

The Early Catholic Missions of California.

The church in California has passed through as many phases within the past hundred years as in other countries it has required centuries to develop. With the conquest of Mexico by Cortez the purely military achievements of the Spanish monarch ended, and a singular but effective combination of military, civil, and religious administration replaced the army.

In the light of recent modern history, which relates the subjugation of nations and sections through the bloodiest contests, sending the victims of national greed into the next world unshriven, it would be manifestly improper and unjust to urge against the church the important part her priests took in the Spanish conquests. No apology now is necessary on behalf of the church of Christ for perfecting her mission of carrying the "glad tidings" to the uttermost parts of the earth, and availing herself of the favorable opportunities afforded by the Spaniards to accomplish the purpose she has always been destined to effect—to wit, the conversion of the heathen. Hence, wherever the Spanish conqueror or adventurer penetrated, there also penetrated the servant of God.

The dream of the soldier was the acquisition of gold and the hope of reward or preferment from the king he served; his motives were human, transitory, and related to the present only, while to the priest occurred the promises of Christ—the world was to be redeemed and an earthly kingdom, a church militant, established; visions

of future glory existed in his mind. With prophetic instinct, and led by the Spirit of God, he sought, as an instrument of the divine will, to fulfill the decrees of Heaven by converting souls to the true faith. The soldier, tired of conquest, and his greed for gold satisfied at last, rested; but the priest, impelled by a dominant power, penetrated into unknown regions and among hostile savages, becoming at once a pioneer explorer and the harbinger of salvation to those for whom the Saviour had shed his blood, but who knew it not. And so we find the members of the Society of Jesus, as early as the year 1642, civilizing the Indians in Lower California with success, until the year 1683, when the Jesuit Fathers, under the leadership of Salvatierra and Eusebius Kino (Kuhn), the latter an astronomer from Ingolstadt, were invested with the ecclesiastical, civil and military administration of the Missions, and, in a short time, brought into the true fold the whole of the peninsula of Lower California. It was the same Father Kino who, in pursuit of further spiritual conquests, made his celebrated explorations to the north of the peninsula and along the Rio Colorado in the years 1701 and 1703, among other missions establishing that of St. Xavier del Bec in Arizona, in the Papago Pueblo, nine miles south of Tucson, erecting so remarkable a church edifice that it stands to-day both a wonder and a reproach—a wonder that the hand of man, in a region such that its agricultural resources and