capable, they have been ordained priests » ¹⁰³). He does not specify whether they became secular priests or religious, but at least some of them were members of the Augustinian Order. Notice is found of two Indian Augustinians who were sent to Spain, probably for studies ¹⁰⁴). It is not likely that

¹⁰²) *CDI Ist*, XLI, 145-148. Letter sent by the Augustinians to His Majesty the Emperor from Mexico, Dec. 15, 1537. The original is found in A. G. I., Mexico 280. This same document is edited by CUEVAS, *Documentos inéditos del siglo XVI para la historia de México* (Mexico, 1914), pp. 86-88. There is some difference between these two editions as regards the names of the laymen who signed the letter. The original in Seville has not been consulted.

¹⁰³) BASALENQUE, *op. cit.*, Bk. I, chap. v, pp. 130-131. « Yo conocí en mi tiempo otros estudiantes en México, que daban muy buena cuenta... y se han ordenado de Sacerdotes, siendo muy capaces ». He adds a curious note to the effect that the Indians did not take to the Mass wine very well because it disturbed their heads.

¹⁰⁴) *Series Dd, Regesta Patrum Generalium*, Augustinian General Archive, Rome. Henceforth this series will be noted simply as *Dd*. The following are the

many of them went to Spain, since normally not even the Creoles were sent out of Mexico for purposes of study. There is no way of telling how many Indian Augustinians there may have been. The chroniclers are strangely silent on this point. Very likely the native candidates were only accepted in the early years when the need of priests was very pressing and the Spanish population was not large enough to supply sufficient vocations.

How long did the Colegio del Nombre de Jesús continue to function? We do not know, but a few years later, in 1541, the Father General Jerome Seripando gave his approval to the activities of the Confraternity¹⁰⁵). And Miguel López de Legazpi was still an *hermano mayor* of this Confraternity in 1564 when he led an expedition to the Philippines¹⁰⁶). If the chronicler mentioned above was referring to this school, when he spoke of Indian seminarians, then it was still in existence a hundred years later, for he wrote in 1644.

Apart from his duties as master of novices, we do not know what teaching assignments Vera Cruz may have had at San Agustín, but it may be safely presumed that he was the chief professor in the Colegio. His work in the field of higher education began in

only references thus far discovered which speak of Indian members of the Augustinian Order.

Dd 18, fol. 60v. July 26, 1539, at Naples. The Father General Jerome Seripando renewed the letters given by his predecessor to Frater Andrea, «Indus», who was returning to his province.

Since the mission in Mexico only began in 1533, it is remarkable to find an Indian, not only a member of the Augustinian Order, but in Europe, at so early a date. If this were the only evidence, one might suspect a mistake, but there is also the following.

Dd 30, fol. 191. March 7, 1567, at Rome. The Father General Christopher of Padua granted to Frater Petrus de Angelis, «Indus», permission to return «ad Indorum partes, ubi oriundus est», and to remain «apud suos consanguineos» with the faculty of saying Mass and hearing confessions, but subject to the approval of the local Ordinary. A subsequent notice in *Dd* 38, fol. 28, indicates, however, that he did not return to Mexico, but became affiliated to the Province of Sardinia. That was in 1577.

It is to be noted that the word «Indus» is not used in any but these two cases, and it is never used to refer to the creoles. Furthermore, the expressions «partes Indorum» and «partes Indiae» or «Indiarum» always refer to Mexico in this *Dd* series.

¹⁰⁵) *Dd* 19, fol. 102v.

¹⁰⁶) SANTIAGO VELA, *AHHA*, XIII (March-April, 1920), 197.

1540 when he was given the job of founding the provincial house of studies at Tiripetío in Michoacán ¹⁰⁷). The Vicar-Provincial, Jorge de Avila, who was elected in that same year, chose Tiripetío because the monastery, with a fine church, had just been completed, and the location enjoyed more quiet and tranquillity than the monastery in Mexico City. Furthermore, it provided a fine center of operations for the mission work in Michoacán.

The mission endeavor in Michoacán had begun in 1537 when Juan de Alvarado, brother of the conquistador Pedro de Alvarado and holder of the encomienda of Tiripetío, had petitioned the Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza to send him some of the Augustinian friars ¹⁰⁸). The invitation was accepted by the Vicar-Provincial Nicolás de Agreda and he appointed Juan de San Román and Diego de Chavez to make the foundation at Tiripetío ¹⁰⁹). The mission included a fine school and hospital which provided models for future foundations by the first Bishop of Michoacán Vasco de Quiroga. The school was a combination elementary and trade school, one of the best of its kind in the Mexican missions ¹¹⁰). Indian children began at the age of eight to learn reading and writing, the serving of Mass, singing and playing of instruments. For trades, they were taught sculpture, painting, pottery, metalwork, and stonecutting ¹¹¹).

The founding of a school of higher studies was entrusted to Alonso de la Vera Cruz; he was appointed to teach both philosophy and theology for Augustinian seminarians, according to a program of studies established by the provincial of Castile ¹¹²). This

¹⁰⁷) BASALENQUE, *op. cit.*, Bk. I, chap. v.

¹⁰⁸) BOLAÑO E ISLA, *Contribución al estudio biobibliográfico de Fray Alonso de la Vera Cruz* (Mexico, 1947), pp. 21-22.

¹⁰⁹) Diego de Chávez (de Alvarado, de San Miguel) was the son of García Alvarado and Teresa de Osma, born at Badajoz. He entered the Augustinian Order in Mexico, made his novitiate under Juan de San Román, and was professed on Dec. 21, 1536. Alonso de la Vera Cruz was a novice at the same time. He worked for many years in Michoacán and spoke Tarascan. When Juan de Ovando wanted to make Vera Cruz Bishop of Michoacán, he refused and suggested Diego de Chávez for the post, but the latter died shortly afterward at Valladolid (Morelia) in 1572. Cf. DE LA PUENTE, *op. cit.*, Bk. II, chap.s 33 to 38. GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Biografías*, I, 62. RICARD, *Etudes et documents*, pp. 135-151, no. 24. SANTIAGO VELA, *AHHA*, XIV (Nov.-Dec., 1920), 302.

¹¹⁰) RICARD, *La « conquête spirituelle »*, p. 252.

¹¹¹) BASALENQUE, *op. cit.*, Bk. I, chap. iv. ESCOBAR, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-149.

¹¹²) In the same year, 1540, on May 6, the Provincial of Castile Antonio de

school was more than a seminary, however, for there were also lay students in attendance. One of the most noted students of Vera Cruz was Antonio Huitziméngari Mendoza y Caltzontzín, the son of the last King of Michoacán, one of the most powerful of the Indian rulers before the Spanish conquest ¹¹³). Antonio lived as a private citizen in Tiripetío and proved to be a very intelligent student. He spoke Spanish expertly and was Vera Cruz' instructor in learning Tarascan, the language of that region. There were, according to the chroniclers, many other Indian students, as well as Spaniards. As was stated above in regard to the school in Mexico City, many of these Indians were candidates for the Augustinian Order, and possibly for the secular priesthood as well ¹¹⁴).

Tiripetío, which today is only a quiet hamlet of 1,500 persons, was then a flourishing center of Spanish culture and civilization ¹¹⁵). The presence of the Augustinian major seminary there has caused some Mexican historians to call it the site of the first university of the New World ¹¹⁶). That, however, is an exaggeration, since the primary function of the school was that of a seminary for theological students. It is true, however, that Tiripetío also served lay students, and was the first center of higher education in the New World. One of the early writers euphemistically called it the « Athens of the New World » ¹¹⁷).

Villasandino sent a letter in which he determined what texts were to be used for studies in Mexico. In theology they were to employ the Master of the *Sentences*, and along with that the teaching of the « fundamental Doctor nuestro Egidio Romano », or St. Thomas. For philosophy, they were to use « Paulo Veneto Dor. de nuestra Orden », and for logic, Doctor P. Jorge or some other who has been approved in the schools of Spain. We shall see that Vera Cruz soon composed his own course in philosophy. The above letter is published by Santiago Vela from the notes of Sicardo, *AHHA*, XIII (March-April, 1920), 197, note 1.

¹¹³) ESCOBAR, *op. cit.*, p. 176. BASALENQUE, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-131.

¹¹⁴) Cf. *supra*, note 103. Basalenque spoke principally about the students at Tiripetío.

¹¹⁵) A. MAILLEFERT, *Fray Alonso de la Vera Cruz*, in *Abside*, III, 6 (April, 1939), pp. 34-42. This is a rather fanciful portrayal of the former glory of Tiripetío based on the ruins of the once great monastery. He calls it the first University of the New World, though without a royal charter.

¹¹⁶) J. BLETHEN, *The Educational Activities of Fray Alonso de la Vera Cruz in Sixteenth Century Mexico*, in *The Americas*, Vol. V, no. 1 (July, 1948), pp. 31-47. Cf. especially p. 34.

¹¹⁷) BASALENQUE, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

It was during this period, around the year 1542, that noteworthy recognition of the ability of Alonso de la Vera Cruz was given by Vasco de Quiroga, Bishop of Michoacán. Quiroga wished to go to Europe to attend the first session of the Council of Trent, and he appointed Vera Cruz his vicar and governor of the diocese in his absence. The Bishop had a high regard for the Augustinians and the work they were doing, but he especially respected the outstanding qualities of Vera Cruz. Alonso managed the diocese for nine months, after which Quiroga returned, unable to pursue his journey because the ship on which he had embarked had proved unseaworthy and was forced to return to Mexico ¹¹⁸). We do not know whether it was necessary for Vera Cruz to suspend classes during that time, but he may have been able to continue, since the work in the new diocese was probably not very much. Nearly all the priests in the territory were religious who were under the jurisdiction of their own superiors.

After about four years at Tiripetío, Vera Cruz' teaching career was interrupted for a year because he was chosen to rule the Mexican vice-province in the place of Juan de San Román, who was one of the members of a commission sent to Emperor Charles V in 1544 ¹¹⁹). At the chapter in the following year Vera Cruz was assigned to the mission at Tacámbaro as prior, pastor and professor of philosophy and theology ¹²⁰). Tacámbaro, also in Michoacán, was located on the edge of Tierra Caliente and was the center for the evangelization of that territory. Apparently, the students were transferred from Tiripetío to the new studium at Tacámbaro which was not very far away. Such an arrangement indicates the unsettled state of affairs in those early years, and furthermore, it shows that

¹¹⁸) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.*, (2nd print.), Edad IV, chap. xi, p. 589. If Quiroga did actually set out to attend the general council he was acting contrary to the orders of the king and viceroy. Quiroga's biographer, Nicolás LEÓN, *Don Vasco de Quiroga primer Obispo de Michoacán* (Mexico City, 1903), p. 53, says that Quiroga did not approve of the royal decision and intended to go to the council. He failed to make the trip when the vessel on which he was to sail proved unseaworthy. It is more likely, however, that the viceroy did not allow him to sail.

In regard to the unwillingness of the civil authorities to allow the bishops to leave New Spain, Cf. the letter of Zumárraga to the Emperor, Feb. 13, 1537, in CUEVAS, *Documentos inéditos*, no. XVI, pp. 79-82.

¹¹⁹) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.*, Edad II, chap. ii, p. 67.

¹²⁰) *Ibid.* (2nd. print.), Edad IV, chap. xi, p. 590. BASALENQUE, *op. cit.* Bk. I, chap. viii, pp. 182-184.

Tiripetío, significant though it was as a center of higher studies, was far from a permanent establishment.

The mission in Tierra Caliente was one of the most difficult because of the heat and low-lying terrain. As Prior of Tacámbaro, it was Vera Cruz' duty to care for that mission, and he did so with great zeal. He used to spend his vacation time and other holidays from school traveling on foot to the Indian villages, preaching and administering the Sacraments. He employed the Tarascan language, the predominant tongue in Michoacán. His solicitude for, and confidence in, the Indians is shown by the fact that he and a Franciscan missionary by the name of Jacobo Daciano were the first ones to administer the Holy Eucharist to the converts ¹²¹). He had already begun this practice some years before at Tiripetío. Vera Cruz had to overcome considerable opposition because most of the missionaries felt that the Indians, so young in faith, were like little children and were not capable of receiving Communion, even though, somewhat inconsistently, the missionaries were accustomed to administer the Sacrament of Penance. Under the influence and persuasion of Vera Cruz, however, the Augustinians adopted the practice of preparing the Indians for Communion immediately after Baptism ¹²²).

The work of evangelization, along with teaching, proved to be more than Alonso de la Vera Cruz could handle. He requested that the studium be moved to a place where he would have more time for teaching and for the study and writing in which he was always engaged. Accordingly, he went with his students to Atonilco, a settlement some distance to the north of Mexico City ¹²³). He was at the time occupied in giving a two year course in St. Thomas. In this course he lectured directly on the text of the *Summa theologica* and, according to his habit of making the best use of time, he used to employ every opportunity during the reading in the refectory and the conversation at recreation periods to explain further the teaching of St. Thomas.

Once more Vera Cruz' work was interrupted when in 1548 he was elected to serve again as Vicar-Provincial, this time for a full

¹²¹) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.*, Edad I, chap. xxviii, p. 48, and (2nd print.), Edad IV, chap. xi, p. 589. RICARD, *La « conquête spirituelle »*, p. 149.

¹²²) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.*, Edad I, chap. xxviii, p. 48.

¹²³) *Ibid.* (2nd print.), Edad IV, chap. xi, p. 590.

term of three years ¹²⁴). We do not know where he was assigned after the completion of his term in 1551, but it appears that he remained in Mexico City, engaged in the business of setting up the University of Mexico. But before that momentous event, there occurred something which might have changed the whole direction of his activity and robbed the kingdom of New Spain of one of her greatest figures. The Emperor Charles V appointed Fray Alonso to be Bishop of León in Nicaragua. That, however, was not to Vera Cruz' liking; he had no desire for honor and he did not wish to leave the work he was doing. He is reported to have punned to his confreres: « Ab ore Leonis, libera me, Domine » ¹²⁵). He decided to decline the office, in spite of the fact that the appointment by the Emperor was supported by Pope Julius III. The Pope addressed a Brief to Alonso on June 28, 1552, saying that on the basis of the Emperor's choice, Vera Cruz should accept the episcopate immediately and strive to fulfill the duties of the office to the best of his ability ¹²⁶). Fray Alonso, however, clung to his resolve. His letter of refusal, dated March 20, 1553, is extant and gives us a glimpse of his character ¹²⁷). After thanking the Emperor, and his son Philip the Regent of Spain, he said that he must refuse because he did not have the ability for the office, and furthermore,

since God was pleased to bring me from the world into religion for my salvation, I am determined not to change my state of life, but rather to persevere in this state to which God has called me, and thus I do not accept the dignity, nor do I seek the episcopate, neither this one nor any other, neither now nor at any other time.

After repeating his unworthiness and determined refusal, Vera Cruz stated quite frankly his hope that His Majesty « in the future may not waste time by sending a nomination to one who will not accept, because the loss caused by the absence of your prelates is very great » ¹²⁸).

¹²⁴) *Infra*, chap. iv.

¹²⁵) BASALENQUE, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

¹²⁶) Vatican Archives, Ar. 41, Tom. 64, no. 440. A reference to this is found in EUBEL, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, III, 274, note 8.

¹²⁷) A.G.I., Mexico 280. A printed copy can be seen in BOLAÑO E ISLA, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.

¹²⁸) « ... como fué Dios servido de traerme del siglo a la religión para mi salvación, estoy determinado de no mudar estado, sino perseverar en éste a que Dios me llamó, y por eso yo no acepto la dignidad ni quiero el obispado, ni

In spite of this unequivocal refusal, the Emperor sent another letter instructing Vera Cruz to proceed immediately to León without waiting for the papal bulls and consecration because his presence was needed in the diocese ¹²⁹). Fray Alonso, however, repeated his determination not to accept. When he decided to give up his position in Spain to come to the missions and become a religious, he had turned his back on ecclesiastical honor and he was determined to remain dedicated to the work he had chosen. It is not known in what year the Bishopric of Nicaragua was first offered to him, but there is a curious piece of information which indicates that the news of the intention of the Emperor first reached him around 1549 ¹³⁰). Seripando, the General of the Augustinians, sent a letter to the Spanish provincial on Jan. 30, 1550, in which he recommended that the provincial grant a request that had been made by Vera Cruz ¹³¹). The latter had written to ask that, in view of the fact that he was working in Michoacán and preaching in the language of that region, he be not changed and sent to another area where he would not know the language. This may very well refer to the projected plan to make him Bishop of León, because it could not refer to an assignment within the Mexican missions since Vera Cruz himself was the major superior at the moment. This conjecture is confirmed by the fact that Antonio de Valdevieso, the third Bishop of Nicaragua, died Feb. 26, 1549 ¹³²). Thus it is probable that the appointment to León was made as

éste ni otro, ni agora ni en algún tiempo... para lo de adelante, no se pierda tiempo en enviar a nombrar a quien no lo ha de aceptar, porque es muy grande la jactura que se pierde en ausencia de sus preladados ».

¹²⁹) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.* (2nd print.), Edad IV, chap. xi, p. 594.

¹³⁰) The early chroniclers have made the date of appointment 1542; e. g., GRIJALVA, *ibid.* JUNQUERA, *El P. Mtro. Fr. Alonso de la Vera Cruz* (El Escorial, 1935), pp. 9-10, corrects the date to circa 1551, because the letter of refusal is dated 1553. This is confirmed by a letter of Juan de Benavente who, writing in 1562, spoke of the appointment of Vera Cruz as having occurred ten years previously, « more or less ». Cf. BOLAÑO E ISLA, *op. cit.*, appendix, pp. 130-134. The appointment is also mentioned by Gerónimo DE MENDIETA, *Historia eclesiástica indiana*, edited by García Icazbalceta (Mexico, 1870), p. 548, who gives the date as 1551. The subsequent evidence will show that it was probably even earlier.

¹³¹) Dd 23, fol. 168v.

¹³²) EUBEL, *op. cit.*, III, 274. The next Bishop, Ferdinando de Bariodero, was appointed in 1555.

early as 1549 and it took Vera Cruz four years to successfully refuse an assignment that he felt he was not called to.

But as much as he preferred the mission work in Michoacán, Alonso de la Vera Cruz soon found himself engaged in a different type of activity in Mexico City, the setting up of the first University of the New World. The importance of this work can hardly be over-estimated; it indicates the earnest efforts of both the religious and civil authorities to transfer the culture and civilization of the old world to the new land. The Spanish friars had not come as conquerors of the land and people, but as leaders of a spiritual and intellectual conquest, as zealous and energetic planters of a new civilization. And Alonso de la Vera Cruz « was among the first of those pioneers who, interested only in conquests of the mind, transplanted the spiritual substance of the civilization of Europe in general and that of Spain in particular to the colonial territories of the New World »¹³³).

The place of Vera Cruz in the establishment of the University has sometimes been exaggerated, especially by Augustinian writers, who have referred to him as Founder. Such a claim is not verifiable, even though his contribution was most important and his memory is still much revered in the National University of Mexico, as has already been mentioned at the beginning of chapter one. The relationship between Vera Cruz and the University is well expressed in a recent tribute which speaks of him as « perhaps the greatest incarnation of its spirit »¹³⁴). Vera Cruz, the product of the best schools of the age, was the very embodiment of the culture that the new University was to implant in the Mexican soil with his help and under his guidance. This opinion is confirmed by the Mexican Church-historian Mariano Cuevas who believes that Fray Alonso can be called, « without exaggeration, the corner-stone » of the University of Mexico, in the sense that his knowledge and learning provided the soul of the moment¹³⁵).

¹³³) K. REINHARDT, *Fray Alonso de la Vera Cruz and the Beginnings of Philosophical Speculation in the Americas*, in *The Americas*, Vol. I, no. 2 (Oct., 1944), p. 207.

¹³⁴) « ... quizá la encarnación máxima de su espíritu ». Cf. *México de Hoy* (Departamento de información para el extranjero; México, D. F.), Vol. III, no. 37 (Sept., 1951), p. 8.

¹³⁵) « ... sin exageración... la piedra fundamental ». CUEVAS, *Orígenes del humanismo en México* (Mexico, 1933), p. 21.

The first efforts to establish a school of higher learning were made before Alonso de la Vera Cruz came to the New World. As early as 1535, the Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza suggested the founding of a University, and his efforts were seconded by Juan de Zumárraga, the first Bishop of Mexico City, as well as by others¹³⁶). The royal charter was not granted, however, until Sept. 21, 1551. By means of that charter the Emperor established the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico « where the natives and the sons of Spaniards may be instructed in the matters of our holy Catholic Faith and in the other faculties »¹³⁷). The model for the new school was to be the University of Salamanca, at that time the most prominent center of learning in Spain, and one of the most brilliant in all Europe. Its reputation for scholarship attracted students from many countries who studied in a lively academic atmosphere charged with a liberal and democratic spirit. New ideas were welcomed and discussed, and the professors of the various schools were chosen by student vote — all this despite the conservative and restraining influence of the inquisition¹³⁸). No one was in a better position to transfer the ideals and spirit of Salamanca to New Spain than Fray Alonso who was both a graduate and former professor of that school.

The University of Mexico was thus legally founded, but the actual beginning did not take place until two years later. In the meantime negotiations were begun between the viceroy and ecclesiastical leaders, among whom was Vera Cruz. The formal foundation took place on the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, Jan. 25, 1553, at the church of San Pablo, and the chronicler Grijalva adds here that Alonso de la Vera Cruz was one of the foundation stones¹³⁹). From this last comment, apparently, comes the sub-

¹³⁶) GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *La instrucción pública en México durante el siglo XVI*, *Opusculos*, I (Mexico, 1896), pp. 163-270.

¹³⁷) « donde los naturales y los hijos de españoles fuesen yndustriados en las cosas de nuestra sancta fee católica y en las demás facultades ». Cf. PLAZA Y JAEN, *Crónica de la real y pontificia Universidad de México*, edited by Nicolás Rangel (Mexico City, 1931), vol. II, appendix, document I, p. 357.

¹³⁸) A. BELL, *Luis de León — un estudio del renacimiento español* (Spanish edition at Barcelona; English edition, Oxford, 1925), chap. iii, pp. 71-97.

¹³⁹) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.*, Edad II, chap. xiii. In speaking of the ceremony at San Pablo, he adds that the Augustinians had a school there. That fact would tend to increase the belief in the importance of the position of Vera Cruz in

sequent belief that Vera Cruz deserved the title of Founder ¹⁴⁰). Such a claim cannot be substantiated, however, even though he doubtless enjoyed a pre-eminent position. Joaquín García Icazbalceta, the outstanding historian of Mexico, declared that « one cannot doubt the adequacy of the professor-founders of the University, simply by seeing among them masters like Fray Alonso de la Vera Cruz ¹⁴¹). There is an abundance of such laudatory statements, but, unfortunately, the lack of information on the life of Vera Cruz between the years 1550 and 1553 makes it impossible to say concretely what was his contribution in the founding and organizing of the University ¹⁴²).

Certainly Fray Alonso was among the first to receive honors and recognition from the new school. On the 20 of July, 1553, he presented a thesis, probably as a token fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, which today would be

the negotiations, but the fact is that the Colegio San Pablo was founded by Vera Cruz as Vicar-Provincial many years later, in 1575.

¹⁴⁰) Cf. SANTIAGO VELA, *Un capítulo de historia Agustiniana de México, AHHA* (March-April, 1920), 172-200. He reviews the whole tradition which claims Vera Cruz as Founder of the University. The chief argument in its favor is that of Sicardo, who, in the MS spoken about above in the Introduction, says that it is authentically certain that Vera Cruz was the « fundador de la Real Universidad ». His testimony is especially reliable because he had access to the official records of the University and all the other information he gives about Vera Cruz is completely accurate. His claims, however, are not verifiable in the extant documents of the University, nor do contemporaneous writers speak of Vera Cruz as Founder.

Especially noteworthy is the silence of contemporaneous writers who had occasion to speak of this accomplishment of Vera Cruz, if it were a fact. Francisco Cervantes de Salazar, pupil, friend and admirer of Vera Cruz, says nothing to that effect in *México en 1554* (edited by García Icazbalceta; Mexico, 1875). Juan de Benavente, writing in 1562 (cf. BOLAÑO E ISLA, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-134), had even more reason to speak of this matter since his purpose in writing was to defend and praise Vera Cruz, but he says nothing. Furthermore, García Icazbalceta in his sketch of Vera Cruz passes over the matter in complete silence (*Biografías*, I, 41-71).

¹⁴¹) « De la suficiencia de los catedráticos fundadores de la Universidad no puede dudarse, con sólo ver entre ellos maestros como Fr. Alonso de la Vera Cruz ». *Biografías*, I, 41.

¹⁴²) We cannot tell, for example, what a comment like the following means in the concrete. Vera Cruz « promovió y agitó con increíble ardor la fundación de la Pontificia Univesidad Literaria de México ». Beristáin DE SOUZA, *Biblioteca hispanoamericana septentrional* (1st edition, Mexico, 1816-1821), III, 295.

called a Doctor of Philosophy ¹⁴³). The next day, in the first meeting of the University council of which there is record, three distinct honors were bestowed on Vera Cruz ¹⁴⁴). He was first incorporated into the faculty as a Master of Theology in view of the fact that he already held that degree both from Salamanca and from the Augustinian Order, and he was further declared the senior member of the faculty of theology. Secondly, he was awarded the degree of Master of Arts, since he already had the Bachelor of Arts from Salamanca, and because of « his well-known qualification ». The third honor paid to Vera Cruz that same day was the most outstanding. A chair of St. Thomas was created for him personally and declared on a par with the First Chair of Theology, the highest professorial post in the University, already occupied by the Dominican Pedro de la Peña ¹⁴⁵). This unusual arrangement was clearly a tribute to the intellectual leadership of Alonso de la Vera Cruz, but it later became a source of irritation to the Dominicans whose primacy in the teaching of the philosophy of St. Thomas was thereby challenged. The creation of two First Chairs seems to have been an attempt to recognize both the rights of the Dominicans and the personal eminence of Vera Cruz.

Fray Alonso thus became the holder of two Chairs at the University for he was already the Professor of Sacred Scripture ¹⁴⁶). The fact that he held these two posts simultaneously, along with the lack of sufficient documentary information, makes it very difficult to trace clearly the course of his career in the University. It appears that, at least in the beginning, he taught only one course to fulfill the duties of the two chairs ¹⁴⁷). While he continued to

¹⁴³) Archivo General de la Nación, *Universidad*, Bk. 2, fols. 102-103v, cited by BOLAÑO E ISLA, *op. cit.*, p. 27, note 1.

¹⁴⁴) *Ibid.* and Bk. 2, fol. 84v, cited by Bolaño e Isla, p. 121.

¹⁴⁵) Pedro de la Peña came to Mexico in 1550. He was elected Provincial in 1559, and three years later he returned to Spain along with Vera Cruz and the Augustinian and Franciscan Provincials. He was presented for the Bishopric of Verapaz, but became Bishop of Quito instead, in 1563. His death occurred at Lima, Peru, March 7, 1583. Cf. GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Biografías*, IV, 429.

¹⁴⁶) *Infra*, note 157, where Vera Cruz is identified as « Cathedrático de Blibia » (sic). Also GRIJALVA, *op. cit.*, Edad II, chap. xiii.

¹⁴⁷) Witness the following, from Archivo General de la Nación, *Universidad*, Bk. 2, fol. 87, as given by BOLAÑO E ISLA, *op. cit.*, p. 28, note 1. August 23, 1553; « Item, se ordenó que en las cathedras del maestro fray Alonso de la

be at least nominal holder of the Chair of Sacred Scripture for some years, he seems to have attached little importance to that title. His first two volumes of philosophy appeared in 1554, and on the title page of these volumes, as well as all subsequent works, he identifies himself as « cathedrae primae in Theologia moderator », and makes no reference to his other professorship.

Whatever may have been the arrangement, it is certain that Vera Cruz began a course on the Epistles of St. Paul on June 30, 1553, which he taught from eight to nine in the morning¹⁴⁸). His class continued over the intervening years until Oct. 28, 1555. In the meantime he had begun his lectures in scholasticism, and in order to relieve him of some of his burden of teaching, the Augustinian Antonio Isidro was incorporated into the faculty of Sacred Scripture¹⁴⁹). On Dec. 9, 1555, Fray Antonio took over the classes of Vera Cruz for a short period. This substitution became final two years later when, on Feb. 24, 1557, Vera Cruz suspended his course in Sacred Scripture for good¹⁵⁰). This cessation in his teaching was necessitated by the fact that he was elected Vicar-Provincial for his second full term in 1557¹⁵¹). He did not, however, give up the title to the Chair of Sacred Scripture. Four years later, on May 10, 1561, a move was made in the University council to notify Vera Cruz that within six days he must resume his lectures or forfeit the chair¹⁵²). We shall see in chapter six that he was at that moment very much involved in difficulties between the religious and the Hierarchy and was soon to embark on a journey back to Spain; doubtless he had no time for lecturing. The threat of forfeiture

Vera Cruz y el maestro fray Pedro de la Peña, se lea lo quel rector señalar, y que los oyentes cursen en qualquiera de ellos, aunque sea de Blibia (sic) la del padre maestro fray Alonso de la Vera Cruz ». This appears to indicate that Vera Cruz was actually teaching Sacred Scripture in his chair of theology, thus uniting both chairs in one course. Bolaño e Isla, however, thinks they both were distinct.

¹⁴⁸) C. DE LA PLAZA Y JAÉN, *Crónica de la real y pontificia Universidad de México*, edited by Nicolás Rangel (Mexico, 1931), I, 17. BOLAÑO E ISLA, *op. cit.*, p. 122, gives the date as July 31, probably a misprint.

¹⁴⁹) PLAZA Y JAÉN, *op. cit.*, I, 18.

¹⁵⁰) Archivo General de la Nación, *Universidad*, Bk. 2, fol. 2, cited by BOLAÑO E ISLA, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-123.

¹⁵¹) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.*, Edad II, chap. xvii.

¹⁵²) Archivo General de la Nación, *Universidad*, Bk. 2, fol. 99, cited by BOLAÑO E ISLA, *op. cit.*, p. 28, note 3.

was not carried out, and the following year Vera Cruz set out for Spain without any settlement having been made for a successor to the Chair of Sacred Scripture. Not until ten years later, just before his return to Mexico, was the chair re-established. On the 7th of Jan., 1572, another Augustinian, Juan Adriano, began to teach Sacred Scripture at the University ¹⁵³).

Vera Cruz' Chair of Theology, as well as that of Pedro de la Peña, suffered from the same unavoidable neglect due to the fact that both men were elected major superiors of their respective orders, and both were engaged in the jurisdictional disputes with the Hierarchy. When Vera Cruz became Vicar-Provincial in 1557, his salary for the Chair of Theology, which amounted to 350 gold pesos a year, was diverted to other purposes in the University ¹⁵⁴). On Nov. 26, 1561, the students of the school of Arts presented a petition that Alonso de la Vera Cruz and Pedro de la Peña be required to resume their lectures within two months or forfeit their Chairs ¹⁵⁵). The records do not indicate whether or not Vera Cruz lectured after this date. If he did, it was not for long, because he embarked for Spain about six months later.

When Fray Alonso returned again to Mexico after eleven years absence, he was already sixty-six years old and probably did not teach any further classes, although he was still a member of the University staff. On the 9th of May, 1582, he awarded the degree of Bachelor of Theology to the Jesuit Pedro de Hortegosa, and later sponsored him for the Doctorate. Vera Cruz had also sponsored Andrés de Uvilla, Prior of Santo Domingo, for the degree of Master of Theology in 1579 ¹⁵⁶). What was his office in the University at that time? He was probably still a member of the faculty of theology, but only as an examiner. We have already seen that the Chair of Sacred Scripture had gone to Juan Adriano. And it appears that Fray Alonso himself had renounced the Chair of Theology before his journey to Spain. When the University appointed a successor to Vera Cruz, first in 1568 and again in 1572, the Dominican Bartolomé de Ledesma protested that it was not right to continue

¹⁵³) PLAZA Y JAÉN, *op. cit.*, I, 19-20.

¹⁵⁴) Archivo General de la Nación, *Universidad*, Bk. 2, fol. 93v, cited by BOLAÑO E ISLA, *op. cit.*, p. 29, note 4.

¹⁵⁵) *Ibid.*, Bk. 2, fol. 46, cited as above, p. 30, note 1.

¹⁵⁶) PLAZA Y JAÉN, *op. cit.*, I, 113 and 104.

to have two first Chairs of Theology. He said that while Alonso de la Vera Cruz by his great merit had earned that honor, he himself had relinquished the Chair when he went to Spain and had petitioned that it be given the lower title of « de Visperas ». The University, accordingly, decided to do that in 1570, although two years later there was still some confusion about the proper title of the former Chair of Vera Cruz ¹⁵⁷).

It is unfortunate that circumstances cut short Fray Alonso's career in the University. If he could have devoted his time to teaching, undisturbed by the duties of provincial, and especially by the unfruitful and, to some degree, disastrous, dissensions between the Hierarchy and the religious orders, he doubtless would have left a richer heritage of learning. Instead of writing long and tedious dissertations in defense of the privileges of the friars, he might have published more books of philosophy or other works of lasting value. The distractions that were forced upon him, the years spent in defending the religious orders, were however, of vital importance at the time. At least he had four good years at the University in which time his learning and eminence made such an impression that the name of Alonso de la Vera Cruz is still revered today for the part he played in establishing the first University of the New World. In those four years he published the only works of his that have come into print, three of philosophy and one on the canon law of marriage, the *Speculum coniugiorum*. This last did a great service to the missionaries because it treated of the peculiar problems of marriage arising among the new converts, especially because of the Indian practice of polygamy.

Finally, we know of one other service performed by Vera Cruz for the University of Mexico. On June 13, 1554, he was designated along with Dr. Juan Alcázar to represent the school at the reception for the new Archbishop, the Dominican Alonso de Montúfar ¹⁵⁸). This was a strange coincidence, for it marked the felicitous beginning of what was soon to be an unhappy relationship. The Archbishop was to become Vera Cruz' chief opponent and bitter critic in the troubles which ensued between himself and the friars.

¹⁵⁷) *Ibid.*, pp. 13-15, 84. This rivalry between the Augustinians and Dominicans over the chair of theology reflects a similar rivalry then going on in Salamanca. Cf. BELL, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

¹⁵⁸) Archivo General de la Nación, *Universidad*, Bk. 2, fol. 90v, cited by BOLAÑO E ISLA, *op. cit.*, p. 29, note 1.

The picture thus far sketched has portrayed the educational work performed by the Augustinians in general and by Alonso de la Vera Cruz in particular in the Mexican missions. It is intended to show that the Augustinians, under the inspiration and guidance of Vera Cruz, made an outstanding contribution in this field of activity in the sixteenth century. In view of these facts it is somewhat surprising to find Alonso de Montúfar, Archbishop of Mexico City, writing to the King on June 30, 1558, to complain of the ignorance of the Augustinians ¹⁵⁹). He said that out of twenty-four Augustinians presented for ordination to priesthood only two of them knew Latin and many of them could not even read Latin, and yet the friars claimed exemption from episcopal examination. In evaluating this complaint it is necessary to keep in mind a few extenuating facts. First of all, Montúfar, as we shall see later, was a worthy but very irascible man who had a most unhappy tenure in the See of Mexico City. Secondly, these candidates were probably presented by Vera Cruz, who was then Vicar-Provincial, and for whom the Archbishop had developed an extreme dislike. Furthermore, the key to his complaint really lies in his reference to the friar's privileges and exemption, which were a thorn in the side of the episcopate. In view of these facts, it is safe to judge that Montúfar's complaint is largely exaggerated, as were the charges he made against Fray Alonso himself in the same year ¹⁶⁰). This is confirmed by a letter of the King sent to the Archbishop two years later, June 24, 1560 ¹⁶¹). Philip II rebuked Montúfar for putting obstacles in the way of the ordination of religious out of hard feelings over the friars' opposition to the collection of tithes. The King reminded the Archbishop of his duty to ordain the religious.

One has to bear in mind, however, that there were frequent and serious abuses in the question of ordination to the priesthood, not only in the missions, but in Europe as well before the Tridentine reform became effective ¹⁶²). The need for priests in Mexico was

¹⁵⁹) RICARD, *Quatre lettres de Fr. Alonso de Montúfar, second archevêque de Mexico*, in *Etudes et documents*, p. 101.

¹⁶⁰) *Infra*, chap. vi.

¹⁶¹) Found in the MS of Sicardo (4349, Archivo Nacional, Madrid), fol. 69, and published by RICARD, *loc. cit.*, p. 101, note 10.

¹⁶²) Cf. C. BAYLE, *El clero secular y la evangelización de América* (Madrid, 1950), chap. v, esp. the beginning. Bayle gives the charge made by Montúfar, but says nothing of the surrounding circumstances.

very great because of the extremely rapid expansion of the missions, and not infrequently poorly prepared candidates were presented for ordination to both the religious and secular clergy. A worthy and conscientious bishop, such as Alonso de Montúfar was, might well find difficulties. In the case mentioned above, however, it appears from the surrounding circumstances that the charge against the Augustinians was exaggerated. In fairness to Vera Cruz, who knew so well the value of education and who was responsible for the formation and guidance of the Augustinian seminarians, it must be said that he would hardly have presented for ordination candidates who did not have at least the minimum training necessary.

We have already seen that the Augustinians were the first to found schools of higher studies, and that these schools were primarily seminaries. This is confirmed by the words of Joaquín García Icazbalceta :

The Franciscans had in their monasteries chairs of ecclesiastical studies, but the Augustinians were the first to establish formal houses of studies, where Spanish and Creoles, who wished to embrace the Order or who had already entered it, could attend classes ¹⁶³).

We have noted above that Indians were also admitted to these seminaries. The schools already mentioned, those of Tiripetío, Tacámbaro and Atotonilco, were all founded under the guidance of Alonso de la Vera Cruz, but his most outstanding foundation was the Colegio San Pablo in Mexico City, which will be treated in the last chapter.

In order to complete the picture of education, especially from the viewpoint of training given to the Augustinian missionaries, something must be said about language. A necessary part of the education of seminarians in Mexico was the learning of one or more of the Indian tongues. One of the reasons for founding the original house of studies in Tiripetío was to make it possible for Augustinian students to learn Tarascan, the language of Michoacán. We have seen that Vera Cruz himself studied Tarascan there, with the help of the son of the last King of Michoacán. The languages varied

¹⁶³) GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *La instrucción pública en México durante el siglo XVI, Opusculos Varios*, I, 193. « Los Franciscanos tenían en sus conventos cátedras de materias eclesiásticas; pero los agustinos fueron los primeros que establecieron casas de estudios en forma, adonde acudían los españoles y criollos que deseaban abrazar el instituto ó habían entrado ya en él ».

greatly from place to place. The Augustinians, throughout their missions in the sixteenth century, spoke ten different tongues¹⁶⁴). In Mexico City the chief language was Nahuatl, also called Mexican ; it was the language of the former Aztec Kingdom and served as the basic means of communication over a wide area. Tarascan has already been mentioned. A third tongue, Otomí, was a very difficult one used in the area toward the north. Another very complicated language was Pirinda, spoken by the natives of Charo in Michoacán. Related to Pirinda was another tongue called Ocuilteca, employed by the Indians of Ocuila southwest of Mexico City. The other five were Huasteca, Totonaca, Misteca, Chichimeca and Tlapaneca. Of these ten, two were languages spoken only by Augustinians ; they were Tlapaneca and Ocuilteca. Some of the friars spoke several Indian tongues, but in most cases it was labor enough to master one. Vera Cruz apparently spoke only Tarascan, but he knew it well enough to be able to preach.

Alonso de la Vera Cruz was largely responsible for many of the best efforts made in the field of education in sixteenth century Mexico. Let us see what exactly was the character of his influence and how widespread it was. In regard to the latter, one of the chroniclers claims, probably with exaggeration, that the influence of Vera Cruz was so great that it was common for someone, in the course of a discussion, to clinch his argument by declaring : « That's what the Master Vera Cruz says »¹⁶⁵). His fame, furthermore, was not restricted to the Augustinian Order ; a Franciscan writer has referred to him as the « Oracle of Mexico »¹⁶⁶). Nor was his renown confined to Mexico, or even to America. At the chapter of the Province of Castile, held at Dueñas in 1569, it was decreed that the philosophy course of Vera Cruz was to be taught in Augustinian seminaries « because we are informed that it is very learned and profitable, and the religious of other Orders teach it »¹⁶⁷). The

¹⁶⁴) RICARD, *La « conquête spirituelle »*, pp. 63-64. Cf. also RICARD, *Un document inédit sur les Augustins, Etudes et documents*, pp. 119-154. He gives two lists of the friars who attended the chapter of May 8, 1563. The second one indicates the languages spoken by each friar.

¹⁶⁵) « Así lo dice el Mtro. Veracruz ». ESCOBAR, *op. cit.*, chap. xxvi, p. 319.

¹⁶⁶) Juan Francisco DE SAN ANTONIO, *Crónicas de la apostólica provincia de S. Gregoria*, Part I (Sampaloc, Manila, 1738), Bk. III, chap. viii, p. 567.

¹⁶⁷) HERRERA, *Historia del convento de Salamanca* (Madrid, 1652), p. 339. The Provincial was Diego de Salazar.

effect of his teachings and opinions also extended to the Philippines, not only through his correspondence with the Augustinian missionaries there and through the instruction on privileges which he sent to the Archbishop of Manila, but also through the « Plan of Studies » which he provided for Augustinian schools ¹⁶⁸).

In Mexico the influence of Vera Cruz was exercised in various ways. Apart from the founding of schools, he made a notable contribution by the establishment of libraries. We have already mentioned that he founded four — those of San Agustín and San Pablo in Mexico City, and one each in Tiripetío and Tacámbaro. That of Tiripetío is the earliest known library of the New World; it contained a fine collection of precious editions from Paris, Venice, Basel, Cologne, Lisbon, Granada, Alcalá de Henares, etc. ¹⁶⁹). The best of the four, however, was that of San Pablo, which will be mentioned again later.

The fame of Vera Cruz also rests on his prestige as a teacher, particularly in the University of Mexico. Among his students there were a number of the outstanding figures of the sixteenth century. Most renowned of all was Francisco Cervantes de Salazar, the humanist and literary genius of early Mexico ¹⁷⁰). Alonso de la Vera Cruz was his discoverer and guide and was thus instrumental in developing one of the most learned men of the New World. With the approval of Fray Alonso, Cervantes was awarded the Master of Arts in 1553, and thirteen years later he earned the master's degree in theology after completing the course given by Vera Cruz ¹⁷¹). Cervantes de Salazar has himself acknowledged his debt

¹⁶⁸) CUEVAS, *Orígenes de humanismo en México*, p. 26. He is the only one who speaks of the « Plan de estudios y directorio espiritual », and he says it was preserved in a letter which up til a few years ago (1933) was to be found in Manila.

With regard to the instruction on privileges sent to Manila, cf. chap. vi.

¹⁶⁹) BOLAÑO E ISLA, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24. The greater part of these books are now to be found in the Museo Michoacano of Morelia; many of them contain marginal comments written by Vera Cruz. Cf. p. 142 and plate iv for an example of one of these: the *Summulae* of Petrus Hispanus, on the title page of which is written: « ad usum frater Alfonsus de la Vera Cruz habet. Pertinet ad conventum de Tiripetío ».

¹⁷⁰) CUEVAS, *Orígenes del humanismo en México*, p. 30. A. MILLARES CARLO, *Cartas recibidas de España por Francisco Cervantes de Salazar 1569-1575* (Mexico, 1946), p. 27.

¹⁷¹) MILLARES CARLO, *Cartas recibidas*, p. 26, note 67; p. 27; p. 149, no. 13.

to his former master, especially in the laudatory Latin letters which he wrote for several of the works of Fray Alonso. In 1554, when the *Dialectica resolutio* was published, Cervantes de Salazar composed a short encomium in which he spoke of himself as a student of Vera Cruz and paid tribute not only to his master's learning, but also to his singular modesty ¹⁷²). In another testimony composed for the *Speculum coniugiorum* he spoke of the extraordinary gifts of Fray Alonso, and referred to him as a light given by God to the New World ¹⁷³).

Among the Augustinian students of Vera Cruz there were a number of men who became leaders in the ecclesiastical sphere in Mexico and elsewhere. There was Pedro de Agurto, a Mexican-born Augustinian who became a noted canonist and professor of the University. In 1595 he was chosen to be the first Bishop of Cebú in the Philippines ¹⁷⁴). Another pupil of note was Andrés de Tordehumos Ribera who published a treatise called *Apologia theologica* in 1581 ¹⁷⁵). He dedicated his work to Vera Cruz and wrote long and effusive praises of his former teacher, to whom he attributed the doctrine he expounded ¹⁷⁶). Another outstanding name was that of Esteban de Salazar, a scholar in the classical and Hebrew languages, and author of an historico-hagiographical work called *Veynte discursos sobre el credo* ¹⁷⁷). He composed three Latin discourses in tribute to Fray Alonso to be published with the latter's philosophical work *Recognitio summularum*.

The influence that Vera Cruz exercised over his students was not only one of learning and scholarship, but also of virtue and goodness. This fact is very well illustrated in the advice which he was accustomed to give his theological students at the end of each course. It was a discourse of some length inspired by his wisdom, experience, firmness and gentleness ; it forms an excellent portrayal

¹⁷²) *Dialectica resolutio* (Mexico, 1554; modern reprint in Madrid, 1945), fol. 2. Also found in appendix of BOLAÑO E ISLA, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-124.

¹⁷³) Text in BOLAÑO E ISLA, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-172. Cervantes de Salazar also wrote about Vera Cruz in his *México en 1554* and, on p. 33, praises him as the « most eminent teacher of Arts and Theology ».

¹⁷⁴) GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Biografías*, I, 428-429.

¹⁷⁵) Cf. Biography in BIA, VII, 672-673.

¹⁷⁶) Text in BOLAÑO E ISLA, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-142.

¹⁷⁷) Cf. BIA, VI, 45-56.

of his character ¹⁷⁸). Besides advising his students in the best methods of study, he also exhorted them to the practise of virtue, religious observance, spiritual reading and the careful use of time. He included as well some norms for good preaching and fruitful discussion. In the true spirit of charity he urged the students never to argue the relative merits of theologians or doctors. In conclusion, Vera Cruz exhorted them to dedicate themselves single-mindedly to the work of the missions, and requested their prayers for himself, saying that he would thus consider his labor well-paid.

Vera Cruz as a Writer

In considering Alonso de la Vera Cruz' contribution to the field of education, something must be said about his writings. But first of all, in order to better understand the man and his books a few words ought to be prefaced about his background and associations in the world of learning. Unlike most of his confreres of that period, Vera Cruz was not educated in Augustinian schools. This proved to be no disadvantage to him in acquiring the spirit of, and a love for, the Augustinian Order, nor did it prove any barrier in having his works accepted as ideal for Augustinian seminaries even in Spain. Furthermore, it was an advantage for him in this sense, that at Salamanca he came under the influence of the superior learning and intellectual leadership of the Dominican Francisco de Vitoria.

We have mentioned earlier that Vera Cruz attended the lectures and enjoyed the guidance of Vitoria, who was one of those illustrious thinkers in whom can be seen the transition from mediaeval to modern times ; his name is revered today especially for his contribution in the field of political and international law. In Francisco de Vitoria there were happily united brilliant intellect, true humanism and a deep Christian sense of morality, inspired especially by justice and charity.

In a century of general violence, Vitoria stood up as the champion of human right and dignity. When the nation of which he was a citizen reached the climax of power, Vitoria contributed more than anybody else to preventing it from letting itself be led

¹⁷⁸) Published by GRIJALVA, *op. cit.*, Edad III, chap. xxxiii.

astray by the temptations of power, always proclaiming its submission to moral law ¹⁷⁹).

Among his works are two that are chiefly concerned with the laws of empire and the rights of the indigenous peoples : *De Indis recenter inventis* and *De Indis, sive de iure belli Hispanorum in barbaros*. In these treatises one finds many statements which illustrate clearly the remarkably Christian and democratic spirit of Vitoria, and show him as a man far ahead of his age. He maintained, for example, that the Indians, though pagans and barbarians, were intelligent beings and could not justly be deprived of either public or private dominion, not even for resistance to the true Faith. Measures could be taken, however, to give protection to the ministers of the Gospel if necessary ¹⁸⁰). He condemned the extension of empire as a just cause for war, and allowed colonization only under limited circumstances where the good of the natives would be the primary object ¹⁸¹). Furthermore, he condemned war as a means of conversion and labeled as monstrous and a sacrilege conversion by force ¹⁸²).

Such then were the bold and timely teachings that Alonso de la Vera Cruz learned from his friend and master. It is interesting to see what effect they had on him. Vera Cruz composed a work called *Relectio de dominio infidelium et iusto bello*, probably written between the years 1542 and 1545 ¹⁸³). Unfortunately, this treatise was never published and the manuscript has been lost. The contents however, is known, and it is clear that he treated of topics very similar to those of Francisco de Vitoria just mentioned ¹⁸⁴). It would have been most interesting to know what Vera Cruz wrote about

¹⁷⁹) A. TRUYOL SERRA, *The Principles of Political and International Law in the Work of Francisco de Vitoria* (Madrid; Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1946), p. 20.

¹⁸⁰) *Ibid.*, Nos. XLIII, LIX, LX.

¹⁸¹) *Ibid.*, Nos. LXXIII, LXII, LXIII.

¹⁸²) *Ibid.*, No. LXI.

¹⁸³) STREIT, *op. cit.*, I, 105. He gives no indication of how the date was ascertained, but his estimate is a likely one since during those years Vera Cruz was engaged in the mission work of Tierra Caliente where he could have seen the effects of the Conquest on the natives.

¹⁸⁴) BIA, VIII, pp. 171-172. Santiago Vela's source is RAMÍREZ, *Adiciones a la biblioteca de Beristáin*, III, 218ff. The contents are listed as follows:

Utrum illi qui habent populos in istis partibus absque titulo possint juste

the rights and powers of the Emperor and the Pope, about the rights of the Indians, the nature of a just war in the Spanish Conquest, and the admissability of conversion by force. All these things are listed in the contents of his treatise. The only reference to this work in the published writings of Alonso de la Vera Cruz is a brief note in his *Speculum coniugiorum*. In the context he gives a small hint of his ideas about the powers of the King of Spain in the Americas¹⁸⁵). In speaking of the marital impediment of disparity of worship among infidels, he says there is nothing in natural law about such an impediment. A « dominus infidelium », however, if he is a lawful « dominus », can make laws pertaining to the respublica and the common good. And since the laws of marriage pertain to the common good, a « dominus » — in this case, the King of Spain — could make laws concerning such an impediment.

While it is clear, as will be seen in chapter six, that Vera Cruz defended the rights and powers of both King and Pope in the New World, his sympathy lay very much with the Indians in the sufferings which many of them had to endure in the course of the Conquest. His experience in the missions had shown him

tributa recipere, an teneant ad restitutionem ipsorum et resignationem populi.

Utrum qui justo titulo possident teneantur ad restitutionem ipsorum.

Utrum Imperator sit dominus Orbis.

Utrum Imperator habeat dominium et proprietatem rerum subditorum suorum.

Utrum Imperator habeat proprietatem super omnia bona subditorum.

Utrum Summus Pontifex habeat supremam potestatem.

Utrum Imperator vel Rex Castellae possit justum bellum indicare istis barbaris.

Utrum licitum sit bellum contra infideles.

Utrum justum bellum fuerit contra istos infideles.

De justa causa belli respectu infidelium.

Utrum detur aliqua causa justificans bellum contra hujus novi orbis incolas.

De justa causa belli contra barbaros.

Utrum ad recipiendam fidem liceat bellum infidelibus inferre.

Quomodo per Summum Pontificem possit compelli infideles ad fidem.

An per voluntatem regis et respublicae possit dominium transferri in alium.

De justo titulo belli hujus novi orbis.

¹⁸⁵) *Speculum coniugiorum* (Milan, 1599), Part I, chap. xxxii, p. 92. In the margin, Vera Cruz wrote: « Vide relectionem nostram de dominio infidelium et iusto bello ». Another reference to the *Relectio* is found in the Escorial MS iii-K6, fol. 285v. Vera Cruz says here that Alexander VI granted « regna et dominia » to the Spanish king to carry out the work of conversion.

what sometimes befell the Indians at the hands of unscrupulous fortune seekers. He endorsed the position of the famous Dominican Bishop Bartolomé de las Casas, at least to the extent of decrying the conditions prevailing in some places, and striving for the adequate execution of the laws established to protect the natives. Vera Cruz presented to the Council of the Indies, probably shortly after his arrival in Spain in 1562, a petition of de las Casas, in which the latter asked that a board of theologians and jurists be set up to approve a list of propositions which he wrote in the petition. Fray Alonso signed the petition and bore witness to its truth¹⁸⁶). It is not conceivable, however, that he meant to endorse in detail the propositions of de las Casas, for they contain the kind of impetuous and all-out condemnation for which the Bishop of Chiapas is well-known, and, as far we know, Vera Cruz never expressed himself in similar terms¹⁸⁷). He doubtless wished only to join in the general protest against evil conditions where they existed.

Vera Cruz has left record of a case where he made a specific condemnation of one of the conquistadores. Again in this instance, Alonso endorsed the position of de las Casas. In a copy of the latter's last will and testament, Vera Cruz wrote a marginal note in which he cited Pizarro for cruelty in causing thousands of Indian babies to be abandoned by their mothers who were pressed into service to carry cargo¹⁸⁸). Fray Alonso had never been to Peru, but he got his information from one of the government officials in Mexico City. Such flagrant injustice and unchristian conduct could not but arouse the anger of a man such as Vera Cruz who had

¹⁸⁶) GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Colección de documentos*, II (Mexico, 1866), 595-598. The document is taken from Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fondo español, MS 325, fol. 306-307. It is signed by Hernando de Barrionuevo, Alonso Maldonado and Alonso de la Vera Cruz, and presented in the name of Bartolomé de las Casas, who was ill and could not make the presentation in person.

¹⁸⁷) These are some of the propositions:

... que todos los reinos y señoríos de las Indias tenemos usurpados.

... que las encomiendas ó repartimientos de indias son iniquísimos, y de per se malos, y así tiránicos, y la tal gobernación tiránica.

... que todos los que las (encomiendas) dan pecan mortalmente, y los que las tienen están siempre in pecado mortal, y si no les dejan no se podrán salvar.

¹⁸⁸) Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fondo Español, MS 325, fol. 299. Printed by ICAZBALCETA in *Colección de documentos*, II, 512. This note is written in the hand of Vera Cruz. He speaks of 20,000 infants, probably an exaggerated figure.

Henceforth, the above MS will be referred to simply as FE 325.

dedicated his life to bringing Christianity to the New World. But unlike Bartolomé de las Casas, he was a more balanced and temperate man who saw the advantages of the Spanish Conquest for the native population as well as its offenses. We saw in the second chapter that he objected to the fact the monastery in Mexico City held an *encomienda* to get funds for building, but there is no reason to believe that he thought that the system was in itself evil. The objection was based on the ideal of religious poverty; Vera Cruz would have preferred to live by begging as the Franciscans were doing. Judging from what we know of Fray Alonso's extant writing, it is safe to say that if his treatise *Relectio de dominio infidelium* had survived, we would find that he defended the Spanish Conquest, but within the framework of Christian justice that he had learned from Francisco de Vitoria.

As a writer, Alonso de la Vera Cruz is best known for his philosophical works. Of his four published works, three concern scholastic philosophy. It is not Vera Cruz the missionary or the canonist, but Vera Cruz the teacher of philosophy who is best known today. And his fame rests, not upon his originality or brilliance, nor upon the quantity of philosophical writing he produced, but upon the fact that he was the first philosopher of the Americas, and principally of Mexico. As early as 1540, he had begun his first course in philosophy at Tiripetío and he composed his own text books. These were not published till 1554, and 1557, when Fray Alonso was already teaching at the University. It was no small feat for a man as busy as Alonso was, living in a primitive land with only the barest means for study and intellectual pursuits, to compose and publish a course in philosophy. This outstanding achievement has merited for him the title of Father of Mexican Philosophy¹⁸⁹). His work was given noteworthy recognition in his own lifetime when his books were adopted for use in Augustinian schools in Spain in 1569. We shall see too that they went through a number of editions.

The first of the three books of philosophy is his *Recognitio*

¹⁸⁹) O. ROBLES, *Investigación filosófico-natural. Los libros del alma de Fray Alonso de la Vera Cruz* (Mexico City, 1942), p. viii. Sr. Robles is the only one who has ever made any thorough study of the philosophical writings of Vera Cruz. The comments following here are taken mainly from his above work and from his *Filósofos mexicanos del siglo XVI* (Mexico City, 1950).

summularum, first published in Mexico City in 1554. It was three times revised and re-published in Salamanca. A fifth edition was put out posthumously in 1595, also at Salamanca. This book, along with his *Resolutio dialectica*, forms a unit; they are based on Aristotle's *Organon*, and constitute a course in dialectics. The *Resolutio dialectica* was published at the same time as its companion volume; it too went through three revisions by Vera Cruz, also published at Salamanca. The *Recognitio summularum* is the basis of logic founded on the texts of Aristotle and Petrus Hispanus. Vera Cruz gave a commentary on the texts, employing the remarks of other authors as well. He discussed all the terms and methods necessary for an understanding of logic; he also treated of the various types of causes, and concluded with a very brief compendium of the rules of dialectics. The *Resolutio dialectica* is the study of the dialectic « quam vocant magnam », and contains commentaries on works of Aristotle and Porfirius. Here Fray Alonso discussed the predicables, universals, the principle of individuation, and the demonstrative syllogism. In his commentary on Aristotle's *Book of Categories* he gave a worthy treatment on the idea of substance.

The third philosophical writing of Alonso de la Vera Cruz is his *Physica speculatio*, first published in Mexico City in 1557. It was thrice revised and re-published at Salamanca. It embraces the same material as the *Physics* of Aristotle in the wide sense, that is, natural philosophy. In the tract « de coelo » Vera Cruz has included a geographical description of the New World. He displayed throughout this book a thorough acquaintance with philosophers and the history of classical philosophy. Perhaps the most important part of the treatise is the last three books « de anima », which can be called a study of rational psychology. Vera Cruz like Aristotle considered it a part of physics, not metaphysics, because all the operations of the soul are exercised in conjunction with the material organism. It must be remembered that the approach of Fray Alonso in this work was that of a philosopher, not a physical scientist. He was interested in being and its essential characteristics, not its external or accidental properties.

In the prologue of his first book, the *Recognitio summularum*, Fray Alonso stated his purpose in composing his course in philosophy. He said it was his desire to rewrite the study of dialectics to remove the labyrinthine confusion of pointless rules and syllo-

gisms. He wished to spare his students the useless pains of brain-splitting syllogistic exercises. « I speak from experience », he said, « and I regret the fruitless years spent in these matters » ¹⁹⁰). He was referring to the philosophers of the decadent period of scholasticism, the ones who split hairs and argued about how many angels could stand on the head of a pin. In the time of Vera Cruz scholasticism was undergoing a renovation under the excellent leadership of men like Francisco de Vitoria. Alonso wished to follow the path of those contemporaneous philosophers who were then leading the way out of the decadent confusion, especially through the study of Aristotle. It was his intention to cleanse philosophy of its useless and ugly warts, while preserving the beauty of wisdom and truth.

This effort of Vera Cruz was significant of a healthy intellectual independance at a time when many teachers were bogged down in a traditional morass of sophistry, and when it was dangerous to appear to be different because of the fear of Protestant infiltration into Catholic thought. This attitude of Fray Alonso is further illustrated in his defense of his confrere and friend Luis de León. When that famous literary figure was imprisoned by the Inquisition under suspicion of heresy, many of the learned men and university savants turned against him. But when Vera Cruz was asked what he thought, he answered simply that he could see nothing wrong in the writings of Luis de León, for the latter's opinions were the same as his own. He refused, however, to discuss the decisions of the Inquisition because of his respect for an ecclesiastical tribunal ¹⁹¹). We shall see later that Alonso himself was to be accused before the Inquisition, but for a different reason ¹⁹²).

¹⁹⁰) « Expertus loquor et doleo annos consumptos in istis sine fructu ». Cf. the text of the prologue as given by BOLAÑO E ISLA, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80. No copy of the *Recognitio summularum* was available to the present writer. However, the same ideas can be seen in the dedication of the 1554 edition of Vera Cruz' *Resolutio dialectica*, fol. 2v.

¹⁹¹) GRIJALVA, *op. cit.* (2nd print.), Edad IV, chap. xi, p. 591. It is said that he wrote a defense of Luis de León, but there is no evidence of such a work. Cf. BIA, VIII, 172. Cf. also, A. BELL, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

¹⁹²) A further attempt of Vera Cruz to rejuvenate studies is indicated by M. CUEVAS in his *Documentos inéditos*, p. xxviii. He says Alonso tried, but without success, to reform the plan and method of studies in the University. Cuevas, however, gives no further information on this point, and no other evidence to that effect has been found by the present writer.

Vera Cruz' purpose, then, in rewriting the course in philosophy was an excellent one; it is a question, however, to what extent he was successful. It is clear that his effort was not as daring as it might have been. Oswaldo Robles, who has made a more thorough study of the philosophical writings of Fray Alonso than any other writer, points out that, while Vera Cruz is usually clear and precise, his style is dry and monotonous. Furthermore, he is sometimes too dependent upon authority in place of the arguments of reason and his syllogisms are occasionally weak and verbose. In other words, he shows the influence of the decadent scholastics¹⁹³). The question arises then: should Vera Cruz be classified among the true restorers of scholasticism or should he be placed among the decadent scholastics?¹⁹⁴). Robles maintains very definitely that Alonso de la Vera Cruz was a true Thomist and belongs among the restorers of pure scholasticism. His opinion is based chiefly on two things. Firstly, he shows that Vera Cruz always insisted upon the genuine doctrine of St. Thomas and Aristotle and that his philosophy was clearly and explicitly anti-nominalist¹⁹⁵). Nominalism is one of the elements that brought about the scholastic decadence, and Fray Alonso, in several places, refutes the nominalist opinion of such men as Gregory of Rimini, Occam, and Henry of Gent¹⁹⁶). Secondly, Robles points out that Vera Cruz, instead of simply repeating the opinions of more recent and less gifted philosophers, went to the writings of the great philosophers and based his writings on their works¹⁹⁷). Alonso de la Vera Cruz was a man of wide erudition who showed a ready familiarity with all the great thinkers,

¹⁹³) ROBLES, *Investigación filosófico-natural*, pp. xiv-xv.

¹⁹⁴) A number of writers have referred to this question. Cf., for example, VALVERDE TÉLLEZ, *Apuntaciones históricas sobre la filosofía en México* (Mexico City, 1896), pp. 118-119. JUNQUERA, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-57. The tendency has been more toward considering Vera Cruz among the decadents. But these opinions have been superficial because no writer before Robles has showed any extensive knowledge of the writings of Vera Cruz.

¹⁹⁵) ROBLES, *Filósofos mexicanos*, pp. 20-34.

¹⁹⁶) Vera Cruz, though an Augustinian, was not educated in Augustinian schools. If he had been, it is possible that he may have come under the influence of Gregory of Rimini, Augustinian General of the fourteenth century, who began a nominalist trend among some Augustinian philosophers. As it turned out, Vera Cruz prevented that trend from entering into the training given to Augustinian students in Mexico.

¹⁹⁷) ROBLES, *Filósofos mexicanos*, pp. 27-30.

both ancient and more recent. He made many references to the works of such men as Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, St. Thomas, Albertus Magnus, Scotus, etc.

In summary we can say that it is quite certain that Fray Alonso deserves full credit for a real attempt to restore pure scholasticism. On the other hand, we must admit that his was not a particularly brilliant mind and he made no extraordinary contribution to philosophical studies. What is most important, however, is the fact that he was clearly aware of the need for restoration and he did at least set the pattern in the right direction when he published the first course of philosophy in the New World. The verbosity and aridity of his style presents a difficulty, but that is something that cannot be fairly judged by a twentieth-century reader. Such a style was common to the period and we know that Vera Cruz' books were widely accepted, not only in Mexico, but also in Spain. We must pay tribute to Fray Alonso's intelligence, learning and foresight, in the realization that, working in a primitive land so far removed from European centers of learning, he was able, not only to produce his philosophical works, but also to introduce the elements of a scholastic reform which was then beginning to catch hold in the schools of the Old World.

The fourth and last of the printed works of Alonso de la Vera Cruz was the one best known to his contemporaries and his best single contribution to the missions of Mexico ¹⁹⁸). It is the *Speculum coniugiorum*, a book on the moral theology, and especially the canon law, of matrimony, with the particular and very valuable purpose of providing a guide for solving the complicated cases concerning the newly-converted Indians. The first edition was published in Mexico City in 1556 with a dedication to the Viceroy Luis de Velasco. Two revised editions were later published in Spain, and a fourth edition was printed in Milan in 1599, fifteen years after the death of Alonso ¹⁹⁹). The book was actually composed, however,

¹⁹⁸) Cf. praise given by Juan DE EGUIARA Y EGUREN, *Bibliotheca Mexicana* (1755), seen in unpublished translation being prepared by Ernest D. Burrus, S. J., paragraph 155.

¹⁹⁹) Apparently a fourth edition was projected in the lifetime of Vera Cruz, but never realized. On July 11, 1581, he had written to the printer Simón de Portunaris in Salamanca to give permission for an edition of the *Speculum*. This letter is published in BOLAÑO E ISLA, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-138. His source is

in 1546, ten years previous to its publication, as Vera Cruz tells us in the introduction ²⁰⁰). He waited that length of time to see how it would be received, and when he found that the book was approved and sought after by the learned in theology and canon law, he put it into print. Fray Alonso had come to Mexico in 1536, and in the subsequent years of practical experience in the missions, he gained the knowledge needed to write this valuable guide for his fellow missionaries. Again we can see the wisdom and foresight of Francisco de la Cruz, when he set out to persuade the learned secular priest, as Vera Cruz then was, to join the Mexican missions; he wanted a man skilled in the arts and in theology who would be able to tackle the problems that were arising in the new land.

Fray Alonso put much serious study into the preparation of this book. In his summary at the end of the volume he lists the Fathers, theologians and canonists whose works he employed; they present a formidable array and represent the extensiveness of his learning ²⁰¹). The book is divided into three sections: 1. matrimony in general and the impediments, 2. matrimony among the infidels, 3. the dissolution of marriage. The first two editions of the *Speculum coniugiorum* were published before the closing of the Council to Trent. Because the Council had made a number of changes regarding the laws of matrimony, especially in reference to clandestine marriage, Vera Cruz found it necessary to put out an *Appendix* to make the required adjustments in his book. He could not, he says in the introduction to the *Appendix*, rewrite the whole book, so he did the next best thing by composing the *Appendix* with marginal references to the text of the *Speculum* where correction was needed. The *Appendix ad speculum coniugiorum* was first published separately in Madrid in 1571 and then printed in a single volume with the text of the *Speculum* a year later in Alcalá. The reason for the separate publication of the *Appendix* was probably simply a question of convenience ²⁰²). The edition of Alcalá was already in preparation, but Vera Cruz was in Madrid handling the

Mexico, Archivo de Notarías, Protocolo de Antonio Alonso, año de 1581, fols. mlxxxvi and mlxxxvi verso.

²⁰⁰) Fol. iv of 1599 edition.

²⁰¹) Pp. 369-370 of 1599 edition.

²⁰²) BOLAÑO E ISLA, *op. cit.*, p. 116. He quotes the opinion of PÉREZ PASTOR, *Biografía madrileña*, I, 26.

affairs of Mexico and preparing his return to the missions. In order to save himself time he had the *Appendix* printed and corrected in Madrid and then sent it to Alcalá to be incorporated in the *Speculum*. Included in the *Appendix* are the texts of three Bulls issued by Popes Leo X, Adrian VI, and Pius V; they are the basis for certain privileges that Fray Alonso claims for the religious missionaries in the course of his writing. As regards the privileges of religious, it is interesting to note that he had planned to publish a compendium of privileges with the first edition of the *Speculum coniugiorum*. It is indicated on the title page of the 1556 edition, but actually it is not to be found in that edition or in any later one ²⁰³). The writings of Vera Cruz on privileges will be taken up more in detail in chapter six.

Before considering the contents of the *Speculum*, something must be said on the nature of the matrimonial problems of the Indians ²⁰⁴). The chief difficulty facing the missionaries in the matter of marriage for the new converts was the custom of polygamy. It was a particularly serious difficulty because polygamy was generally practised by the Mexican chieftains and was therefore a special obstacle to the conversion of the ruling class. This difficulty was further accentuated by the fact that polygamy was more than just a concession to sensuality, it was the basis of an economic system. The possession of many women gave the chief a larger labor force, and hence a better means of income. When the chief was converted to Christianity, the problem was not only to persuade him to abandon polygamy, but also to determine which was his legitimate wife. Must he retain the one he first married, or could he choose the one he preferred? That brought up the further question of whether there was such a thing as valid marriage among the infidel Indians, apart from those cases which were simply concubinage. These then were the questions that Vera Cruz set out to answer. The whole problem of settling the complicated marriage cases was further confused by the struggle between the religious and the bishops. The latter claimed that such cases were reserved

²⁰³) The title page of the 1556 edition can be seen in *BIA*, VIII, 166. The present writer has not seen this first edition, but it was consulted through the kind assistance of Dr. C. E. Castañeda of the University of Texas.

²⁰⁴) For a more complete review of this question, cf. RICARD, *La « conquête spirituelle »*, pp. 134-141.

to them and they complained that the religious were acting beyond their powers in marrying and annulling marriages on the basis of their investigation of the legal status of Indian marriages previous to conversion. The religious, of course, defended themselves on the grounds of their privileges.

In the first part of *Speculum coniugiorum* Vera Cruz treated the law of matrimony in general and the impediments. He gave a complete exposition, in sixty articles, of the nature of the marriage contract and the impediments to a valid and licit contract. It is chiefly this first part that he had to revise according to the decrees of the Council of Trent. The largest item in the revision, which is contained in the already mentioned *Appendix*, is the question of clandestine marriage. While it had previously been taught that clandestine marriage, though a grave sin, except in certain specified circumstances, was a valid contract, the Council of Trent declared that marriage which was not contracted before the pastor or his delegate and with the necessary witnesses and banns was invalid. In a series of fourteen dubia with their solutions, Vera Cruz brought his book up to date, and treated also of the necessary steps for the confirmation of the marriage of new converts. The rest of the *Appendix* is devoted to stating the decrees of the Council regarding the effect of force employed against a person entering marriage, and the nature and effect of certain dispensations. A further matter treated here is the marriage of « transients », and the authority of the priest who officiates at such a marital contract. The question of the privileges of religious appears where Vera Cruz maintains that religious in the Spanish missions do not need the permission of the Ordinary to validly and licitly marry « transients »²⁰⁵).

The second part of the *Speculum* is more pertinent to the peculiar problems of the missions. In thirty-six articles Fray Alonso discusses the nature and validity of marriage among the infidels of the New World and the nature of polygamy. First of all, in article two, Vera Cruz points out that, while there is such a thing as valid marriage among infidels, the Indians of the New World presented a special problem because of the ease with which they could put away their first wife and because of the custom of marrying many wives. But in spite of these conditions prejudicial to legitimate matrimony, he concluded that there was true marriage

²⁰⁵) *Speculum coniugiorum* (1599), *Appendix*, p. 54.

when man and woman joined together freely in accordance with the Indian customs. He described some of these customs and demonstrated that marriage among the Indians was intended to be, and often actually was, permanent, and had the true purposes of legitimate matrimony. In this second article, and the three subsequent ones, Vera Cruz gave some interesting ethnological details of the life of the Indians of Michoacán. There was a difference between the marriage rites of the nobility and those of the common people but both groups were capable of making a valid contract. In those cases, however, where there was no consent expressed between the two parties and no semblance of a contract, even though they continued to live together, there was no true marriage.

As for the custom of polygamy, Vera Cruz argued that the practice of taking several wives, though contrary to the natural law, could be legitimate for the infidel Indians because of their ignorance of the natural law and because the new law of the Gospel had not been preached to them. The use of divorce, however, could never be legitimate, even according to the pagan laws and customs of the Indians ²⁰⁶). The question about which of many wives was to be regarded as the lawful wife of a converted Indian is a difficult one. Vera Cruz does not directly answer this question, but indicates his belief that the first wife must always be retained as the lawful spouse ²⁰⁷). The bulk of the material after article five in part two of the *Speculum* is taken up with long and somewhat verbose disquisitions on the natural law and the dispensation of the Old

²⁰⁶) *Ibid.*, Part II, article iv; article xiii, conclus. 5; article xviii, final conclusion.

²⁰⁷) *Ibid.*, cf. especially Part II, article iv, p. 184. Vera Cruz based his opinion on the canon of Innocent III «*Gaudemus in Domino*», de divortiis, (1201). This canon states that a convert who previously had several wives can retain only his first wife unless the Pauline privilege is applicable, even though he may have already divorced his first wife in accordance with the pagan law.

An effort to solve this question was made by Pius V in his constitution «*Romani Pontifices*», Aug. 2, 1571. (Cf. document VII in the appendix of the *Codex juris canonici*.) Pius V decreed that the convert may be permitted to live in marriage with the wife who is baptized with him. León LOPETEGUI in his article, *La constitución 'Romani Pontificis'*, *Estudios eclesiásticos*, Vol. XVI, no. 63 (October, 1942), pp. 487-511, shows that new problems arose over the application of the above constitution. He maintains, on p. 506, that Vera Cruz was among the conservative canonists who limited the interpretation of the papal decree. It is doubtful, however, whether or not a true idea of Fray Alonso's

Testament, a treatment of the degrees of relationship for contracting lawful marriage, a discussion of the Pauline privilege and other similar questions.

The third part of the *Speculum* is composed of twenty articles on divorce, or more accurately, as Vera Cruz indicates in the introduction, on separation and annulment, the judicial procedure, and finally, some moral theology of the use of matrimony. The only article that is of special interest is numer eleven because it speaks of the privileges of religious for handling marriage cases. This question will be taken up in chapter six.

Before leaving the subject of Alonso de la Vera Cruz' contribution to education and learning in Mexico, something must be said of his work as censor of books. The first such assignment we know of probably came from the University of Mexico. A commission representing the King and Archbishop approved the 1554 edition of *Commentaria in Ludovici Vives exercitationes linguae Latinae* by the noted humanist Francisco Cervantes de Salazar. The members of the commission were Doctor Matheo Sedeño Areualo and Maestro Alonso de la Vera Cruz ²⁰⁸). Two other works censored by Vera Cruz were the *Tratos y contratos de mercaderes y tratantes* (Salamanca, 1569) by Tomás Mercado, and *Doctrinalis fidei* (Mexico, 1577) by the Augustinian Medina Plaza ²⁰⁹). Alonso also censored two books by the Franciscan Maturino Gilberti, *Tesoro espiritual* and *Diálogos de doctrina cristiana*, published in Mexico City in 1558 and 1559 respectively ²¹⁰). Both these works were published in Tarascan, the language of Michoacán, and an autograph copy of the criticism of the *Diálogos* by Vera Cruz is extant ²¹¹). Maturino Gilberti was the center of a controversy between the bishops and the religious ²¹²). His *Diálogos* was contested for a period of seventeen years (1559-1576), first by the Bishop of Michoa-

position can be found in the *Speculum coniugiorum* because the last revision of this book, that is, the *Appendix*, was published in the same year that the new decree was issued, 1571. The final answer to this question must await further research into the writings of Vera Cruz.

²⁰⁸) MILARES CARLO, *op. cit.*, appendix II, no. 6, p. 169.

²⁰⁹) *BIA*, VIII, 173.

²¹⁰) *Ibid.*

²¹¹) FE 325, fols. 327-328. Written in the hand of Vera Cruz, it is signed by him, and the first folio is also signed by Diego de Chavez, O. S. A.

²¹²) RICARD, *La « conquête spirituelle »*, pp. 77-79.

cán Vasco de Quiroga, and then by the Archbishop of Mexico City Alonso de Montúfar. It was contended, probably without much basis, that his use of Tarascan was inaccurate and misleading. Vera Cruz, at any rate, gave the *Diálogos* complete approval; he said the book was « approved as most Catholic and in conformity with the holy doctors » ²¹³). He reviewed four charges against Gilberti, one linguistic and three doctrinal, and cleared him on all four.

The unpublished works of Fray Alonso which have not been available for this study have not been considered in this chapter. A complete list of all his writings will be found in the appendices. Among his unpublished treatises the most notable are two works dealing with philosophy, a commentary on canon law, a commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul, and a grammar for the Tarascan language.

A final point ought to be made about the contribution of Alonso de la Vera Cruz to Mexican culture from the artistic and architectural point of view. He was responsible, at least indirectly, for the designing and building of many of the Augustinian monasteries which are today among the best national monuments of Mexico. It was during his three full terms as major superior that many of these splendid buildings were planned and begun, and the plans must have been at least approved, if not to some degree directed and inspired, by him. To mention one famous monastery founded by Vera Cruz, there is Cuitzeo, which Cuevas calls « that glorious convent of the golden century, the best and most artistic ecclesiastical building that we know in Mexico » ²¹⁴).

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(To be continued).

²¹³) FE 325, fol. 327. « Se prueba ser catholicamente dicho conforme a los santos doctores ».

²¹⁴) CUEVAS, *Orígenes del humanismo en México*, p. 26. Cuitzeo « aquel glorioso Convento del siglo de oro, la mejor y más artística mansión eclesiástica que en México conocemos ».