Eusebio Francisco Kino
Kino Writes About Reason for Conversions and "Preferential Option for the Poor"
" Kino's Biography of Javier Francisco Saeta"
 Book 8 Chapter 6
 "Motives And Sublime Goals To Make New Evangelical Conquests
 Among These New Conversions And Missions"

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The same spiritual motives and divine ends that God had in creating the universe and man, who was made in His image and likeness, God also had in coming down from heav­en to become man. He lived among us, He suffered and died for love of us. Thus we were to come to know, love and serve and enjoy Him for all eternity. And these same motives of God can and should be held by the missionary Father who enters into a new mission. He must want to achieve the eternal salvation of souls that have been lost. No motive on earth can excel these motives. They endow a new mission with such value and excellence that no other human |213| works offer or equal their advantages. New missions are great­er than the conquest of huge cities, citadels, or whole king­doms. They count more than distributing great haciendas and wealth among the poor; more than the founding of church­es, convents, and hospitals; more than mastering languages or curing the sick; more than working miracles or reviving the dead.

If anyone thinks that the distinguished chairs of famous universities or the celebrated pulpits of cathedrals amount, or even could amount, to more than these missionary works, let him attend to what Father Master Francisco de Florencia wrote in his printed Life of the distinguished apostolic mission­ary, Father Jerónimo de Figueroa.[1] That learned scholar of our holy Company, who himself was so well known as a preacher, and who had written outstanding books, showed how tenderly and affectionately he loved the work of new conver­sions. He told of Father Figueroa who went to Mexico City at the request of his superiors to take the chair of the arts. But on his arrival he proposed various reasons to his superiors for working in the missions - in imitation of Father Velasco, the evangelic missionary to Sinaloa who had done the same thing years before. [2] He proposed for the consideration of his superiors the grave harm that would result to the heavenly doctrine which the Son of God taught and which His apostles and disciples repeated if they ceased to teach or to repeat it to the needy Tepehuanes while they occupied their time, in­stead, in the worldly maxims of pagan philosophy. For him it would be a genuine mortification to leave the book of the Gospel for the works of Aristotle, or the preaching of Christ for the predicables of Porphyry.[3] He would not leave the ex­planation of the catechism with its solid and eternal truths for the categories of vain and futile sophistries. He asked them to consider before the eyes of God if it would be good to employ him in teaching subjects in the classrooms which many others in the Province could do as well. They should recall that he had learned Indian dialects which no one else had been able to learn as quickly and that he was able to uti­lize them in catechizing the heathen and in instructing the Christians. Would it not be for the spiritual ruin of count­less souls if he were occupied in doing what many others could do while there was no substitute for himself? After all he had |215| come from the missions not to abandon them, but to represent their need and his holy desires to return to them. But naturally he would be quick to do what obedience determined before God. Thus far the venerable Father Pedro Velasco.

If Christ, our Savior, would come down again, a second time, to this world and live among us, He would do what He did the first time. With particular care, He would employ himself in opening new missions among destitute and lost souls "so that he might save what was lost"(Luke 19:10). And when he would return to heaven, the very special command which he would leave behind would be: "Go into the whole universe and preach the Gospel to every creature"(Mark 16:15). Convert the whole world by means of new reductions for only in this way can there be one flock and one shepherd: "That there may be one shepherd and one flock"(John 10:6).

The missionary who deals with poor, uneducated, and timid savages does not lose the value accruing to a profound ministry. For God himself has assured us "That he who does something for the least of mine, does it for me"(Matt. 25:40). Whatever we do for his little ones, we do to God Himself; thus we serve and please God through his poor. As the Psalmist says "The poor and needy will praise your name"(Psalm 73:21). And according to Saint Augustine "The illiterate will rise up and seize the kingdom of heaven."[4] "His preaching will be to the simple "is what Scripture says. "If anyone is ignorant, let him come to me, and to those wanting in judgment I (Wisdom) say: Come! eat my bread and drink the wine I have mixed for you"(Proverbs 9:45)! Thus speaks heavenly and eternal Wisdom, confirming the divine oracles that say that the grandeurs, the glories, the crowns and the kingdom of heaven have been especially prepared for the poor, the destitute, the abandoned, the insignificant, and those little esteemed in this life.

But the greatness of new missions will shine not only in the eternity of heaven, but also in the most desolate and remote regions of the world. It will live on in the splendid construction of temples, churches, buildings and houses. It will reflect in the solemnities of the saints, in gay fiestas, and in the treats of religious banquets; it will be heard in music and the choirs of singers. It will be seen in the bountiful, |217| spiritual and temporal wealth of opulent missions which, with reason, will be a source of pride. But it will be the target of gossip if in the abundance of the old and rich missions there is no holy, charitable assistance for the newer and needy missions.

Finally, let the blessed crown of a prolonged bloodless martyrdom be the distinguishing motive and special goal of these new missions wherever a sudden and bloody martyrdom like that of Father Francisco Javier Saeta is wanting. It was the pious letter of Father Provincial Diego de Almonacir which brought us such happy news of this glorious and more protracted martyrdom. And as this little work concerning the innocent and glorious death of Father Francisco Javier Saeta was begun with that letter, so I would close with that same letter. It should be noted at the same time that the devotees of Saint Francis Xavier ascribe to him the crown of a prolonged martyrdom in his apostolic ventures. Thus he added to his other two crowns — the golden one of a doctor and the lilies of virginity — a third crown of the roses of martyrdom. And the Sorrowful Mother, the special patron of the missions of this extensive Pimeria and of its first mission rectorate, entitled Nuestra Señora de los Dolores, can now take on the surname of Mary the Most Holy Queen of Martyrs, although no blood has been shed: "What was named before in the womb will be conceived"(Luke 2:21). That name was given even before these missions were founded.

This happy and bloodless martyrdom, although more protracted, consists for us missionaries in the continual risk of our lives, in the wearisome toil of service, in the instruction of countless peoples and in conforming ourselves to the massive undertakings of an apostolic life.

May this glorious and blessed crown be our most happy goal here in these sweet lands and in our heavenly country. May we be happily accompanied by the many, many souls who have come to the true knowledge, love, and worship of his Divine Majesty. May we worship and praise Him for the whole of eternity - for as long as God will be God. Amen. All to the greater honor and glory of God and the Mother of God and for the cult of the entire heavenly court and for the eternal salvation of all souls.

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Notes

[1] Father Jeronimo de Figueroa: born in Toluca, Mexico; entered the Society in 1606 when he was 15 years of age. After the completion of his studies, he went to the missions. In 1638 he was in residence at Durango. Prior to 1653; when he was teaching among the Tarahumares, he was the rector and visitor of all the northern missions. The catalog of 1691 notes that he had been on the mission frontier for forty years; he died in Mexico City on March 21, 1683. See ABZ 2:466, n. 43; ABZ 3:471. See also SOMMERVOGEL, Bibliotheque, III, Col. 797: Vida admirable y dichosa del religioso P. Geronimo de Figueroa, professo de la Compania de Jesus, en la Provincia de Nueva Espaha, missionero quarenta anos entre los Indios Tarahumares y Tepehuanes de la Sierra Madre, y despues rector del colegio Maximo y preposito de la casa profesa de Mexico (Mexico, 1689).[

[2] Father Pedro Velasco: a native of Mexico City; born in 1581; entered the Society on March 6, 1597. He went to the missions of Sinaloa about 1605. He made his solemn profession on April 3, 1614. He was rector of the colleges of Valladolid (Morelia) and Tepotzotlan and Provincial (1646- 1649). He died on August 26, 1649. ABZ 3:179-80.

[3] In logic each of the classes (genus, species, difference, individual and proper), to which everything that can be said about a subject can be reduced. See Kino’s Historical Memoir, 1:101 where Bolton apparently does not understand “predicables,” which is translated as “ teachings.”

[4] St. Augustine, Confessions, Book 8, Chapter 8.

Editor's Note: Ernest Burrus' English translation is printed on the odd numbered pages and the Spanish translation is printed on the even numbered pages.