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THE CHAPEL AND COFRADIA OF OUR LADY OF LIGHT IN SANTA FE

By ELEANOR B. ADAMS*

FOR many years one of the loveliest examples of Spanish colonial art in the United States remained in undeserved obscurity in a back room of the Cathedral of Santa Fe. This is the great carved stone reredos originally made for the Chapel of Our Lady of Light, also known as the Castrense, or Military Chapel, which was erected on the south side of Santa Fe plaza opposite the government palace in 1760. In 1940 the reredos was moved to the new church of Cristo Rey, built under the auspices of Archbishop R. A. Gerkin of Santa Fe, and now that it may again be seen in a worthy setting its early history should be of even more interest than before.

Up to the present the information generally available about the reredos and the chapel which housed it has consisted of a brief reference to it by Bishop Pedro Tamarón of Durango, whose stay in Santa Fe during his episcopal visitation of New Mexico occurred while the Chapel of Our Lady of Light was still under construction, and various short descriptions of the already decayed and neglected chapel written by persons who had occasion to be in Santa Fe in the 1840's and 1850's just before and during the early days of the American occupation. Sometime before the sale of the chapel in 1859 Bishop Lamy had the reredos taken to the

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parish church of Santa Fe for safekeeping, and there it remained for more than eighty years.¹

Early in 1776 Fray Francisco Atanasio Domínguez was sent to New Mexico by the Provincial of the Franciscan Order in Mexico City, Fray Isidro Murillo, to make a formal inspection of the missions of the Custody of St. Paul. After his return to El Paso in May, 1777, Father Domínguez forwarded a detailed report on interior New Mexico to his superior.² In this lengthy document we find an interesting and comprehensive account of the Chapel of Our Lady of Light and the confraternity attached to it, written some sixteen years after they were founded. At the time of Domínguez' visit both were flourishing, and his impressions were, on the whole, highly favorable. The chapel and *cofradía* were dependent on the Mitre of Durango, of whose vast diocese New Mexico was then a part, and the *cofradía* had to give an accounting to the bishop's vicar in New Mexico every three years. Although the Franciscan Order had no real authority over this church and its *cofradía*, the lack of secular clergy in the province made it inevitable that friars should officiate at most of the religious functions, therefore Domínguez felt that it was proper and necessary for him to give as complete a description of it as he did of the missions.

According to Domínguez, "In the year 1760 Don Francisco Marín del Valle, then governor of this kingdom, dis-

1. Pedro Tamarón y Romeral, "Demostración del vastísimo obispado de la Nueva Vizcaya, 1765," *Biblioteca Histórica Mexicana de Obras Inéditas*, vol. 7 (Mexico, 1937); Report of Lieut. J. W. Abert to Col. J. J. Abert, chief of the corps of topographical engineers, in Emery, Abert, Cook, *Notes of a Military Reconnaissance from Fort Leavenworth to San Diego in California* (30th Congress 1st Session Ex. Doc. No. 41); the recollections of Col. Francisco Perea as related to W. H. H. Allison, "Santa Fe as it appeared during the winter of the years 1837 and 1838," and "Santa Fe in 1846," *Old Santa Fé*, vol. 2 (1914-15), pp. 170-83, 392-406; W. H. H. Davis, *El Gringo or New Mexico and her People*, 2nd. ed., Santa Fe, 1938; Frank S. Edwards, *A campaign in New Mexico with Colonel Doniphan*, Philadelphia, 1847. See also James H. Defouri, *Historical Sketch of the Catholic Church in New Mexico*, San Francisco, 1887; and Col. Henry Inman, *The Old Santa Fé Trail*, New York, 1898. A. Von Wuthenau presents the most comprehensive treatment of the subject in "The Spanish Military Chapels in Santa Fé and the reredos of Our Lady of Light," *NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW*, vol. 10, no. -3 (July, 1935), pp. 175-94.

2. Biblioteca Nacional, México, leg. 10, doc. 43. For a brief summary of the nature of the report, see E. B. Adams, "Two Colonial New Mexico Libraries, 1704, 1776," *N. M. HIST. REV.*, vol 19, no. 2 (April, 1944), p. 143.

played the glowing and fervent ardor of his devotion to Our Lady and Mother of Light by his plan to build a chapel for her in this Villa of Santa Fe." For this purpose the governor bought a site on the plaza directly opposite the government palace and about two musket shots down the street from the gate of the cemetery of the parish church. Construction must have been started immediately. It is possible that Domínguez gives too late a date for the beginning of the chapel, for Marín del Valle held office from 1754 to 1760³ and the building was well along by the middle of 1760. In that year Bishop Tamarón arrived in Santa Fe, and although the chapel was not yet completed, Marín del Valle took advantage of the prelate's presence to found the Cofradía of Our Lady of Light with the episcopal blessing. Therefore, on June 3, 1760, he presented to the bishop the Constitutions for the cofradía,⁴ which he had drawn up himself, and Tamarón approved them and conceded certain graces and indulgences to those who should become members. The first meeting took place on June 5 in the sacristy of the unfinished chapel. Bishop Tamarón presided, and Governor Marín, Don Santiago Roibal, the bishop's vicar and ecclesiastical judge in Santa Fe, and the other founding members took oath before him to defend the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. This was one of the chief requirements for membership. In the election which followed Marín was made *hermano mayor*, and the bishop formally approved his election and that of the other officers. Apparently the governor had tactfully absented himself from this part of the proceedings, for the Congregation voted to wait upon him in a body to notify him of the results. No church function took place until the following year, but Tamarón consecrated the altars before he left Santa Fe.

The governor endowed the cofradía with 530 head of

3. L. B. Bloom, "The Governors of New Mexico," *N. M. HIST. REV.*, vol. 10, no. 2 (April, 1935), pp. 152-57.

4. The constitutions were later printed in Mexico City at Marín del Valle's expense. *Constituciones de la Congregación de Nuestra Señora de la Luz*, Mexico, 1766. The library of the Historical Society of New Mexico has a photostat copy. Domínguez mentions this edition and says that there was a copy of it "in the little archive of the Cofradía."

ewes, and the members gave two pesos each when they were admitted to the brotherhood and a peso a year thereafter. At the time of Domínguez' visit in 1776 the Cofradía of Our Lady of Light had a capital of 1070 ewes, with an income of 214 sheep and 12 fleeces of wool per year. Since there was little or no money current in New Mexico at the time, all transactions were made in kind at the prevailing rate. Domínguez tells us that sheep were reckoned at two pesos per head. This cofradía was in excellent financial condition and was well able to pay its annual expenses out of income, although the accounts of the other cofradías show that most of them were in arrears.

The Constitutions state that since a church was being built for Our Lady of Light, it was an opportune time to found a Congregation in it dedicated to "the greatest and most permanent cult of Most Holy Mary, with the advocacy of Light, and to the suffrage to the souls of its deceased brethren." It was to be principally for citizens of New Mexico, but those of other provinces were not excluded. Women could belong, to the extent that their names could be recorded in the *Libro de Congregantes*, but they were not allowed to attend the meetings or to take any active part in cofradía affairs. A candidate for membership had to be "a respectable person of good life." In addition to swearing to defend the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception and paying the entrance fees and annual dues, the brothers were supposed to pay for certain masses. The Constitutions give the order to be observed at cofradía functions with characteristic Spanish regard for problems of precedence. The officers to be elected and the duties of each are also specified.

The chief feast, of course, was that of Our Lady of Light, which was celebrated on May 21 with vespers, mass, sermon, and procession. The following day, May 22, was the anniversary of the deceased brethren, with vigil, mass, and responsory.

August 15, the Assumption, was observed with a mass and procession. From the Domínguez report we learn that through the efforts of the founder, Marín del Valle, Pope

Clement XIII issued a brief, dated at Rome, March 22, 1764, "in which His Holiness concedes plenary indulgence and remission of all sins to persons (of both sexes) who, having confessed and received communion, and praying for the extirpation of heresies, etc., shall visit this said church on one of the feasts of Our Lady which the ordinary may designate . . . And on the other six feasts of Our Lady, praying for the same after having confessed and received the Sacrament, the faithful shall obtain seven years and seven times forty days of pardon." The indulgence was granted for a fifteen-year period, which came to an end in 1779. This apostolic brief was passed upon by the Council, Commissary of the Crusade, and Mitre of Durango, and the feast of the Assumption was designated. When Domínguez arrived in 1776, he was horrified to find that the people of New Mexico considered this indulgence a jubilee and that "with the knowledge and toleration of the ecclesiastical and secular judges, and of the ministers (who, out of respect for the aforementioned judges, kept silent, fearful of not finding protection in those who should have upheld their proper zeal) the Most Divine Eucharistic Bread was taken in procession from the parish church to this chapel on the morning of the fifteenth, and such Sovereign Majesty remained exposed in the chapel until sunset so that the obligations to win the aforesaid indulgence might be performed. Then our best Sun, Light, Love, and Life returned in procession to His house, or tabernacle." The good father immediately took steps to eradicate this abuse and informed the governing board of the *cofradía* that this could not and must not be done under any pretext whatever. He also left his patent as superior for the vice-custodian and minister of Santa Fe, Fray José Medrano, and his successors, strictly forbidding the removal of the sacrament from the parish church to the Chapel of Our Lady of Light on any occasion, since this was not conceded by the apostolic brief nor was it necessary in order for the faithful to win the indulgence. Moreover, he had found no authentic license from the Bishop of Durango which would permit the exposition of the Host.

The third annual feast celebrated by the Cofradía of Our Lady of Light was that of Our Lady of Valvanera,⁵ on September 10, with vespers, mass, and procession.

The following expenditure was made for these feasts: "For May 21, 25 pesos in sheep. For the anniversary, 15 pesos in the same. For August 15, 12 pesos in 6 sheep. For September 10, 25 pesos in sheep. For the sermon of May 21 the preacher is given 25 pesos in sheep. One *arroba* of wax per year.⁶ About 2 jugs of wine. What wine and wax is left over remains in the Cofradía."

Although the feast of Our Lady of Light falls on May 21, for some reason the ceremonies for the inauguration of the new chapel began two days later on May 23, 1761. They lasted five days, and everything possible was done to make the occasion a memorable one. On the afternoon of the twenty-third Vicar Don Santiago Roibal blessed the chapel in the presence of the Franciscan custodian, Fray Jacobo de Castro, Vice-Custodian Fray Manuel Zambrano, six other friars, the governor *ad interim*, Don Manuel Portillo Urrisola, the troop of the royal presidio, and the members of the cofradía and other persons of distinction. Marín del Valle had ceased to be governor of New Mexico late in 1760, and Portillo y Urrisola was the second acting governor to take office in 1760-61.⁷ Since Domínguez makes no specific mention of the presence of the founder at these ceremonies, it seems probable that he had left the province. Nevertheless he paid all the expenses for the first day of the solemnities. The cofradía paid the costs on the succeeding days.

On May 24 Father Roibal celebrated mass, and the Father Custodian preached the sermon. Fray Tomás Murciano de la Cruz had been assigned this task but was ill. On the

5. The miraculous image of Our Lady of Valvanera was found in the hollow of an oak, surrounded by a swarm of bees, at Valvanera, Logroño, Spain, in the tenth century. The circumstances attending this discovery led to the foundation of the Benedictine monastery of Our Lady of Valvanera, which became a place of pilgrimage. The cult of the Virgin of Valvanera spread throughout Spain and later to the Americas, especially México. *España-Calpe, S. A.*, eds., *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada*, vol. 66, pp. 853-56.

6. The arroba weighs approximately 25 pounds.

7. Bloom, "The Governors of New Mexico."

twenty-fifth-Custodian Castro was the celebrant, and Fray Miguel Campos preached. On the twenty-sixth Fray Manuel Rojo, the vicar and ecclesiastical judge of Albuquerque, said mass, and the sermon was given by Fray Francisco Guzmán. May 27 was devoted to exequies for the deceased brothers,⁸ and Fray Joaquín Pérez sang mass. "On all the said days eighty large candles of fine wax burned on the altar." With the exception of the last day, *comedias* were performed every afternoon.

The description of the Chapel of Our Lady of Light shows that Governor Marín del Valle spared no effort or expense in carrying out his plan. In addition to buying the land and endowing the *cofradía* he was responsible for all the cost of construction and decoration. After describing the exact location of the chapel Domínguez continues as follows:

It is of adobes with walls a *vara* thick.⁹ Its door faces due north, and just above there is a medallion of white stone with Our Lady of Light in half relief. At the very top, on the azotea, there are three arches, a large one in the center with a good middle-sized bell, and two small ones on either side without anything.

It is 24 varas long from the door to the mouth of the transept, 8 varas wide, and 9½ high up to the entablature. From the mouth of the transept to the presbytery there are 7 varas, by 15 in width and 11 in height because of the clerestory, which is as I described it in the principal church. One ascends to the presbytery by four octagonal steps of white stone, and the whole presbytery is tiled with said stone, and in it there are three sepulchers. Its area is 7 varas square, and it is as high as the transept. There is a choir across the chapel in the usual place, and it projects 5 varas into the chapel with a balustraded railing; it rests upon fourteen carved beams which are supported by a large carved and corbeled beam set into the lateral walls.

On the Evangel side there are three windows like those of the principal church; they face east, and one is in the front of the transept and the other two in the body of the chapel. . . . [The main door] is set in a strong wooden frame, has two leaves made of boards, with a wicket in one, and good keys. It is 3 varas high and correspondingly broad. The cemetery is a little enclosure, or wall, of adobes more than

8. According to the Constitutions it was possible for members of the confraternity to enroll in the Congregation any deceased persons they might wish, with the obligation to have a mass said for each one annually so long as the benefactor should live.

9. The Mexican vara is 32.99 inches.

a vara high, with a gate opposite the chapel door, and its area is that sufficient for a small cementary.

The ceiling of this chapel is of carved and corbeled beams, and there are twenty-eight of them in the body of the chapel. The aforesaid clerestory is on the one which faces the presbytery. In the transept there are nineteen like the aforesaid running crosswise from those of the body of the chapel. In the presbytery there are ten exactly like those mentioned, but across the width like those of the body of the chapel, and a false vaulted arch like that mentioned in the presbytery of the principal church.

The report goes on to describe the furnishings of the chapel in detail, beginning with the high altar.

The reredos is all of a white stone (about which I shall give information in a separate place) very easy to carve. It consists of three sections. In the center of the first, as if enthroned, is an ordinary oil painting with a painted frame of Our Lady of Light, which was brought from Mexico at the aforesaid Sr. Marín's expense. He also provided the curtain it has, which is of crimson damask with silver braid. On the right side of this image is St. Ignatius de Loyola, and on the left St. Francis Solano. Toward the middle of the second section is St. James the Apostle, and beside him, St. Joseph on the right and St. John Nepomuceno on the left. The third section has only Our Lady of Valvanera, and the Eternal Father at the top.

All these images, with the exception of Our Lady of Light, are in medallions of the same stone of which the reredos is made and carved in half relief, painted as is suitable, and this work resembles a copy of the facades which are now used in famous Mexico.

The frontal of the altar was of carved stone like the reredos, with a small oval of St. Anthony of Padua in the center. There were two altars in the transept on the walls facing the body of the chapel. The one on the right side had an oil painting of the Immaculate Conception in a gilded frame, and that on the left one of St. Francis Xavier. There was another altar which Domínguez does not fully describe, and the aras of these three were of the same stone as the high altar. As has already been said, all four altars had been consecrated by Bishop Tamarón during his episcopal visitation in 1760.

Although Marín del Valle provided the greater part of the church furnishings, a number of residents of New Mexico presented vestments and other items to the chapel. In

addition to some gifts of linen, Father Santiago Roibal, a native of New Mexico and one of the few members of the secular clergy stationed there, donated the pulpit, which was octagonal and of carved stone to match the reredos, with a little wooden stairway leading up to it. Don José Reaño and his wife, Doña Ana Ortiz, gave thirteen small oil paintings, one of Our Lady of Valvanera and the other twelve representing the Apostles, which were placed on one wall of the church. Doña Juana Roibal made a number of gifts, including two wooden screens, two mirrors for the sacristy, a pair of corporals, and two candleholders. Her husband, Don José Moreno, Governor Marín's lieutenant general and one of the original members of the *cofradía*, who was elected treasurer and deputy of feasts, gave a bronze crucifix with silver corner plates for the high altar, eight candleholders of silvered wood, a small china plate with glass cruets, and a Chinese carpet with silk embroidery. The carpet, however, is said to have been on account for 100 pesos that he owed the chapel. Don Juan Francisco Arroniz Riojano, who, with Father Roibal, was elected to the council of the *cofradía* at the first meeting in 1760, gave a complete set of vestments of silver lustrine with gold galloon. Don Pedro Fermín de Mendinueta, governor of New Mexico at the time of Domínguez' visit, gave the chapel four maps and two globes of the world. Other donors of small items were Father García, Doña Josefa de Bustamente, Vicar Don Lorenzo Rivera, Juana Padilla, and Father Cuellar. Everything else in the chapel when Domínguez saw it he presumed to be the gift of the founder.

The sacristy, a room 7 varas long by 5 wide and 4 high, was on the Evangel side of the chapel toward the front of the transept. It had a beamed ceiling, a window to the south, and a door leading into the chapel. There was a table with drawers across the front and a wardrobe surmounted by a wooden cross on each side. The sacristy contained a small image in the round about two feet high of Our Lady of Light, which was kept on the table. There was also a small oil painting of her in a niche, and there were two small wooden images of St. Joseph and St. Anthony of Padua, the latter

said to have been made in Madrid. Domínguez also lists an adequate supply of vestments and linen of good quality, a silver chalice with its paten and spoon, "all gilded, chased, and with Bohemian stones," and a pair of cruets, a small bell, and a plate to match the chalice.

As donor of the chapel Governor Marín del Valle must have had a great deal to say about the details of its design and decoration. Certainly there is nothing in New Mexico to compare with the extraordinary reredos, and with the exception of the governors, the soldiers, the clergy, and some of the wealthier citizens, it is doubtful that many of the residents of the province had ever had an opportunity to see the numerous works of art in Mexico to which it bears a resemblance in style and feeling. Father Domínguez was not an enthusiastic admirer of the general run of ecclesiastical art and architecture in New Mexico, and he was sometimes shocked by the primitive *santos* which excite so much interest today. In one case he even ordered two to be burned because they were too indecent to be borne.¹⁰ Despite his rather dry description of the reredos, he must have felt some admiration for it or he would never have compared it with "the facades which are now used in famous Mexico," or admitted, as he did, that the interior of the chapel was "muy alegre." Unfortunately he says nothing that gives us any clue whatever to the identity of the craftsmen who did the actual work of carving. This is not surprising, for at the time such artists were anonymous more often than not. The decorative detail, which actually includes some Aztec symbols, is typical of some of the work of Indian stone carvers of Mexico in its interesting interpretation of the European forms they were called upon to imitate from the standpoint of a culture upon which Spanish ideas and ways of life had arbitrarily been imposed and never completely assimilated. In the actual rendering of religious subjects they must have

10. These were in the church at San Juan, and had been given to it by one Catarina Pando at the time Father Junco was in charge of the mission. One was supposed to represent Nuestra Señora del Rosario and the other Jesús Nazareno, "and the two are so unworthy that they do not deserve the titles of the Most Holy Persons they wish to represent; for this reason I ordered them to be consumed by fire."

been closely supervised, but they seem often to have been allowed to express themselves more freely in the matter of ornamentation. So far as we know the various indigenous groups of New Mexico had no experience in elaborate carving of this type, and this, plus the definite Mexican elements in the designs, makes it seem probable that Marín del Valle took the trouble to have stone carvers brought from some part of Mexico proper. We know so little about Governor Marín's personality that it is impossible to be certain of his talent in this direction, but he seems the most likely person to have conceived the general plan of the reredos and to have decided upon the subjects to be represented. Domínguez implies that he chose the material which was used and tells us that the stone was brought from "some little hills which are about a league to the northwest of this settlement of *vecinos* [Ranchos de Pujuaque] which I have just mentioned, and on the left side of the highway as we go to La Cañada." Ranchos de Pujuaque was about a league below Nambe.

Documents of the period of Marín's governorship indicate that he was not on entirely amicable terms with the Franciscans and that he was devoted to the Jesuits, even hoping to oust the former from New Mexico in favor of the latter. The cult of Our Lady of Light is said to have been introduced into Mexico by the Jesuits, and the founder of the Society, St. Ignatius de Loyola, occupies the place of honor on her right hand in the lower section of the reredos; but the great Franciscan missionary in America, St. Francis Solano, also occupies a prominent position at her left, so it seems that Marín was not unwilling to do honor to the Franciscans in one of their mission provinces. Another Franciscan missionary, St. Anthony of Padua, was depicted on the altar frontal, and there was a wooden image of him in the sacristy. With the exception of St. James the Apostle, patron of Spain, the choice of the remaining two saints and of Our Lady of Valvanera may have been due to some personal devotion. One of the altars in the transept was dedicated to Loyola's disciple and "Apostle of the Indies," St. Francis Xavier; the

other was of the Immaculate Conception, which is natural in view of the tenets of the *cofradía*.

It has been generally believed that the stone medallion of Our Lady of Light which now occupies the lower center of the reredos was restored to its original position when the altar piece was taken to Cristo Rey in 1940. Domínguez' description quoted above shows that this is not true. The reredos was designed to hold an oil painting of Our Lady of Light which the founder ordered from Mexico City, and it was evidently placed there before the chapel was inaugurated. We do not know what became of this painting, and at one period the niche held a wooden image of St. John Capistrano. Probably it was allowed to fall into decay along with the chapel in the disturbances preceding the American occupation of New Mexico. Frank Edwards, who entered Santa Fe with the American forces in August, 1846, admired the fine carving on each side of the altar (obviously referring to the reredos) and added that "above, there has been a good painting; but the rain has beaten through the roof upon it, and nothing is now left but a head, apparently of an angel, which is beautifully painted." We cannot be certain that he is referring to the painting donated by Governor Marín del Valle, but it is quite possible. He noted the date 1768 on a tomb in the building, which he believed to be much older than it actually was.¹¹

Undoubtedly the representation of Our Lady of Light now in the reredos is the one which was originally over the door of the chapel, although the building must have undergone some changes in the years after Domínguez' visit in 1776. Colonel Perea, who first visited Santa Fe as a boy in the winter of 1837-38, gives the following interesting description of the chapel:

Opposite the Palace stood the military church, called La Castrense, then the handsomest building of its kind in the capital city. This house of worship was most gorgeously adorned within with pictures of saints and other portraits, some of which were said to be very valuable. The altar in every appointment was very tastefully adorned,

11. Edwards, *A campaign in New Mexico with Colonel Doniphan*, p. 47.

and was a thing of dazzling beauty. Outside the church, just above the door, at a convenient distance apart, were two marble slabs built into the wall, and on these were carved pictures of saints, one of which represented Santa Gertrudes, wrapped in the coils of a large serpent, while the other, I believe, represented the mother of Jesus, Nuestra Señora de la Luz (Our Lady of Light), rescuing a human being from Satan. It was claimed these beautiful works of art were brought from Spain, about twenty-five years before, by Don Pedro Bautista Pino, said to have been the only man that ever represented New Mexico in the Spanish Cortez, at Madrid.¹²

The reference to the "two marble slabs" above the door and their history is somewhat puzzling, for the one of Our Lady of Light must surely have been the original medallion placed there when the chapel was built. Whether the St. Gertrude was a gift of Pino or not, it seems unlikely that it was brought from Spain. It must be remembered that Colonel Perea's recollections were recorded many years later, when he was an old man, and may not have been entirely exact. When he again came to Santa Fe in 1846 the church was in very bad condition, and part of the roof had fallen in. The carving of Our Lady of Light was still in place, but St. Gertrude had disappeared. Such decorations of the interior as remained were decaying because of exposure to the elements.¹³ Edwards, who saw the chapel in the same year, says that it had been robbed of its plate and ornaments "some time before we arrived." He believed this to be the reason for its having been allowed to go to ruin.¹⁴ Thus when Perea saw the beautiful chapel in 1837, its short history was already coming to an end. Only seven years later James J. Webb, a merchant who first visited Santa Fe in 1844, mentions the "old church about the centre of the block on the south side of the plaza which had not been occupied as a place of worship for many years."¹⁵ One of the last descriptions we have was written by W. W. H. Davis, who was in New Mexico in

12. Allison, "Santa Fe as it appeared during the winter of the years 1837 and 1838," p. 177.

13. Allison, "Santa Fe in 1846," p. 395.

14. Edwards, *loc. cit.*

15. R. P. Bieber, "The papers of James J. Webb, Santa Fé Merchant, 1844-1861," *Washington University Studies*, vol. 11, Humanistic Series, no. 2 (1924), p. 276.

1854-55. Although he viewed everything New Mexican from a lofty pinnacle of smug superiority, his account of his experiences is extremely interesting. He was quite blind to the beauty of the reredos and considered the building, inside and out, "primitive and unprepossessing." The altar was plain, the ornaments few and cheap. "The wall behind the altar is inlaid with brown stonework wrought in the United States, representing scriptural scenes." Instead of the three arches on the roof of the building described by Father Domínguez, Davis tells of two plain towers in front, both of which contained bells. His account indicates that the church was then being used as a place of worship.¹⁶

According to Colonel Perea, in the early summer of 1849 the Castrense "had been repaired and so altered as to be conveniently used as a store house."¹⁷ When Bishop Lamy arrived the civil authorities were finally forced to turn the chapel over to him as the property of the Church after a most unpleasant episode when Chief Justice Grafton Baker made difficulties about doing so.¹⁸ Public indignation made it impossible for Baker to persist, and for a while the bishop seems to have opened the chapel for religious purposes again. He soon obtained permission from the Holy See to sell it, and in 1859 it was sold to Simón Delgado for a thousand dollars and a piece of land with building thereon adjoining San Miguel Church, which was used for St. Michael's College, founded the same year.¹⁹

The reredos of Our Lady of Light was used in the old parish church for some years thereafter, and it may be that Bishop Lamy, who had taken care to preserve it, wished to give it a prominent position in the new cathedral which was started in 1869. A few years after his death, however, a wall was built separating the reredos from the main part of the new building.

The Church of Cristo Rey, patterned after the traditional

16. Davis, *El Gringo or New Mexico and her People*, pp. 41, 49.

17. Allison, "Santa Fe in 1846," p. 401.

18. R. E. Twitchell, *Leading Facts of New Mexican History*, vol 2 (1912), p. 330, note 257.

19. Defouiri, *Historical Sketch of the Catholic Church in New Mexico*, p. 49.

mission architecture of New Mexico and said to be the largest adobe building in the world, was finished in 1940 in time for the celebration of the Coronado Cuarto Centennial, and the reredos of Our Lady of Light was brought to it from the cathedral. Since the beauty of this striking work of art may now be admired in a church built especially to receive it, we can almost be grateful for the lack of perception which relegated it to an inconspicuous place in the late nineteenth century.