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French Secular Clergy in New Mexico Territory: Images of the Mission

NANCY N. HANKS

Catholicism in the United States evolved from a peripheral missionary field in the late eighteenth century to become the single largest denomination in the country by 1850. To minister to this growing congregation, American Catholic bishops turned to Europe—particularly to France—to recruit new clergy. As a result, between 1789 and 1865, twenty-four of the one hundred priests who became bishops in America were born in France. At the time of the Catholic Church’s Second Plenary Council of Baltimore in October 1866, there were ten Frenchmen out of the forty-five bishops in attendance. The proportion of French bishops in the United States was much greater than the relatively small number of French Catholic immigrants.

In 1850, one of these new French bishops—Jean Baptiste Lamy—was appointed to administer the new vicariate apostolic of New Mexico, an enormous area that included all of the present-day states of New Mexico and Arizona (except the Gadsden Purchase area) and parts of Colorado and Nevada (map 1). Responsibility for the region was transferred to the American Catholic authorities after being held for over 200 years by the diocese of Durango in Mexico. With American occupation, the population of New Mexico Territory increased and Lamy’s vicariate was elevated to the diocese of Santa Fe in 1853, then to an archdiocese in 1875.

As Lamy’s title changed through the years—from vicar apostolic to bishop to archbishop—he continued to look to his home in France for the recruitment of parish priests for New Mexico. This was partly because there was a constant demand for priests to serve in the western

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frontier, but it was also because he wanted to work with fellow Frenchmen. Lamy was succeeded by a series of four French archbishops in New Mexico, all of whom also recruited from France (see table 1 for information on Santa Fe’s French archbishops). As a result of this long French tenure during New Mexico’s territorial period (1850 to 1912), French clergy comprised over 64 percent of the 181 secular clergy who served in the area that today lies within the boundaries of the archdiocese of Santa Fe (map 2).

No other region in the American West remained a territory as long as New Mexico, was so resistant to non-Catholic intrusion, or had so many French secular clergy. During the territorial period, the presence of these French priests left an indelible mark on the lives of their Hispano parishioners. The influence of the Frenchmen has faded now, but their impressions of the region and the images they conveyed back to France for subsequent generations of French missionaries provide a unique reflection of New Mexico’s history.

Before leaving France the men already had formed images of the hardships to come, of the terrain they would cross to get to New Mexico, of their parishioners, and of the Indians they would convert. These images were derived from stories told by their predecessors who returned to France to recruit them and from reports and letters published in French
Catholic periodicals. Although they saw themselves as explorers in a foreign land, it was not *terra incognita*.

The religious goals of all French missionaries in the nineteenth century were to provide enlightenment to the "inferior" inhabitants of their mission country, to convert the native population to Catholicism, and to establish the "proper" (French) type of Catholicism in a frontier setting. Thus, in annual reports sent from every mission region to the French sponsor, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the priests categorized the inhabitants as either Catholics, heretics, or infidels. In New Mexico, Catholics consisted of Hispanos—Spanish-speaking descendants of early colonists—and converted Pueblo Indians; heretics were Protestants (usually American Anglos); and infidels were the nomadic
Navajo and Apache Indians, the “poor, benighted children of the prairies” who needed the “civilizing and sanctifying influences of the Catholic Church.”

Much of the priests’ success in New Mexico Territory depended on their personalities and backgrounds. For many, it was the first mission experience and they were not emotionally ready for the hardships of the West. Father Philibert Domergue, from St. Flour, France, arrived in New Mexico sometime around 1870. He was “scared of mission work,” however, and “ran away with the intention of joining [a group of] Trappists.” Other young priests overcame their fear and culture shock. Father Jean Baptiste Rallièrè was “homesick to tears” for France and afraid of Indians, but he remained parish priest at Tome for fifty-five years. A few priests had served elsewhere before coming to New Mexico Territory, giving them an advantage in adapting to a new world. Father Robert Garassu, for example, had been in the French army prior to coming to New Mexico. When Archbishop Lamy stopped at Garassu’s Mora parish in the 1870s and told of his difficulty in collecting money to continue building his cathedral, Garassu took what money Lamy had and went to Fort Union where he gambled with the soldiers and returned with $2,000 for the archbishop.

Perhaps the strongest determinant of the priests’ images of New Mexico Territory was their French nationalism. In 1893 soon-to-be Archbishop Chapelle, while visiting his home in Lozère, France, was asked why he had come back to recruit French priests for New Mexico when there were priests of other nationalities in the United States. He replied that, due to the mixed population of Spanish, English, Germans, Irish, and Indians in New Mexico, “only French priests go well with all and are welcome by all... they are the elite of the elite... if I had with me only 20 priests from Lozère, in ten years the Church of Santa Fe would

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARCHBISHOP</th>
<th>NATIVE FRENCH REGION</th>
<th>YEARS AS ARCHBISHOP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jean Baptiste Lamy</td>
<td>Auvergne</td>
<td>1875–1885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Baptiste Salpointe</td>
<td>Auvergne</td>
<td>1885–1894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placide Louis Chapelle</td>
<td>Languedoc</td>
<td>1894–1897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierre Bourgade</td>
<td>Auvergne</td>
<td>1899–1908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Baptiste Pitaval</td>
<td>Rhône</td>
<td>1909–1918</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
rank among the most flourishing in the United States." Indeed, the priests' francisation was almost as strong as the Catholic Church itself, especially in the early years of the New Mexico diocese. An 1868 French description of the (then) diocese of Santa Fe called it "almost totally Auvergnate," and, in fact, it was frequently referred to as "little Auvergne," after the region where Lamy and others were born. In 1877 Father Joseph Machebeuf—after thirty-seven years in North America—still boasted that the prelates of the Archdiocese were all "Auvergnats," including himself, in the "petite Auvergne" of the archdiocese of Santa Fe (photo 1).

French nationalism may even have played a part in the rift between French secular clergy and Italian Jesuits who arrived in the area in 1867. The French were strict in their belief that their religious outlook was the only correct one, but the Jesuits, "reared in a Mediterranean religious culture that shared characteristics with the Hispanic-American southwest, . . . tolerated many local customs that the French clergy condemned," such as penitente practices. The different styles of mission
work contributed to the running feud between Father Joseph Coudert and the Jesuits in Las Vegas, New Mexico. Their dispute culminated in 1888 with Archbishop Salpointe's order for the Jesuits to stop ministrations in Our Lady of Sorrows parish.12

Long before leaving France for North America, young seminarians Lamy and Machebeuf were introduced to the American continent in the 1830s through stories told by French-born missionaries who returned to recruit seminarians. As early as 1833, Bishop Benedict Joseph Flaget of Bardstown, Kentucky, visited Clermont-Ferrand to recruit priests for his missions.13 Father Jean-Marie Odin (who later, in 1861, became archbishop of New Orleans), also recruited in Clermont-Ferrand while Lamy and Machebeuf were students (probably around 1834).14 Finally in 1839 Bishop Jean Baptiste Purcell of Ohio brought Lamy and Machebeuf to the United States to work in his diocese.

When Lamy was head of New Mexico's Catholic Church, he visited Clermont-Ferrand to recruit in 1854, 1866–1867, 1869–1870, and 1877–1878. He also sent his French subordinates to his old school to recruit for him—among them, Machebeuf in 1854 and 1856, Father Pierre Eguillon in 1859, and Father Gabriel Ussel in 1864–1865. Father Jean Baptiste Salpointe, who became vicar apostolic of Arizona in 1868, made frequent visits to his home parish Auvergne in 1869, 1883–1884, and 1889–1890. Chapelle, while coadjutor to Archbishop Salpointe, conducted one major recruitment visit to France in 1891–1892 that netted at least nineteen clergymen for the mission in Santa Fe. Archbishop Pierre Bourgade also visited Europe at least twice, in 1901 and 1903, during his short tenure in Santa Fe. Archbishop Jean Baptiste Pitival, as far as we know, did not visit France or Europe while serving as archbishop.

As a young seminarian, Lamy read with great interest the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith, a periodical begun in Lyon in 1822 by the newly-formed Society for the Propagation of the Faith, an organization of lay people who offered "prayers and donations" for the support of the Catholic Church's missionary efforts throughout the world.15 Reports on North America were important from the very first volume of the Annals, which featured long letters from French priests serving in the missions of Louisiana and Kentucky; it was no coincidence that in that same year, two-thirds of the money collected by the Society went to missions in these two states. The Annals were first published only once a year, but grew to six issues a year by 1835. Originally published in French, the Annals were soon translated into many languages, and by 1842 a total of 150,000 copies of the Annals were printed in French, English, German, and Spanish.16
The Society deemed it necessary to supplement the *Annals* in order to discuss more subjects in greater depth, and so in 1868 began a weekly called *Catholic Missions (Les Missions Catholiques)*. Expanded discussions in *Catholic Missions* included those by priests serving in New Mexico, who, like other contributors, wrote about the geography, ethnography, and natural history of their area. Both journals documented all departures of missionaries from France and listed missionaries' obituaries, but *Catholic Missions* also printed reviews of books, compiled bibliographies, and provided engraved illustrations and maps of mission regions.

Through its subscribers and these two publications, the Society played an important role in funding efforts to establish Catholicism throughout the world in the nineteenth century. French geographer Pierre Deffontaines estimates that the Society funded "a veritable army" of missionaries from France, about 30,000 in all. Letters from these missionaries appearing in the *Annals* and *Catholic Missions* provided images of the mission countries to hundreds of thousands of Catholic readers. The circulation figures of *Catholic Missions* during the territorial period are not available, but it can be assumed that they were as well-distributed and well-read as the *Annals* since they included maps and illustrations (and later photographs), which the *Annals* did not.

Less widely circulated were the weekly newsletters published by the priests' home dioceses in France, such as *La Semaine Religieuse de Clermont* and *La Semaine Religieuse de Mende*. Both chronicled the visits home by the French priests serving in foreign missions. In addition, the English-language *Catholic Extension Magazine* was published in the United States and focused on missions in the North American continent. Like the two French Catholic journals, *Catholic Extension* printed information about the missions as a request for funds to build churches and schools.

Many of the New Mexico recruits from France were young priests or seminarians who were excused from ordination age requirements in order to assign them to parishes as soon as possible. Their youthful enthusiasm and religious zeal made them inordinately susceptible to the chance for adventure suggested by recruiting priests. Archbishop Salpointe, forty years after he left France, still remembered Father Eguillon's 1859 recruitment visit to Clermont-Ferrand; stories of the long distances the priests had to travel "on horseback, almost daily, in all kinds of weather and, in many instances on roads infested by hostile Indians," were sufficient to inspire Salpointe to volunteer immediately for Santa Fe. In his autobiography, Salpointe reminisces about his anxiety "to try the life of the plains, which had been represented to [the seminarians as] indeed very rough and tedious, but which, we fancied, we might find very poetical and agreeable after all." Forty-four years
later, Father Chapelle’s stories of “the lamentable situation” in New Mexico helped his efforts in his 1893 recruitment trip to the diocese of Clermont.21

Reports of hardship were also printed in the Annals and Catholic Missions. One group traveling to Santa Fe in 1857 wrote to the Annals that they were camping in a tent under five inches of snow but “taking it very well.”22 Years later, in 1912, Father Joseph Freri, an official with the American branch of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, conceded that the “publications of the Propagation of the Faith speak of nothing but privations, perils and struggles; the more they darken the picture, the more they kindle the zeal for the Missions, especially if they open the sombre perspective of martyrdom.”23

This “sombre perspective” may have colored the first images relayed from New Mexico Territory, but the beauty of the land was not lost on the new clergy. A mere eight months after his arrival in the region, Machebeuf was writing to France from Peña Blanca about “the richness of the soil” and “the picturesque mountains with their slopes covered with majestic pines,” adding, however, that “if the zeal and charity of pious souls can do anything to help the missionary, this, of all the places in the world, is where it ought to be done, where we are surrounded by a thousand dangers unknown in France.”24

The French missionaries’ tendencies to “darken the picture” may account for their inclination to describe the Great Plains as a “desert,” when it was really more of a savannah.25 Lamy first used the term when he wrote to the Society of his initial crossing on the trail to Santa Fe in 1852: after he had gone up the Missouri River for almost 200 leagues (600 miles), he still had to cross “the desert, or, as they say in the United States, the plains or the prairies.”26 In an 1868 letter to Catholic Missions, Father Jean Baptiste Brun described his first trek across the Santa Fe Trail in 1867 as crossing the “immense desert plains of Kansas and Colorado.”27 Recounting the same trip for the Annals, Father Coudert called Trinidad City “the outermost station in New Mexico towards the desert.”28 Coudert’s association of Trinidad with New Mexico is excusable—the southeastern part of the present-day state of Colorado had earlier been part of New Mexico and the diocese of Santa Fe—but his use of “desert” is not so easily understood since he had crossed a real desert in 1863 when he traveled with Lamy across Arizona to Los Angeles and back by wagon train. Why then did Coudert and other priests continue to describe the Great Plains as a desert?

One reason may be that, in French, “désert” can also mean a biblical “wilderness,” and this translation had special religious meaning for the priests.29 In the area they were crossing, there were very few Catholics and even fewer French Catholics—it was, in fact, a virtual wilderness full of “heretics and infidels.” Also, there are no deserts in Europe, and
the Great Plains were different from anything most of the French priests had ever seen. This novelty would explain why the image faded over time. By 1855, for example, after Lamy had navigated two complete trips across the Santa Fe Trail, he no longer referred to the region as a desert, calling the plains “fairly monotonous” but “rich in good pastures and abundant in buffalos or bisons.” By 1866, Lamy described the region simply as “the immense plains” that isolate New Mexico from the United States. Since the occupants of the plains had not changed significantly in that eleven-year period, it must have been Lamy’s increased familiarity with the geography of the area that changed his image of it.

By the time the railroad connected Santa Fe to the eastern United States in 1880, the “desert” image no longer appeared in the priests’ reports, indicating that the shorter and more comfortable journey across the Great Plains by train softened the priests’ view of the terrain. By 1893, in an interview with Archbishop Chapelle in France, the focus was on the rich minerals and healthful climate of New Mexico, with no mention of the hardships associated with getting there.

Before the arrival of the railroad in New Mexico, priests’ letters about the “desert” always focused on the long distance involved in just getting to mission sites. Lamy’s 1856 report to the Society detailed the problem of the diocese’s location: “we are isolated in the middle of the North American continent, with immense deserts to cross even to communicate with our nearest neighbors.” While in Rome in 1867, Lamy reported to Pope Pius IX that the Santa Fe diocese was very much dispersed, being about six hundred miles from north to south, and almost as much from east to west, and that the “chief difficulties in his mission lay in maintaining connections with the outside world” across the plains.

Within the diocese, parishes were comprised of vast areas, making it difficult for one priest to serve all the village chapels within his jurisdiction. Father Etienne Parisis, a parish priest at Bernalillo, wrote to his uncle in France in 1883 that “it is difficult to give as little as one day per month to each village. Our parishes are so spread out that we cannot be sufficient for all.” Even as late as 1911, Archbishop Pitaval (photo 2) wrote to the Catholic Extension Magazine about a parish “in which it requires twenty–two days for the bishop to make the circuit in order to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation in the several missions and stations.”

The French, at least initially, blamed the region’s shortcomings on the weak and immoral character of the native Hispano clergy. While en route to Santa Fe in 1851 to assume administration of the new vicariate, Lamy was warned by Bishop Odin of Texas—who had never been to New Mexico—of the “scandalous native clergy” to be found there. In
a letter to France from El Paso, Texas, dated 29 June 1851—before even setting foot in New Mexico Territory—Lamy concludes that “from what I have heard, and the little I have seen here, no doubt I may expect to meet with serious difficulties and obstacles.”

These preconceived images made conflict between Lamy and the native New Mexico clergy inevitable. Machebeuf, in a letter to France dated 29 September 1851, took up the refrain. Machebeuf explained that Hispano priests were obstacles to Bishop Lamy's efforts because they "dread a reform in their morals, or a change in their selfish relations with their parishioners." The editors of Howlett's Machebeuf biography correctly wonder how both Lamy and Machebeuf "could have come so rapidly, in a mere five weeks, to so thoroughly negative a judgment on men whom they had met only casually if at all." In fact, Lamy's initial treatment of the native clergy may have had a chilling effect on their future recruitment: aside from the Hispano clergy already in New Mexico when Lamy arrived, there were only eight native-born New Mexico priests in the region from 1852 to 1912.
Lamy blamed not only the Hispano priests, but Hispano parishioners for New Mexico's problems. Lamy's first impressions of his new flock are best summarized in his first official report to the Society, dated 31 August 1851, which begins: "The state of immorality in matters of sex is so deplorable that the most urgent need is to open a school for girls under the direction of the Sisters of Charity. . . . Since ignorance is the Mexican national vice, boys' schools in all parishes will be indispensable." To Lamy, the problem with the native boys was ignorance. Later, Lamy tempered his judgement of his parishioners—this may have been a common occurrence, since Protestant missionaries' descriptions also became less accusatory, particularly during the 1880s and 1890s. Whatever the reason, by 1871, twenty years after his initial recommendations, Lamy stopped calling the inhabitants "Mexicans" in his reports to the Society. Instead, he refers to the population as "Espano-Americans," implying, in his view, a more desirable European heritage.

This revisionism in the priest's writing is especially apparent in the later years of French dominance. In a series of articles written for Catholic Missions in 1898, Father Georges Juillard, then in the Gallup parish, calls his parishioners "Mexicans," as was common at the time. Juillard, however, goes on to write that "the Mexican is a descendant of the proud and valiant Spanish noblemen who discovered and conquered an immense part of the New World. He is quite close to the Spanish type; even though he often has a few drops of Indian blood in his veins, he is Spanish above all." Father Juillard blames the problems in New Mexico not on the Hispanos, but on the early Anglo-American settlers who "were recruited from the dregs of the American nation" and "caused their race to be hated because of their actions—their plundering, their lying, and their cruelty." From Folsom, New Mexico, in 1910, Father Michel Dumarest seemed to feel equally defensive of his Hispano and Mexican parishioners (photo 3). He wrote that Americans looked down upon his parishioners as "uncivilized people, probably because they do not know what fashionable parties and the theaters are, and do not read the petty happenings recited in the daily newspapers. May God keep them long from contact with these phases of our civilization."

Whether by design or due to economic constrictions, few of the Frenchmen serving in the area during Lamy's tenure (1850 to 1885) did significant work among the Indians. New Mexico historian Marc Simmons contends that the Church's early neglect of the Indians was Lamy's fault and that "the few priests who ministered to Indian villages were hamstrung by lack of funds and by their inability to interest the bishop in the problems of remote missions." In his defense, Lamy probably tried to implement Indian education as soon as he could spare the clergy, as evidenced by his short-lived effort at the Bosque Redondo in 1865.
The need to minister to New Mexico’s Indians gained importance when Protestants started schools at Indian pueblos. Grant’s Peace Policy, passed by Congress in 1869, established a Board of Indian Commissioners and seventy Indian agents, who were nominated by all established religious denominations and were appointed by 1872. The Catholics, however, got only seven agencies, and none of them in New Mexico. According to historian Francis Paul Prucha, “the conflict between the Protestant mission groups and the Roman Catholics was nothing less than flagrant bigotry.”

Federal money for Catholic Indian schools in New Mexico was not forthcoming until after Lamy’s death. In 1886, when Archbishop Salpointe went to Washington, D.C., in the company of Charles L. Lusk, secretary of the Catholic Bureau of Indian Missions, he got contracts for “four day schools with the promise of four additional ones as soon as federal funds became available.” Even then it was difficult for the Catholic schools to get funding, as the United States government moved to abolish contract schools. Father Juillard argued in 1898 that the reason the government wanted to abolish contract schools was that only the Catholics were successful in running them, and the Protestants were jealous. By the early 1890s, the government stopped giving funds directly to church groups, and schools in New Mexico were secularized.

The promise of government help may have prompted Archbishop Salpointe’s 1887 visit to various pueblos. He was accompanied by Frenchman Father Antoine Jouvenceau who had just been made superintendent of Indian schools in New Mexico. Jouvenceau reported to his home Diocese of Clermont in great (and relatively accurate) detail on the dress, architecture, and customs of the Indians they visited. He contended that the Protestant-run Indian school at Laguna Pueblo was favored by the United States government, but that Lagunans still had their infants baptized by the Catholic priest, still attended Mass, and still celebrated communion in the chapel. His impression of Zuni Pueblo, when seen from afar, was that it looked like an old ruined manor house along the coast of France. After watching dances at San Ildefonso Pueblo (which included Jicarilla Apaches), Jouvenceau concluded that “the simplicity of these poor people, their ignorance, and their naturally good disposition toward missionary work” would almost guarantee the success of a mission there.

Jouvenceau’s study of the pueblos was echoed twenty years later by the Dumarest brothers. Father Michel Dumarest, who served from 1908 to 1918 in Folsom, New Mexico, was particularly appreciative of pueblo life, as was his brother, Father Noel Dumarest, parish priest at Peña Blanca (1894 to 1900). The latter received special funding from
Mother Catherine Drexel to study the missions of Cochiti, Santo Domingo, and San Felipe pueblos. The American Anthropological Association published Father Noel's vivid work with illustrations by Father Michel.57

Protestant missionaries came to New Mexico as early as 1849, but the railroad came closer to Santa Fe, there was an increased presence of the United States military and civilian immigrants in New Mexico Territory. This influx of Anglo immigrants meant a greater Protestant ('heretic') population with the army's accompanying subjugation of the Navajo and Apache ('infidel') tribes. Table 2 presents the estimated population figures for Catholics, 'heretics,' and 'infidels,' taken from the New Mexico clergy reports to the Society and from each selected year's Catholic Directory. Table 3 presents a Protestant's count for two of the later years. Although the numbers in the two tables do not agree...
Table 2: Estimated Population Figures for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, Selected Years, 1851-1905

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Catholics</th>
<th>Heretics</th>
<th>Infidels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>68,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>30,000-40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>96,000</td>
<td>3,000-4,000</td>
<td>17,000-18,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>3,000-4,000</td>
<td>17,000-18,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>129,500</td>
<td>13,500</td>
<td>15,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>145,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>10,000-15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>115,000</td>
<td>20,000-30,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Catholic Directory, various years; reports to the Société de la Propagation de la Foi, various years.

Table 3: Church Membership in New Mexico by Denomination, 1890 and 1906

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Members</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Method.</th>
<th>Presbyt.</th>
<th>Baptist</th>
<th>Episcop.</th>
<th>Latter Day Saints</th>
<th>Disc. of Christ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>105,748</td>
<td>100,576</td>
<td>2,360</td>
<td>1,275</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>137,009</td>
<td>121,558</td>
<td>6,560</td>
<td>2,935</td>
<td>2,403</td>
<td>869</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>1,092</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the region. Hence, in 1866, General Carleton gave $2,000 to Lamy to start an orphanage and a hospital, on the condition that his soldiers would be treated in the hospital. In 1870, Lamy wrote that several soldiers converted to Catholicism and that he was grateful to the American officers from whom he received "so much politeness, favors, and services for nineteen years."  

As the number of Protestants grew, however, their relations with the Catholic clergy deteriorated, and the priests wrote letters full of images of the Protestant threat, supplanting previous images of hardships, isolation, and distance. The Catholic Church, which had been the dominant religion in northern New Mexico for almost three centuries, was reluctant to accept even a small Protestant population because Protestant Anglos exercised greater power in the territory than the many Catholic Hispanos. By 1873, just three years after Lamy wrote his salute to coexistence, Salpointe wrote that the "Protestant propaganda" in Arizona influenced Catholics in the public schools, the only schools his parishioners could afford to attend. In 1874, Father Ussel in Taos also protested Protestant propaganda "published here and copied in the [United] States newspapers, that the Indian Pueblos in New Mexico under the cover of some Catholic practice, are but superstitious, idolaters, believers in future coming of Montezuma."  

Education became the battleground on which Protestants and Catholics fought for souls and for government funding from the 1870s until after the turn of the century. Lamy was at a disadvantage, as he tried to spread approximately thirty parish priests among about 90,000 Catholics in the archdiocese of Santa Fe. His successor, Archbishop Salpointe, reported to the Society in 1889 that the spiritual decline of the mission was due to the growing population of Protestants, "and with them ministers of their different sects who try to win over our Catholics to their cause, not only by persuasion but, above all, by [Protestant] education in their schools." Unlike Catholic schools, the Protestant education was free, subsidized by the numerous "home mission" groups back East, making it difficult for Catholics to compete.  

By 1891, there were only about 5,000 Protestants and over 100,000 Catholics in New Mexico Territory, but the Protestants pushed through the establishment of a public school system throughout the entire New Mexico Territory, and the Catholic Church was forced to abdicate any hope of being the prime educator in the state. Two years later, the third archbishop of Santa Fe, Placide Louis Chapelle, categorized the needs of the archdiocese: "(1) prevent the Protestant propaganda among the Mexicans by multiplying our clergy; (2) establish a mission for the Pueblo Indians, who have virtually fallen into paganism; and (3) establish a mission for the savage infidels who have never been evangelized and
who would be glad to be." Chapelle served as archbishop of Santa Fe for only three years (with six years total in the archdiocese), so he did not have much opportunity to implement these plans, but by 1895 he was "happy to be able to say that the Protestant propaganda is much less active than last year although we still have to keep watch continuously to keep the wolves out of the fold of the Shepherd." Archbishop Pitaval still complained in 1909, however, that it was the schools that were "the weak point in the Catholic fortress, and the Protestants were not slow in detecting it."

Although their images of New Mexico were at first quite negative, the majority of the French secular clergy who served in the archdiocese of Santa Fe eventually saw past the hardships, the terrain, and the isolation of their mission. Many became staunch defenders of their parishioners against the Anglo world that began to intrude on the archdiocese. One manifestation of their attachment to the people and the land was that several of them brought relatives from France to live with them. Archbishop Lamy brought two nephews and a niece from France to New Mexico. Father Machebeuf's French nephew worked for a while as a stone mason on the construction of St. Francis Cathedral in Santa Fe. Father Joseph Balland, who served in Mora from 1901 to 1917, brought a brother, Pierre, who started a mercantile store in Mora prior to World War I, reared a large family, and died there. The priest who succeeded Balland in Mora, Father Maurice Olier, brought his sister Anna. Father Adrien Cazals, who served in Tierra Amarilla from 1906 to 1916, had a sister, Leontine, who lived with him there. Father J. B. Brun, who served in Socorro and also outside the boundaries of this study in Cebolleta and Grants, brought his parents and his sister with him in 1867.

Another sign of the French priests' attachment to New Mexico lies in the fact that more than half of them retired, died, and are buried in the region, despite the fact that their roots were in France. Today, in many small Catholic cemeteries across New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado, one can read the names of the Frenchmen who served as parish priests. With the dawn of the twentieth century, these priests became the last detachment of a foreign culture in a land where Protestant American Anglos were rapidly becoming dominant. After statehood in 1912, New Mexico ceased to be a "mission country" for the Catholic Church, and few new French priests arrived. The end of the territorial period brought to a conclusion a unique combination of history and geography in which generations of French priests viewed New Mexico as a canvas on which they were obligated to recreate their own version of Catholicism.
NOTES

The author is grateful to the following who helped facilitate the research for this article: Thomas J. Steele, S. J., of Regis University; Marie-Christine Mondou of Clermont-Ferrand, France; Marina Ochoa of the archdiocese of Santa Fe; Claire Guyot of the diocese of Clermont; and Stéphane Gomis of Le Cendre, France.


3. With each administrative change, the diocesan boundaries also changed. Arizona and Colorado eventually broke off to form dioceses of their own, although they were still under the authority of the archdiocese of Santa Fe. French priests worked in these territories as well, but only those clergy who served within the boundaries of map 2 are included in this study.

4. Information about the French secular clergy and the Catholic Church in New Mexico Territory was derived from research conducted at the following locations: in France at the Archives of the Diocese of Clermont, the Archives Departementales du Puy-de-Dôme, and the Archives of the Société de la Propagation de la Foi in Lyon; in the United States at the Western History Collections at the University of Oklahoma, the University Archives at Loyola University in Chicago, the Center for Southwest Research at the University of New Mexico, the New Mexico State Historical Preservation Office, the New Mexico State Archives and Records Center, the Library and Photo Archives of the Museum of New Mexico, the Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe (AASF), the Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, and the Catholic Archives of Texas. Other information was gleaned from papers collected by Father Jean-Marie Jammes of the Archdiocese of New Orleans (hereafter Jammes Papers). Also, extensive research was done in Catholic directories published from 1848 through 1918, but whose exact titles and publishers varied through the years. For information from 1848 through 1857, the directories I used were entitled The Metropolitan Catholic Almanac and Laity's Directory. For information from 1858 and 1859, I used Dunigan's American Catholic Almanac. For information from 1860 and 1861, I used The Metropolitan Catholic Almanac and Laity' Directory for the United States. There were no directories for the years 1862 and 1863, presumably because of the Civil War. For the years 1864 through 1889, 1893, 1894, and 1896, I used Sadlier's Catholic Almanac and Ordo. Sadlier changed its title in 1866 or 1867 to Sadlier's Catholic Directory, Almanac, and Ordo. For the years 1890 through 1892, 1895, and 1897, I used Hoffman's Catholic Directory, Almanac and Clergy List Quarterly. Wiltzius dropped "Hoffman" from the title in 1900, dropped "Quarterly" from the title in 1903, and in 1907 the title changed to become The Official Catholic Directory and Clergy List.

5. James H. Defouri, Historical Sketch of the Catholic Church in New Mexico (San Francisco, California: McCormick Bros., 1887), 158.


9. “La Petite Auvergne ou les Origines de la Mission du Nouveau-Mexique,” *La Semaine Religieuse de Clermont* 1, no. 11 (1868), 165-72. In 1869, twenty-nine of the thirty-three secular clergy serving in the study region were French, and twelve were from the Auvergne region.

10. Chavez, notes, s. v. “Machebeuf.” Machebeuf was justifiably proud; in all, over 60 percent of the Catholic clergy in the study region in 1877 were born or attended seminaries in the Auvergne region.


14. Howlett, 35-38. Lamy and Machebeuf might have also been influenced by Flaget’s 1838 apostolic tour of France in which he is credited with a “revival of zeal” in the country, according to Edward John Hickey, *The Society for the Propagation of the Faith: Its Foundation, Organization and Success* (1822-1922) (Baltimore, Maryland: Catholic University of America, 1922), 3: 139.

15. The *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith* (*Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*), hereafter cited as *Annals*, were an expansion of the *Lettres Edifiantes*, a publication that printed letters from missionaries all over the world to their benefactors in France from about 1702.

16. By 1852 almost 170,000 copies of each issue of the *Annals* were published, and by 1911 almost twice that number.

17. For the story of the works of the Society, see Hickey.


20. Ibid., 212.


23. Joseph Freri, *The Society for the Propagation of the Faith and Catholic Missions* (New York, 1912), 16, as quoted in Hickey, 140n. Father Freri had been a priest in Tombstone, Arizona, in 1890, and went on to become a delegate of the Society in the United States.


25. Father James Defouri explained in 1867 that the Great Plains were the “savannahs of America,” although in the same letter he stated that the “desert” was the Indian’s life, Defouri, letter to the Société de la Propagation de la Foi, April 1866, *Annals* 39 (1867), 48.

26. Jean Baptiste Lamy, letter to the Société de la Propagation de la Foi, 10 July 1852, Record 3448, Jammes Project.


30. Jean Baptiste Lamy, letter to the Société de la Propagation de la Foi, 1 January 1855, *Annals* 27 (1855), 319–20. Lamy made the trip from Kansas City, Missouri, to Fort Union, New Mexico, a total of twelve times in his life, most of them prior to 1867, according to Defouri, *Catholic Church in New Mexico*, 35.


35. Horgan, 334.

36. Etienne Parisis, letter to his uncle, 20 January 1883, Record 3520, Jammes Project. Many priests in New Mexico felt isolated and lonely in their huge parishes, especially in those outside of northern New Mexico. This explains why Father Emile Barrat—in 1937, when threatened with reassignment to Monticello, New Mexico, in the far southern part of the diocese as it existed at the time—referred to it as a “Black Hole of Calcutta” and wrote that “no padre ever liked the place”; see Chavez notes, s. v. “Barrat.”


38. Horgan, 92.


40. Howlett, 165.

41. Machebeuf letter, 29 September 1851, see Howlett, 428.

42. Father Jose Eulogio Ortiz was ordained in 1854 and died at San Juan Pueblo in 1862. Four others trained under Father Martinez at his seminary in Taos: Father Ramon Medina, ordained in 1856 and in the archdiocese until his death in 1911; Father Manuel Felipe Chavez, ordained in 1859 and died in Valencia in 1881; Father Jose Tafoya, ordained in 1859 and killed by the upsetting of his vehicle when on a visit to his chapels in Lincoln County in 1884; and Father Jose Miguel Vigil, ordained in 1859 and died in 1879. The three later native clergy were: Father Jose Romulo Ribera, who studied at St. Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore and served the region from about 1872 to 1886, when he left the clergy; Father Manuel Antonio Daniel Ribera, who served from about 1886 until his death in 1921; and Father J. Samuel Garcia, who served in the archdiocese from 1887 to approximately 1893, when he transferred to Costilla in the Diocese of Denver.


47. Ibid., 452–53.


50. Gerald Thompson, The Army and the Navajo (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1976), 82. New Mexico historian Fray Angelico Chavez writes that Lamy consistently tried to get federal funding for Pueblo schools; Old Faith and Old Glory, 1846-1946 (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Santa Fe Press, 1946), 14.


52. Chavez, Old Faith and Old Glory, 14.

53. Juillard, 479.


55. Antoine Jouvenceau, “Voyage de Mgr. Salpointe Chez les Indiens Zunis,” La Semaine Religieuse de Clermont 19, no. 6 (1888), 112.

56. Antoine Jouvenceau, “Danses Indiennes, Fete de San Ildefonso,” La Semaine Religieuse de Clermont 19, no. 20 (1888), 408. Despite Jouvenceau's efforts, there was still an amazing amount of misinformation (or misunderstanding) as late as 1893, when Chapelle’s discussion of the “Aztec” Indians in New Mexico revealed to readers that the Indians’ principal idol is the serpent, who is “dreaded by the whites, is always angry upon awakening, and is so terrible and has venom so deadly that there is no remedy for his bite, except for natural cures that are kept secret,” Chapelle, “Les Missions du Nouveau Mexique,” La Semaine Religieuse de Mende 21, no. 2 (1893), 19–20.


58. Szasz, 134–36.

59. Lamy, letter to the Société de la Propagation de la Foi, 1 May 1870, Annals 42 (1870), 396.

60. Salpointe, Catholic Missions 5 (1873), 458. It should be noted that Arizona Protestants were much more “free-wheeling” than those of New Mexico; see Szasz, 138.

61. Clergy files, AASF, letter from Gabriel Ussel to Bishop Lamy, 4 January 1874, Clergy Files, “Loose Documents, 1874, # 1.”


63. Even then, “the Sisters' schools simply became the public schools,” writes Szasz, 144.

64. Placide Louis Chapelle, “Annual Report to the Société de la Propagation de la Foi, 1893,” Record 3553, Jammes Project. Chapelle wrote this report on the eve of his tenure as archbishop.


Chapelle was reassigned to New Orleans late in 1897, and French priest Antoine Fourchegu administered the archdiocese until 1899, when French-born Pierre Bourgade was consecrated as the fourth archbishop of Santa Fe. After Bourgade died in 1908, his vicar-general, Jean Baptiste Pitaval, became archbishop in 1909.

67. Antoine Lamy arrived at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore in 1867 and later served as parish priest in Taos and Manzano until his death in 1876. The other nephew, J. B. Lamy, shot and killed the French architect of Lamy's cathedral, François Mallet, who had been paying undue attention to the nephew's wife. (Young Lamy was acquitted.) Lamy's niece, Marie, arrived in Santa Fe in 1877 and eventually became mother superior of the Loretto Convent.


69. Clergy files, AASF, s. v. "Cazals" and "Olier." After Father Cazals died in 1916, Leontine stayed on to keep house for the Franciscans who succeeded him. By 1921, Father Olier had taken her in to help his own sister, Anna. Leontine, however, "had an evil tongue," and was returned to France. Brun's sister married a Frenchman, Dumas Provencher, who settled at Ojo del Gallo (San Rafael).
Call for Papers

36th Annual Conference of the Western History Association
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Grasslands and Heartlands: Remembering and Representing the Great Plains in History and Literature

The program committee for the 1996 meeting of the Western History Association requests proposals for papers and sessions on all aspects of Western and frontier history. For this meeting in Lincoln, Nebraska, we especially welcome panels and papers that explore the history of the grasslands and its peoples. This will be a joint meeting of the Western History Association and the Western Literature Association, so we encourage proposals that reflect on the interplay of imagination and experience, of myth and memory, in reconstructions and representations of the Great Plains. We look as well for interregional and international proposals: for comparative assessments of the biotic and human communities of woodlands and grasslands, of prairies and deserts, of plains and pampas.

A brief summary of prospective papers, with participant names, addresses and telephone numbers, and a short paragraph on each presenter, chair, and commentator will be most useful. The committee will assume that all those whose names appear in the proposals have agreed to participate.

Proposals should be sent by September 1, 1995 to the committee chair:

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