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The New Mexico Martyrs' Book

Eleanor B. Adams

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Ad Canticum Canticorum.

tum virginium, vel futurum an-
nuntiantur, vel iam factum con-
firmantur.

debet constitui, & collocari ad
hoc, ut prompte offerantur.

CAP. 7. NPM 13.

VEL SIC ANAGOGICE.

In portis nostris omnia poma nova,
& vetera dulciter mi seruaui tibi.

25. Omnia tam sensuum, quæ Deum unicum,
potentiarum animæ sanctæ ob- & totale animæ
iecta ad Deum summe dilectum sanctæ obiectum,
referuntur, & ordinantur.

Quæ Deo donan-
da promptis ex-
hibenda.

24. QVÆ Deo donanda
sunt, in portis ipsi



este libro trahido de la... al Nuevo Mundo...
Carbonari de este país al Vicedel P. D. de Fr. Juan...
municipal amonada de los Arzobis en la Subscripción del año de 16...
queda en poder de otros legados este libro y le arrancaron...
217. Este es quien lo recitaba y sacó de capisericio el P. P. Fr. Diego...
de Chaurria de año poder y uno segunda vez a ver de mi año este
año de 1699. Fray Miguel Muñiz

LI-

Page 396 of the seventeenth-century biblical commentary bearing the inscription of fray Miguel Muñiz.

The New Mexico Martyrs' Book

ELEANOR B. ADAMS

I brought this book from Old Mexico to New Mexico and gave it to Father Preacher fray Antonio Carboneli. From him, it passed to the use of Father Maestro fray Francisco Corvera. Both died at the hands of the Indians in the uprising of the year 1696. This book remained in the possession of those apostate Indians, and they tore 214 [241?] pages from it. Afterwards, the Reverend Father fray Diego de Chavarría ransomed and rescued it from captivity. From his care, in this year 1699, it came into my use for the second time.

fray Miguel Muñiz [de Luna]

Not a chronicle of New Mexico's Franciscan martyrs, this book was instead a seventeenth-century biblical commentary owned by two of them and subsequently mutilated beyond ready identification.

Local headquarters of the Franciscan Custody of the Conversion of St. Paul of New Mexico resided at the pueblo of Santo Domingo. The custody's library and other books at the missions or in the keeping of individual friars or citizens during the Spanish colonial period have long since disappeared. Some perished as a result of the Pueblo Indian uprisings of 1680 and 1696, the end of the Franciscan era in New Mexico, or floods and other natural disasters over the years.

Fortunately, we do have some idea of the reading matter available to the religious and to literate colonists. There are two lists of the largest and most important collection, the Franciscan library, dated 1776 and

About Eleanor B. Adams, a former editor of the *New Mexico Historical Review*, see the lead article in this issue, pages 304-19.

1788.¹ Moreover, in the late 1930s, a contemporary Franciscan, Fray Angélico Chávez, discovered at Santo Domingo some thirty-odd volumes that may well have been part of the old custodial library.

In response to your query concerning certain very old mission volumes, this is what I recall after so many years. In June 1937, I arrived in Peña Blanca as my first parish assignment. The Santo Domingo Indians, who were part of the parish, were under an episcopal interdict at the time, following dissensions they had two years before with a new Archbishop of Santa Fe, [Rudolph A.] Gerken by name.

Although all religious ministrations were thus banned in the Santo Domingo church, I made it a point of visiting the pueblo's families, and especially their leaders, and in time I began winning their good will and affection. On Sunday afternoons the children, as well as some adults, began coming to the church to listen to my talks on basic religious topics.

As time went by, the governors and their councils began asking me to intercede with the "Wispi" (Obispo), so that they could have Mass and their babies baptized. . . . Finally I did . . . and [the bishop] said that he himself would personally lift the interdict with all kinds of fanfare. This he did with great pomp on an August 4th, the patronal feast of Santo Domingo. If I remember correctly, it took place in 1940, the occasion of the Coronado Cuarto-Centennial. (On the following Sunday afternoon, I baptized 97 children, ranging from infants to kids five years old; the adults and leaders expressed their affection for me more than ever before.)

Ever since my arrival three years before, I had noticed a number of old Missals and Breviaries which lay piled up inside a low cabinet inside the sacristy, as well as two old Mexican chalices of solid silver which I began using at the altar after the interdict was lifted. Then, to my great surprise, the governor and his men offered no objection when I proposed taking both the volumes and the chalices to Peña Blanca! I had expected a different response.

Then came the war, when I left Peña Blanca to serve as an army chaplain in 1943. When I returned years later, I discovered that both the volumes and the chalices had been sent to

Provincial Franciscan Headquarters in Cincinnati. From there, I presume, the volumes must have been transferred to their main College or Seminary of St. Leonard in nearby Dayton.²

In the mid-1960s, Lincoln B. Spiess, a musicologist from Washington University, who was particularly interested in liturgical books, heard about these volumes and traced them to St. Leonard College. At his insistence, they were given to the Museum of New Mexico and are preserved today in the Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe. Later, Spiess published a listing of the books.³ Most are from the eighteenth century, but a few earlier items indicate that some may have survived the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 as well as the 1696 uprising. Many are in bad condition. The mutilated volume referred to above—an unidentified, seventeenth-century biblical commentary or concordance—is perhaps the most interesting of all because of its association with four Franciscan friars who served in New Mexico at the time of the reconquest and the uprising of 1696, in which two of them lost their lives.⁴

The year of don Diego de Vargas Zapata Ponce de León's reconquest of the rebellious kingdom of New Mexico on the far northern frontier of New Spain is usually given as 1692. Some of us who are familiar with the voluminous documentation for the period are inclined to feel that this is misleading. It is true that after some show of resistance many apostate Indians submitted to don Diego during his reconnaissance in the autumn of that year, but later events were to show that they were mostly biding their time.⁵

Vargas, however, confident of his triumph, undertook to return with a colonizing expedition in 1693. He set out from El Paso in October with a train of more than seventy families (including young and old, women and children), eighteen Franciscan friars, and a force of one hundred soldiers. One may admire his daring and determination, but deplore his rashness in exposing this motley crew to the rigors of such an expedition on the strength of his short acquaintance with this remote area and its native inhabitants, who had shown their mettle thirteen years before when they drove the Spaniards from the province in 1680.

Nevertheless, Vargas did have apparent success at first, retaking in battle the villa of Santa Fe, then occupied by apostates, at the end of December. Several more months and fierce confrontations were to pass before comparative quiet reigned elsewhere in the province.

Meanwhile, in the bitter winter weather, the colonists and friars were suffering great hardships for lack of adequate supplies, which the Indians were ill equipped to supplement.

By September 1694, it was finally possible to think of reestablishing some missions and assigning friars to them. Fray Francisco de Vargas, no close relative of the governor, had arrived from El Paso with four more Franciscans who were also placed in mission pueblos. Father Vargas was *custos* (superior) of the New Mexico custody. At the end of the year, he asked for progress reports. At this point, most of the friars were reasonably satisfied with their neophytes, although they were finding it difficult to wean them from their traditional customs. The missionaries nonetheless looked to the future with cautious optimism.

During 1695, more settlers came, lands were distributed, and in April a new settlement, La Villa Nueva de Santa Cruz de Españoles Mexicanos del Rey Nuestro Señor Carlos Segundo, now Santa Cruz, was founded at a site that Tano Indians had occupied after the Revolt of 1680. By Governor Vargas's order, these Indians were forced to move—an act that scarcely served to endear the Spanish intruders to them. By November, conditions were becoming desperate. Winter was near, the crops had failed, food and clothing were in shorter supply than ever, and there were rumors of possible French incursions from the east.

In the pueblos, the missionaries, who had more knowledge of and day-to-day contact with the Indians, were seriously alarmed by indications of an insurrection to come. Early in 1696, things seemed to quiet down, but only briefly, for by March there were even more ominous signs of trouble. In reports to and meetings with their superior, Father Vargas, the Franciscans gave compelling reasons for their suspicions. The *custos* petitioned Governor Vargas for armed guards to be stationed at the pueblos. Although the governor believed that the friars' fears were exaggerated and expressed his skepticism in terms they considered contemptuous, he did undertake some minimal aid. At the same time, he pointed out that he did not have sufficient forces to do more, and this was true. The reconqueror did not scruple to exert a kind of moral pressure on the friars by suggesting that, if they abandoned the missions, their actions would only serve to encourage rebellion.⁶

Finally, on 4 June 1696, the dissidents struck. Five missionaries and twenty-one Spanish settlers suffered death at the hands of the rebels, churches were desecrated, and the perpetrators fled into the sierras. A few pueblos remained loyal to the Spaniards, but for many months

Governor Vargas had his work cut out for him in restoring order throughout the kingdom. Not until 31 July did he report the disaster to the authorities in Mexico City.⁷

As to the New Mexico martyrs themselves, fray Antonio Carbonel and fray Francisco Corvera were among the more than two dozen casualties on 4 June 1696. Father Carbonel, to whom fray Miguel Muñiz de Luna had given our book, was a Spaniard who had arrived in Mexico with a company of missionary recruits in 1687. He accompanied don Diego de Vargas to New Mexico in 1693 and served as chaplain to the men-at-arms in 1694. In September of that year, he was assigned to San Felipe, then transferred on 27 November to Cochiti, where the Indians had already built a chapel and a dwelling for the friar. In 1695 and 1696, he was at Nambe for a time and later at Taos. He also served as a definator, or councilman, of the custody.

Carbonel was killed at San Cristóbal by Tano Pueblo Indians along with their minister, fray José de Arbizu. The two bodies were found lying outside the convento and later buried in the church. Carbonel had predicted the uprising, and although he had no romantic desire for martyrdom, he faced it in the hope of saving a few souls and forestalling the desecration of sacred objects.

Fray Francisco Corvera, to whom Carbonel had passed on the commentary, was a creole from Manila who made his profession in the Convento Grande of the Franciscan Province of the Holy Gospel in Mexico City on 8 February 1684. He arrived in El Paso with Governor Vargas in 1691. Although Corvera had some differences with the governor in the summer of 1692, he accompanied him to the interior as chaplain of the army and president of the Franciscans and played an active role in the doings of that year. Fray Francisco rode again with Vargas in 1693 and became missionary at San Ildefonso and Jacona in October 1694.

Corvera soon made himself familiar with the Tewa Pueblo language of his charges. We have a number letters and statements from his pen about conditions in his pueblos and his increasing apprehension about the Indians' state of mind. Although things seemed to be going well for a while, in December of 1695 Father Corvera was extremely suspicious. Concealing himself in a buffalo robe, he hid by a kiva at night to gather what information he could overhear about plans for rebellion.

By early spring 1696, Corvera had convinced himself of the gloomy outlook, as is evident from his reply to the 9 March circular of Custos Vargas.⁸ Fray Francisco died at San Ildefonso on 4 June. He and fray Antonio Moreno of Nambe were shut up in a cell and suffocated from smoke inhalation when the Indians set fire to the church and convento.

The original bearer of the book to New Mexico, fray Miguel Muñiz de Luna, was guardian of the El Paso missions in 1696. Born in Puebla, New Spain, he had professed there on 13 February 1684. By 1697, he was serving at Zia, one of the pueblos allied with Governor Vargas. We have references to his services in New Mexico from then until as late as 1729. He was considered by his brethren an accomplished man of great learning and piety.

Fray Diego de Chavarría, who “ransomed” the ill-treated commentary, was a native of Tacuba in the Valley of Mexico who professed in the Convento Grande on 6 March 1679. He began serving in the El Paso district in the late 1680s and was still there in 1693. During the perilous years preceding the uprising of 1696, Chavarría was at Taos for a time, but was forced to leave for lack of a sufficient armed guard. In 1696, he became chaplain to Vargas’s campaign force and was acting custos during fray Francisco de Vargas’s absence about 1697-98. The year he found the book, 1699, he was stationed at Cochiti. After 1701, Father Chavarría apparently returned to the El Paso area as missionary to the Sumas, whose language he knew.⁹

Evidently her last historical writing, Adams considered this brief essay little more than a footnote, albeit a fascinating one. She prepared it in the mid-1980s as a contribution to a proposed volume honoring her old friend, the late José Porrúa Turanzas, renowned publisher and bookseller in Mexico City and later in Spain. When the original project faltered, Professor W. Michael Mathes volunteered to resurrect it as volume 50 (forthcoming) of the Colección Chimalistac. It is through his courtesy that this version of Eleanor B. Adams’s “The New Mexico Martyrs’ Book” appears in the New Mexico Historical Review as well. Pertinent additions to her notes have been added in italics. JLK.

NOTES

1. Eleanor B. Adams and France V. Scholes, "Books in New Mexico, 1598-1680," *New Mexico Historical Review* 17 (July 1942), 226-70; Adams, "Two Colonial New Mexico Libraries, 1704, 1776," *New Mexico Historical Review* 19 (April 1944), 135-67; and Adams and Fray Angélico Chávez, *The Missions of New Mexico, 1776: A Description by Fray Francisco Atanasio Domínguez with Other Contemporary Documents* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1956, 1975).

2. Fray Angélico Chávez to Eleanor B. Adams, Santa Fe, 24 April 1984 [present location unknown]. *About the multifaceted Father Chávez, who died in 1996, see Ellen McCracken, ed., Fray Angélico Chávez: Poet, Priest, and Artist* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000).

3. Lincoln Bunce Spiess, "A Group of Books from Colonial New Mexico," in Marta Weigle, ed., *Hispanic Arts and Ethnohistory in the Southwest: New Papers Inspired by the Work of E. Boyd* (Santa Fe, N.M.: Ancient City Press, 1983), 358-77.

4. Spiess, "A Group of Books" (no. 16), 370. Spiess's description reads in part: "In sexto. No covers or title page. Preserved pages: pp. 241-878; p. 241 headed 'Ad Librum 3. Regum.' In Latin. Typography: roman, black. Size 19.7 cm. x 29.7 cm. Museum of New Mexico accession number: A.65.51-16."

5. See J. Manuel Espinosa, *Crusaders of the Río Grande: The Story of Don Diego de Vargas and the Reconquest and Refounding of New Mexico* (Chicago: Institute of Jesuit History, 1942). *And the more recent Vargas Series from the University of New Mexico Press: John L. Kessell, ed., Remote Beyond Compare: Letters of don Diego de Vargas to His Family from New Spain and New Mexico, 1675-1706* (1989); *Kessell and Rick Hendricks, eds., By Force of Arms: The Journals of don Diego de Vargas, New Mexico, 1691-93* (1992); *Kessell, Hendricks, and Meredith D. Dodge, eds., To the Royal Crown Restored: The Journals of don Diego de Vargas, New Mexico, 1692-94* (1995); *Kessell, Hendricks, and Dodge, eds., Blood on the Boulders: The Journals of don Diego de Vargas, New Mexico, 1694-97* (1998); *and Kessell, Hendricks, Dodge, and Larry D. Miller, eds., That Disturbances Cease: The Journals of don Diego de Vargas, New Mexico, 1697-1700* (2000).

6. *For the early signs, events, and aftermath of the Pueblo uprising of 1696, see J. Manuel Espinosa, ed., The Pueblo Indian Revolt of 1696 and the Franciscan Missions in New Mexico: Letters of the Missionaries and Related Documents* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988). Adams had prepared a documentary edition of these materials in Spanish for Porrúa in Mexico City, but because of financial constraints, it was never published.

7. Espinosa, Pueblo Indian Revolt, 257-80. Adams appended to her original version of this essay the letter of fray Francisco de Vargas to fray Miguel Muñiz de Luna, Santa Fe, 21 July 1696, in Spanish transcription. She alluded

in a note to Father Vargas's two letters of the same date to his superiors in Mexico City "more detailed, more formal, and, not surprisingly, more restrained in their references to Governor Vargas." All three are translated in *Espinosa*, 243-57.

8. In a second appendix, Adams provided a Spanish transcript of Corvera's reply to Father Vargas, San Ildefonso, 10 March 1696, characterizing it as "an example of the missionaries' point of view and well-founded reasoning as opposed to Governor Vargas's reluctance to face facts." It too is translated in *Espinosa*, Pueblo Indian Revolt, 181-83.

9. It would not be feasible to cite here the sources of all the scattered data in mission, provincial, and other records upon which the biographical information about these friars is based.

