

An Unpublished Manuscript Contain- ing Statistics and Biographical Notes Concerning the Augustinians in Mexico c. 1595

In the Biblioteca Angelica, located in the former monastery of St. Augustine in Rome, there is a small sixteenth century manuscript book entitled : *Formularium pro iis qui sunt a secretis ordinis* ¹⁾. At the end of the volume are inserted a number of papers, one of which gives statistics on the Augustinians in New Spain ; it consists of two small pages (nos. 106 and 107) written in Latin. There is no date, but the writer, Agustín de Carvajal, became the Spanish assistant general in 1595. The manuscript must have been written around that year as a report on the friars and foundations in Mexico. This conjecture is confirmed by its contents. Carvajal speaks of the burial place of Pedro Suárez de Escobar, Bishop-elect of Guadalajara, who had died in 1591. Furthermore, Agustín de Carvajal refers to himself as « Magister », a title awarded to him by the Augustinian general at the conclusion of the chapter of 1592. On the other hand, he mentions only one province in Mexico ; therefore, he must have written previous to 1602, the date of the foundation of the second province, that of Michoacán. This manuscript is both interesting and valuable, not only for statistics, but also for biographical notes on some of the outstanding Augustinians in New Spain in the sixteenth century. The information given by Carvajal can be considered as accurate ; he had many years of

¹⁾ MS 958. 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.

experience in the missions of Mexico, served as secretary to Pedro Suárez de Escobar when the latter was provincial, and held several high positions in his order.

Agustín de Carvajal was a controversial as well as an outstanding figure in Augustinian history in the last years of the sixteenth century. Born of a noble Mexican family in Guadalajara, he and his brother Diego were the first Augustinian novices received at the monastery in that city ²⁾. Agustín later went to Spain to study at Salamanca. He subsequently became very much involved in the confusion surrounding the juridical status of the new Augustinian province in Mexico ³⁾. As discrete to the general chapter held in Rome in 1592, Carvajal spoke for those friars in Mexico who sought to establish a separate province, free from the authority of the Spanish provincial and subject immediately to the general in Rome. Urged on by Carvajal, and against the wishes of the Spanish religious and civil authorities, the fathers of the general chapter created a separate province in Mexico. Again at the urging of Fray Agustín, the general, Andrea Fivizzani, sought to have this action of the chapter confirmed by Pope Clement VIII. A brief to that effect was given at Rome on July 24, 1592. Agustín de Carvajal promptly dispatched a copy of the brief to Mexico, thus precluding any intervention by Philip II or the Spanish provincial.

This influence exercised by Carvajal in Rome has been criticized by some ⁴⁾, but at least it is clear that his interest in Augustinian affairs in Mexico was wholehearted and sincere. His efforts in Rome, moreover, were appreciated by the general who, at the end of the chapter of 1592, awarded him the title of Master of Sacred Theology. Carvajal's influence at Rome continued, for he became the assistant general for the Spanish-speaking provinces of his order in 1595. In 1605 he was chosen for the bishopric of Panama, and in 1612 advanced to the See of Guamanga in the Kingdom of Peru. Agustín de Carvajal died around 1620.

Following is the text of Carvajal's report on Mexico :

²⁾ D. BASALENQUE, *Historia de la provincia de San Nicolás de Tolentino de Michoacán* (2nd. ed.; Mexico, 1886), Bk. 1, p. 413. Tomás DE HERRERA, *Alphabetum Augustinianum* (Madrid, 1644), I, 48.

³⁾ A. ENNIS, *Fray Alonso de la Vera Cruz, O. S. A.*, in *Augustiniana*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Louvain: August, 1955), 258-259.

⁴⁾ *Ibid.* Cf. note 268.

In Provincia Mexicana ordinis sancti Augustini sunt septuaginta duo conventus in una provincia quae nominis Jesu nominatur.

Conventus s. Augustini in civitate Mexicana habet centum quinquaginta fratres, est conventus regius structus expensis regis catholici Filippi ⁵⁾.

In conventu civitatis angelorum s. Augustini, habitant sexaginta fratres.

In conventu civitatis Guayangareo habitant quadraginta.

In conventu S. Mariae de gratia civitatis Guadalaxarae habitant vigintiquinque.

In conventu S. Augustini de Guajaca habitant viginti.

In conventu de Cacatecas habitant viginti fratres.

In aliis duobus vel tribus conventibus provinciae, sustudia (sic) sunt fratrum tam artium et theologiae, quam grammaticae et rhetorices (sic).

In collegio D. Pauli habitant triginta fratres theologi in civitate Mexicana. Et ultra hoc studium, semper in Conventu S. Augustini Mexicano sunt studentes et lectores tam grammaticae quam artium et theologiae.

In aliis conventibus habitant quatuor vel quinque fratres. Sunt indorum quantitatem (sic) qui eis administrant Sacramenta et instruunt in fide catholica illos noviter conversos.

Omnes isti sunt conventus habentes claustra, et officiales et ministros requisitos ad observantiam.

Pater venerabilis fr. Franciscus de Lacijs. Primus Fundator illius provinciae. Sepultus est in s. Augustino de Mexico, fuit eximius in doctrina et religionis observantia ⁶⁾.

Fr. Joanes Baptista acerrima penitentia domavit carnem suam, resplenduit vivens aliquibus miraculis, ab omnibus hatur (sic) beatus,

⁵⁾ The original monastery was destroyed by fire in 1676; it was replaced by a more grandiose structure a short time later. The monastery is today the National Library in Mexico City. The history of the early years of this principal Augustinian foundation in Mexico can be seen in the work cited above in note 3. Cf. Vol. 5, Nos. 1-2 (April, 1955), pp. 74-75; Vol. 5, No. 4 (December, 1955), pp. 371-377.

⁶⁾ Francisco de la Cruz. All the early writers refer to him as «Pater Venerabilis»; he had been the leader of the first group of seven Augustinian missionaries who came to New Spain in 1533. A few years later, during a visit to Spain, he persuaded the noted Alonso de la Vera Cruz to come to the missions. He died July 12, 1536. Cf. biography in HERRERA, *op. cit.*, pp. 226-227.

sepultus est in conventu S. Augustini de Guyangareo, principaliter coluit ieiunium ⁷⁾).

Fr. Antonius de Roa fuit vita inculpabili, in omnibus 6 feriis quadragesimae ad columnam ligatus in conspectu millearium indorum crudelissime flagellabatur.

Fr. sepultus est in conventu Sancti Augustini de Totolapa ⁸⁾).

Fr. Didacus de Vertavillo. Fuit vitae admirabilis et regulae Sancti Augustini observantissimus, sepultus est in sancto Augustino de Mexico. Provincialis fuit bis, et prior in Mexico conventu multoties ⁹⁾).

R. mus fr. Petrus Suares descobar ellectus episcopus Guadalaraxae. Viginti octo anis (sic) ante mortem suam abstinuit se a carnibus, piscibus et ovis, non manducabat nisi semel in die, nec bibebat vinum. Super nudam tabulam dormiebat, semper usus fuit cilicio et disciplina, etiam cum esset provincialis sine intermissione alicuius diei. Quod testis ego M. fr. Augustinus carvajal eius socius indignus fui ¹⁰⁾).

⁷⁾ 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). Cf. R. RICARD, *Un document sur les Augustins*, in *Etudes et documents* (Louvain, 1930), pp. 135-151, No. 69. G. DE SANTIAGO VELA, *Ensayo de una Biblioteca Ibero-Americana de la Orden de S. Agustín*, 8 Vols. (Madrid and El Escorial, 1913-1931), V, 653-654. J. GONZÁLEZ DE LA PUENTE, *Primera parte de la crónica agustiniana de Mechoacán* (2nd ed.; Mexico, 1907), Bk. II, chaps. i-xxii. N. P. NAVARRETE, *Fray Juan Bautista Moya* (Mexico, 1938).

⁸⁾ Antonio de Roa. A friar noted for great asceticism, he was professed at Burgos in 1529 and came to Mexico in 1536. He died Sept. 14, 1563. Cf. RICARD, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-151, No. 16. J. DE GRIJALVA, *Crónica de la Orden de N. S. P. Agustín en las provincias de la Nueva España 1533-1592* (Mexico, 1624), Bk. II, chaps. xx-xxiii.

⁹⁾ Diego Rodríguez de Vertavillo. Born at Vertavillo (Palencia) in 1513, he was professed at Valladolid or Burgos. He came to Mexico in 1539 and was appointed master of professed in Mexico City that same year. Cf. RICARD, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-151, No. 32.

¹⁰⁾ Pedro Suárez de Escobar, de Medellín. Born at Medellín, he came to Mexico as a very young child. At the age of 13 he entered the Augustinian Order and was professed in Mexico City June 2, 1541. He was a doctor of the University

M. Illefonsus avera cruce. Homo doctissimus in utroque iure et theologus vixit fere 80 anis (sic). Religionem nostram gubernavit quadraginta, atque eam ingressus est etatis suae anno 38, bis episcopatum oblatum sibi a rege Filipo reliquit, sepultus est in conventu S. Augustini de Mexico ¹¹).

R. mus fr. Johannes de Medina Rincon. Episcopus Mechuacensis. In religione munus prioris et provincialis admirabili prudentia gessit. Vixit in episcopatu annis undecim, omnia sua singulo quoque ano (sic) pauperibus distribuebat, et propinquus (sic) morti lectum in quo iacebat cuidam pauperi donavit, ac dixit : testamentum nulum facio, quia pauper Christi non habeo unde faciam, nec possum dicere super terram aliquid esse meum. A fratribus et clericis quos secum habebat, obnixi petiit, ut mortuum ne illum tunica spoliarent, sed non obediendo, invenerunt cilicium acerrimum, quo semper utebatur. In processionibus, quae fiebant propter pestem et aquae necessitatem, nudis pedibus ambulabat. Episcopatum multoties reliquit, et nunquam rex catholicus renunciationem acceptare voluit. Sepultus in sua ecclesia Mechuacanensi ¹²).

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of Mexico and taught Sacred Scripture there. Fray Pedro was chosen for the see of Guadalajara in 1590, but died a year later at Tlayacapan. Cf. RICARD, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-151, No. 83. M. CUEVAS, *Documentos inéditos* (Mexico, 1914), p. xvii.

¹¹) Alonso de la Vera Cruz. The manuscript says here that Fray Alonso was 38 when he entered the Augustinian Order, but Carvajal should have written 28. Vera Cruz was born in 1507 and entered the order in 1536 shortly after his arrival in New Spain. He had been previously a member of the secular clergy and professor at Salamanca. He was one of the most prominent figures in that period of Mexican history, providing leadership in ecclesiastical, civil and educational affairs. Vera Cruz died in 1584. A complete biography can be found in the study cited above in note 3.

¹²) Juan de Medina Rincón. Born probably in Segovia, he was professed in Mexico City May 6, 1543. Nominated for the see of Michoacán in 1573, he died in 1588. Cf. RICARD, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-151, No. 55. GONZÁLEZ DE LA PUENTE, *op. cit.*, Bk. II, chaps. xxiii-xxxii.