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Confessionario

Francisco Pareja

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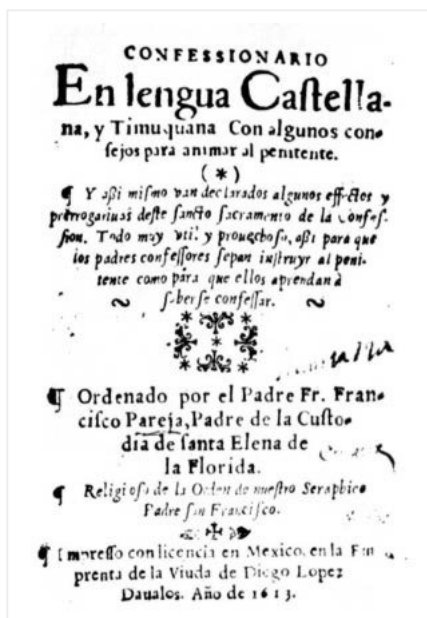
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Early Visions of Florida

Poetry • Stories • Chronicles from an American Borderland

Francisco Pareja, Confessionario



- Pareja's bilingual Confessionario is one of the earliest works to survive in any North American native language. (Courtesy, Jay I. Kislak Foundation.)

Friar Francisco Pareja (d. 1628) first traveled to Florida from his homeland Spain in 1595. As friars of the Franciscan order, Pareja and the eleven priests who accompanied him to Florida followed Francis of Assisi's example of living a peaceful life and helping the needy. An ethnographic and historical source, the Confessionario was originally written in Spanish and Timucuan in 1613 in an effort by Franciscan priests to introduce the sacrament of confession to the natives of Florida. Though Pareja would later write several other books in and about the Timucuan language that would lead to his being recognized in 1614 as the unofficial scholar of the Florida Franciscans, his

Confessionario stands out amongst his other works because it offers insight into the lives and motivations of the Spanish explorers as well as the Florida natives.

Pareja uses the Ten Commandments and the Seven Deadly Sins (avarice, envy, gluttony, lechery, pride, sloth, and wrath) as a guide to help Timucuan change some of their cultural practices and to show them how to practice confession, a prerequisite for communion. The following excerpt is a series of questions that a Spanish Friar may have asked natives, in order to guide him or her through the Christian sacrament of confession.

Edited by Mikaela Perron, University of South Florida St. Petersburg

Further Reading

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For Doctors, Herbalists, And Sorcerers

Are you a doctor? Did you cure someone badly in such a manner that they had to call you again and give you something more? In order that they pay more, have you said: if you don't give me something, the sickness that you have will return?

Have you cured anyone with prayers to the Devil or with the ceremony of adulation? Have you cured some person, entreating the Devil to improve him and doing and saying those things that he

commands be taken out and done, have you done this? Have you produced a new fire or made a fire apart to cure someone? Have you believed that with these prayers and superstitions a person can be cured?

When they are running for some prize or stake, have you made someone in the race faint with some herbs? Have you taken an herb to run faster than the other in order to take the bet or the prize that they put up?

After someone ill has given you something to be cured, have you not returned until he pays you more?

For Both Herbalists And Midwives

Have you made someone late in delivering so that they will call you and pay you well because with this herb you can make her give birth quicker?

Calling you to aid in delivery, did you do it in such a manner that until they gave you the amount that you desire, you did not help her, but instead made her suffer, did you do this? Someone being in labor, have you prayed those words that you used to say to the Devil?

Leave that evil prayer because it is perverse, cure only with medicine.

For Sorcerers

Are you a sorcerer? Have you bewitched someone? Have you taken the herb with the intent of bewitching someone? Have you given the spell to another in order to do evil to him? Have you advised someone else so that they could bewitch? Did the spell work? Did the spell that you gave to the other person take effect?

If he has bewitched someone, it should be said to him to take the antidote and cure him in order to undo the evil done, and when he is cured, to return and he will be absolved, etc. And if he has given the spell to another or advised that they do it or given instructions for it, the following is to be said to him: Have you conjured a rain storm or a thunder storm with superstitions? Thundering, have you blown toward the heavens in order to stop the clouds or water with your evil prayers? Have you made the ceremony of rain?

Son, don't make this ceremony any more, for do what you will, be aware that it will not rain unless God our Lord is served.

In order to begin to take out the food out of the storehouse, have you prayed? Have you taken the skin of the poisonous snake or of the black snake and with black *guano* and other herbs have you tried to bewitch someone or have you bewitched them or wished to do so?

And to do the above, have you considered it a sin to eat fish and to paint yourself and to sleep with your wife; but once the person is dead, have you begun to do the things that you were abstaining from, after a bath?

The bewitched person not having died from that evil spell, did you say that then I must die? And in order to do a [another ceremony for causing death], have you gone to question the other, and taking water and moss and other things, have you made this evil spell?

Have you told them that they must give you something, otherwise you will kill all of them, and with this fear did they give you something?

Have you made the marriage ceremony, praying over them? And if they did not pay you, did you do something evil?

Have you taken a woman out of her house by singing your charms?

Have you put some herb in the mouth of some woman so that she will love you a lot? Have you injured anyone with herbs?

Have you ruptured someone?

Have you injured someone in the legs or feet?

In curing someone, have you placed in front of the sick person white feathers and new chamois and the ears of the owl and arrows which are stuck in, and then said that you will take out the evil and sickness?

About the strength of these superstitions many of which are more fears and tremblings than real ceremonies and nonsense, he is to be told that having left all these things (for in them does not lie health nor the obtaining of what is attempted) that he is to heal only with herbs and medicines, since God made them for our health and our illnesses without mixing them with useless words and words from the Devil. And if he is poor, cure him for the love of God, that such is good pay indeed, thus you are to act.

Another counsel by which one can undeceive those who cure in this way, that what he shows in the palm of his hand after having placed one [there], as if a leech sucking with his mouth (that usually is a little piece of coal, at other times a small lump of dirt and other unclean things, things alive or as if alive) that it cannot be, since no hole is left in the body through which that can exit, and naturally there was deception and some substance where that was, or else the Devil must have managed it subtly, and this can be believed since from as hard a part as the forehead and arms and head and spine or back of the neck it is not possible, it is a secret that has not been comprehended until now; when asked about such things they say with a look of surprise I do not know how this is done, they answer; and it is true, they do not have any treaties or pacts with the Devil, as our sorcerers.

That to begin to cure with the name of Jesus and the sign of the cross, that thusly God willing, he will cure, etc. And that if He is not served by this, no matter what he does it will be of no avail.

Questions To Players

Have you defeated someone by stealth? Have you lied in games? Did you count more points than there were? What you won by cheating must be returned to its owner, since something badly won is like something stolen. Have you played so long that you have lost all that you had in your house?

If the answer is yes: Son, do not do this again, and be sorry for it, because it is a sin.

Have you won something knowing it was stolen? Playing and having lost, have you said bad words with anger or have you fought with anyone and so insulted him, and affirming what you said not being the truth, swearing by God or by the saints?

Have you obtained something from someone who can't play it?

Ceremonies Of The Game

To win over someone, have you taken some herb and rubbed your hands with it? Have you taken this herb with the intention of winning over the other person?

That which is this badly won should be returned to its owner like a stolen thing.

Have you played with the intention of winning, and having lost, not paying? Did you pay what you lost?

If he says no, you must pay because you would want them to pay you.

If a case of restitution arose, the following is to be said: Know that what is stolen is to be returned to its owner, at least restore it when you can because that helps your soul more than any material thing, etc.

In the section below he is to say what he has taken.

Do you still have what you took?

If he says yes, then return it to its owners, or in having it the manner should be suggested how he can honorably return it, etc.

And if it were a Spaniard to whom restitution will be made, the manner of so doing is to be suggested, and do so without attracting attention.

[Questions on the Tenth Commandment]

Have you wished that someone die soon, so that you can inherit? Have you desired someone else's goods?

Have you eaten meat on a day of abstinence? How many times in a day did you eat it?

Questions For The Chiefs

Have you taken more tribute or other things from your vassals, more than you used to take or carry? Have you taken the daily wages of those that work for you? Have you occupied your vassals in some work and asked them to miss Mass? Have you made someone work without permission of the priest on a fiesta day? Without prayers by the sorcerer have you said that no one should open or go up to the storehouse? The new maize or other new fruits, have you said that it will not be eaten until the sorcerer tastes it first?

Have you arranged that someone be married according to the Indian ways without first giving notice to the parish priests? Have you consented that your slaves sleep together? Have you some [black female] slave or servant as your mistress? Have you consented that in your village someone bringing herbs pray words to the Devil with them?

Have you made some sorcerer look for something lost by the arts of the Devil?

After having eaten bear, have you said that you be given a drink from another shell, and that otherwise you will become sick?

Because they don't come to dance, have you ordered that some woman be affronted or that the penalty be taken to her?

For the beginning of the sowing, have you had fixed a pot of *gacha*, and that six old men eat from it, and etc?

For Those That Inherit Ceremonies – For Chiefs-To-Be

Having become a chief, have you ordered a new fire to be made for six days in the community house, and that it be daubed with laurel or with something else?

Have you desired that the chief dies in order to become his heir?

For All, Chiefs, And Leaders

Being sick, have you made a new house, saying here I will remain and die, etc.?

Commanding-Chiefs And Lesser Chiefs

Not because of work, but because you are angry, have you ordered that someone be punished by having his arm broken? Without having any reason except that you were angry, have you punished anyone?

Are you sorry for not having changed your life before now and being so late in so doing this?

Have you believed that some dreams will come true? Having seen or heard some animal of the forest that sings or that does something else, have you believed in some omen or that some evil will come? Have you believed that which some possessed person says?

When you gather acorns or other fruits or other things, the first of these that dry, have you abstained from eating them because you consider it a sin as you used to? Have you considered it a sin to eat some maize or fish or other thing?

For someone who is sick, have you made a separate light or fire?

All Those Questions Above Are For Everyone And Those That Follow Are For Women

During your menses have you taken it as a sin to eat meat or fish? Being pregnant have you taken it as a sin to eat meat or fish? Have you eaten charcoal, pieces of pottery, or other things that are bad for you?

[Questions on the Fifth Commandment]

Being sick or in some great distress, have you thoughtlessly wished to die?

Being angry, have you wished to hang yourself?

Have you given some herb or other noxious thing to a sick person or to a healthy one to kill him or cause him some great harm, or have you counseled him or wished him to do such, in his food or drink?

Have you made to miscarry some pregnant woman with an herb, or a blow, or with fear, or in any other manner whatsoever? Or have you taken some herb, or squeezing your belly strongly as you used to, or given yourself some cause to miscarry? Or because of having lied down improperly with the unbom child, did it smother?

For Herbalists

Are you an herbalist? Did you cure someone badly so that he would call you back and give you some more pay? Have you cured someone with the prayers and ceremonies of the Devil? Have you believed that sick be healed with such prayers? Have you bewitched someone?

For Both Herbalists Or Midwives

When someone has labor pains have you prayed with the herb the prayers of the Devil?

On The Sixth Commandment

Have you delighted in past sins, remembering about them and even taking the liberty to tell them to others? Have you physically fondled another person or have you embraced or kissed or held hands with evil intent? Have you shown some part of your body to arouse in some person desires of lust or to excite them? Sleeping two in a bed or taking a bath, have you touched your sexual organs, saying that in this manner you will do it, and etc.? Have you consented in your house or in another part that some kinsman or other person meet to have intercourse?

Have you desired to do some lewd thing with yourself or with another person? Have you desired someone carnally? For how much time? How many times have your desires occurred? Have you delighted in some lewd signal or afterwards procured or desired to put it into practice? Have you been a procurer or procuress?

Questions For Married People

Have you hit your spouse without cause?

Have you consented that someone have sexual rights to your spouse? While married, have you done acts against nature? Or have you desired to do such? Have you refused to give sexual rights to your spouse? How many times have you refused?

For Those Who Know Each Other [Carnally] Before Having Married Which Is To Marry According To The Custom

After having arranged to marry [or to be betrothed] how many many times have you had intercourse? After you were married have you had intercourse with some kin of your spouse?

For Single And Married Men

Have you gone around with desire for someone? Have you physically fondled someone? Speaking with someone or embracing or holding the hand, were you aroused? Did you kiss someone? Have you gone around with someone? Have you had relations with any married woman? Or with any single woman? How many times?

Have you had relations with some young lady? How many times with each one? Among these are there any that are kin? In what way are they kin?

With your kin have you gone around? Kin in what way? With some kin of your wife have you carried on? Kin in what manner? Have you gone around with two sisters? Or with mother or with daughter? Have you had intercourse with your mother-in-law? Have you gone around with your godmother? Have you had intercourse with someone contrary to the ordinary manner?

For All

Within the church have you had intercourse? Have you had intercourse with some infidel person? Have you said suggestive words? Have you delighted in exhibiting the forbidden parts? Have you desired to have to do some lewd act with some man or woman or kin?

The other degrees of consanguinity, affinity, or relationship, or of godparenthood can be looked up in the big Confessional.

Questions For Married And Single Women

Did you desire someone? Did you desire some of your kin? Or some kin of your husband? Have you consented that some of them kiss you? Have you decorated yourself with evil intent so that someone desires you and has you?

Have you had intercourse with someone? Was he married? Or was he single? How many single? With each one how many times? Did you have intercourse with some of your kin? In what manner are you related?

Have you gone around with two brothers? Have you gone around with your brother-in-law? With some kin of your husband have you mixed? Has someone that has had your younger sister had a duet with you? Have you mixed with your godfather? By chance, have you had intercourse as if you were a man? Have you had intercourse with father and son? Have you mixed with some infidel? Have you taken some herb so that you would not become pregnant? Have you taken some herb in order to become sterile?

Do you eat meat on a day of abstinence? Do you consent that another eat it in your house?

For Sodomites

Have you had intercourse with another man? Or have you gone around trying out or making fun in order to do that?

For Boys That Are In The Custom Of Doing This

Has someone been investigating you from behind? Did you consummate the act?