

## CHAPTER CCIX.

How we impressed very good and holy doctrines on the Indians of New Spain, and about their conversion, and how they were baptised and turned to our holy faith, and how we taught them the Offices in use in Castile, and to comprehend and secure justice.

AFTER getting rid of the idolatries and all the evil vices they practised, it pleased our Lord God that with his holy aid and with the good fortunes and the holy Christianity of our most Christian Emperor Don Carlos of Glorious Memory, and of our King and Lord the felicitous and invincible King of Spain, our Lord Don Felipe, his much loved and cherished son (May God grant him many years to live with an increase of more kingdoms, so that he may enjoy them in this his holy and happy [life-]time), there were baptised, after we conquered the country, all, both men and women, and children who have since been born, whose souls formerly went, lost, to the Infernal regions. Now there are many and good monks of [the order of] Señor San Francisco and of Santo Domingo and of other Orders, who go among the pueblos preaching, and, when a child is of the age our holy Mother Church of Rome ordains, they baptise it. Furthermore, through the holy sermons preached, the Holy Gospel is firmly planted in their hearts, and they go to Confession every year, and some of them, who have most knowledge of our holy faith, receive the Sacrament. In addition to this they have their Churches richly adorned with altars and all pertaining to the holy divine worship, with crosses and candlesticks and wax tapers and chalice and patens and silver plates, some large and some small, and censers all worked in silver. Then, in rich pueblos, they have copes, chasubles, and frontals, and often in moderate [sized] pueblos they are of velvet, damask and

satin, and of taffeta of various colours and workmanship, and the arms of the crosses are elaborately embroidered with gold and silk<sup>1</sup>, and the crosses of the dead are of black satin, and figured on them is a death's head with its ugly likeness and the bones, and the pall of the bier itself is sometimes good and at other times not so good. Then the necessary bells [vary] with the rank of each pueblo. There is no lack of choir singers with well harmonised voices such as tenors, trebles, contraltos, and basses, and in some pueblos there are organs, and nearly all of them have flutes, oboes, sackbuts and lutes. As for trumpets, shrill and deafening, there are not as many in my country, which is Old Castile, as there are in this province of Guatemala. It is a thing to be grateful for to God, and for profound consideration, to see how the natives assist in celebrating a holy Mass, especially when it is chanted by the Franciscans and Dominicans who have charge of the curacy of the pueblo where it is celebrated. There is another good thing they do [namely] that both men women and children, who are of the age to learn them, know all the holy prayers in their own languages and are obliged to know them. They have other good customs about their holy Christianity, that when they pass near a sacred altar or Cross they bow their heads with humility, bend their knees, and say the prayer "Our Father," which we Conquistadores have taught them, and they place lighted wax candles before the holy altars and crosses, for formerly they did not know how to use wax in making candles. In addition to what I have said, we taught them to show great reverence and obedience to all the monks and priests, and, when these went to their pueblos, to sally forth to receive them with

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<sup>1</sup> Blotted out in the original: "and even in some places with pearls."

lighted wax candles and to ring the bells, and to feed them very well. This they do with the monks, and they paid the same attentions to the priests, but after they had seen and known some of these and the covetousness of the rest, and that they committed irregularities in the pueblos, they took no [further] notice of them and did not want them as Curas in their pueblos, but Franciscans and Dominicans. It does not mend matters that the poor Indians say to a prelate that they do not hear him or . . . . but what more there is to be said about this subject had better remain in the inkpot, and I will return to my story. Besides the good customs reported by me they have others both holy and good, for when the day of Corpus Christi comes, or that of Our Lady, or other solemn festivals when among us we form processions, most of the pueblos in the neighbourhood of this city of Guatemala come out in procession with their crosses and lighted wax tapers, and carry on their shoulders, on a litter, the image of the saint who is the patron of the pueblo, as richly [adorned] as they are able, and they come chanting litanies and other prayers and playing on their flutes and trumpets. The same thing they do in their own pueblos when the day comes for these solemn festivals. They have the custom of making offerings, on Sundays and at Easter<sup>1</sup> and especially on All Saints Day, and about this custom of making offerings the secular priests hurry them up in their parishes by such means that the Indians cannot possibly forget, for two or three days before the festival takes place they order them to prepare for the offering. The Monks also [seek] offerings, but not with so great solicitude.

Let us get on, and state how most of the Indian

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<sup>1</sup> Domingos y Pascuas—Pascua is not only Easter, but any festival lasting three days.

natives of these lands have successfully learned all the trades that there are among us in Castile, and have their shops of the trades, and artisans, and gain a living by it. There are gold and silver smiths, both of chased and of hollow work, and they are very excellent craftsman, also lapidaries and painters. Carvers also do most beautiful work with their delicate burins of iron, especially in carving jades<sup>1</sup>, and in them depict all the phases of the holy passion of our Lord Redeemer and Saviour Jesus Christ, such that, if one had not seen them, one would never believe that Indians had done. It seems in my judgment that the most renowned painter, such as was Apelles in ancient times, or in our times a certain Berruguete and Michael Angelo or the other modern now lately become famous, who is a native of Burgos,<sup>2</sup> who has as great a reputation as Apelles, could not emulate with their most skilful pencils the works of art in jade, nor the reliquaries, which are executed by three Mexican Indian craftsmen of that trade, named Andrés de Aquino, Juan de la Cruz, and El Crespillo. In addition to this nearly all the sons of Chieftains are usually grammarians, and would have become expert, if the holy synod had not commanded them to abandon that which the very reverend Archbishop of Mexico had ordered to be done.

Many sons of Chieftains know how to read and write, and to compose books of plain chant, and there are craftsmen in weaving satin and taffeta and making woollen cloth, from *veintecuatrenos*<sup>3</sup> to sackcloth, and cotton cloths and rugs. They are carders, woolcombers, and weavers in the same manner as there are in Segovia and in Cuenca, and others are hat makers and soap

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<sup>1</sup> Esmeriles = half precious stones, such as jade, agate, etc.

<sup>2</sup> In the original there appears blotted out: "who is called . . .," and then follows a blank space.

<sup>3</sup> A technical term for a narrow band of twenty-four threads.

makers. There are only two crafts they have not been able to undertake, although they have tried: these are to make glass, and to become druggists, but I believe them to be so intelligent that they will acquire them very well. Some of them are surgeons and herbalists. They understand conjuring and working puppets and make very good guitars, indeed they were craftsmen by nature before we came to New Spain. Now they breed cattle of all sorts, and break in oxen, and plough the land, and sow wheat, and thresh harvest, and sell it, and make bread and biscuit, and they have planted their lands and hereditaments with all the trees and fruits which we have brought from Spain, and sell the fruit which they produce. They have planted so many trees that, because the peaches are not good for the health, and the banana plantations give them too much shade, they have cut and are cutting down many of them and putting in quinces and apples and pears, which they hold in higher esteem.

Let us go on, and I will speak of the laws which we have shown them how to guard and execute, and how every year they are to choose the Alcaldes ordinarios and Regidores, Notaries, Alguacils, Fiscals, and Mayordomos, and have their municipal houses (Cabildos) where they meet two days in the week, and they place doorkeepers in them, and give judgment and order debts to be paid which are owed by one to another. For some criminal acts they flog and chastise, and if it is for a death or something atrocious they remit it [the case] to the Governors, if there is no Royal Audiencia. According to what people, who know very well, have told me, in Tlaxcala, Texcoco, Cholula, Oaxaca and Tepeaca and in other great cities, when the Indians hold Court (Cabildo), Macebearers with gilt maces precede those who are Governors and Alcaldes (the same as the Viceroy of New Spain take with them), and justice is done with as much

propriety and authority as among ourselves, and they appreciate and desire to know much of the laws of the kingdom.

In addition to this, many of the Caciques are rich, and possess horses, and bring good saddles with trappings, and ride abroad through the cities and towns and places where they are going for amusement, or of which they are natives, and bring Indians and pages to accompany them. In some pueblos, they even play at tilting with reeds and have bull fights, and they tilt at the ring, especially on Corpus Christi day or the day of San Juan or Señor Santiago, or of Our Lady of August, or at the removal<sup>1</sup> of the Saint of the pueblo from the Church. There are many who wait for the bulls although they are fierce, and many of them are horsemen, especially in a pueblo named Chiapa of the Indians, and, even those who are not Caciques, nearly all of them own horses, and some own herds of mares and mules, and use them to bring in firewood and maize and lime and other things of the kind which they sell in the Plazas, and many of them are carriers in the same way as we have in our Castile.

Not to waste more words, they carry on all trades very perfectly—and even know how to weave tapestry cloths.

I will stop talking further on this subject and will tell of many other grandeurs which, through us, there have been and still are in New Spain.

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<sup>1</sup> Probably the round of visits paid by the image of the saint to the various Cofradias.

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## CHAPTER CCX.

About other matters and advantages which have followed from our renowned conquests and labours.

THERE will already have been understood from the past chapters all that has been reported by me about the benefits and advantages which have been conferred by our renowned and holy exploits and conquests. I will now speak of the gold and silver and precious stones and other riches, from cochineal to sarsaparilla and cowhides, which have gone from New Spain and are going every year to Castile to our King and Lord, both on account of his Royal Fifths, as well as through many other presents which we sent him as soon as we took possession of these lands for him, not counting the great quantity which merchants and passengers took. Since the wise King Solomon built and ordered to be constructed the Holy Temple of Jerusalem with the gold and silver which they brought him from the Islands of Tarsis, Ophir, and Saba, there has never been reported in any ancient writings more gold and silver and riches than what has gone daily to Castile from these lands. I assert this, although already from Peru, as is notorious, innumerable thousands of pesos of gold and silver have been sent. At the time we conquered New Spain the name of Peru was not known, nor was it discovered or subdued until ten years<sup>1</sup> later. Always from the very beginning we sent very rich presents to His Majesty, and for this reason and for others which I will state I place New Spain first, for we well know that in the events which have taken place in Peru the Captains, Governors, and soldiers joined in civil war, and all has been upset in blood and in the

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<sup>1</sup> Blotted out in the original : "two three four."