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A History of Miracles in New Mexico

Annette Nichols

NICHOLS — HISTORY OF MIRACLES IN NEW MEXICO

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A HISTORY OF MIRACLES IN NEW MEXICO

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By
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PREFACE

The intention of this study is to demonstrate the nature of miracles in New Mexico-their social significances as related to the cultural background.

Questions of importance are: What is a miracle? Do miracles actually occur? How can the existence of such miraculous intervention be proved? None of these queries can be answered positively, except insofar as they exist in the minds and the religions of those who believe in them. Objectively, the social activities of the believers is evidence of their beliefs. Miracles are part of the social customs and institutions. Whatever substantiation of miracles there is must rest with the recorded knowledge available insofar as this study is concerned. Only the material which seems to bear directly upon the social problem will be included herein. No attempt will be made to evaluate the validity of the Christian's reaction to miracles through his experience of revealed truth. This is beyond the scope of social phenomena subject to objective evidence.

The Spanish term for miracle, milagro, was considered important enough to be given a rather lengthy definition in the laws of Spain in the seventeenth century. Apparently, the definition given at that time was, "a divine intervention

in the regular course of nature, the purpose of which, among other things, os to reward the faithful and to bear witness to the veracity of the Christian faith."[1] In this study, miracles

> . . . means not the actual accomplishment of some exceptional act but acceptance of the act as accomplished. This is an arbitrary definition but the qualification of each statement might prove to be an element of complication and confusion in a study where the important fact is the belief, rather than the act itself.[2]

The mere fact that an occurrence is irregular does not mean that it is a miracle; it must have a specific meaning or value for the particular group or a certain individual involved. Through the ages, there have apparently been many beliefs linked with good-luck charms and potents which have promised gain in some miraculous manner. There has been evidence of the fear of punishment by a divine being on the one hand and the idea of the miracle or hope of reward on the other.

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[1] Frank Calcott, The Supernatural in Early Spanish Literature (New York: Instituto de las Espanas en Los Estados Unidos, 1923), p. 28.

[2] J. C. Russell, "The Canonization of Opposition to the King in Angevin England," The Haskins Anniversary Essays (Boston: 1929), p. 282.

But Christianity has dramatized the belief in the actual intervention of the supernatural through the Catholic church. One author gives his opinion of the belief in miracles as follows:

> . . . To deny miracles is to disclaim facts of history. A miracle is a sensible fact and may be known, like all other sensible objects, by the testimony of the senses or by ordinary human reason. To the Catholic, it is as logical to believe that miracles took place as it is to believe that the Declaration of Independence was signed at Philadelphia in 1776. [3]

The whole of the Christian faith is based upon a miracle, that of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is the greatest miracle of them all. Christ gave his disciples power to perform miracles in His name. In the gospels of the New Testament of the Bible, reference has been made to miracles performed by Christ during His lifetime. One of the miracles attributed to the powers of Christ is that of having turned water into wine. In contrast to most of the other religions, Christianity is " not only supernatural in origin and doctrine, but its claims to acceptance is necessarily based upon supernatural evidence." [4]

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[3] Linus Riordan, "Reality of Miracles Based on Sound Historical Facts," Santa Fe Register, June 28, 1946, pp. 2-4.

[4] Supernatural Religion (New York: The Truth Seeker Company, n. d.), p. 64.

With the Spanish-Americans, the church is the real center of social life. It has made the supernatural influence of the church leaders a forceful directive in the lives of these people. With ideals of social service and altruism, the church has disseminated throughout society, thereby, forming group mores which have cemented the ties of culture within this section of the country.[5] Much of this cohesiveness has been brought about by common values and experiences. Thus, we find the miracle playing its part in the perpetuation of the beliefs together with a role in giving the people an emotional outlet through social intercourse.

Miracles, obviously, provide the people with a stronger sense of unity; they aford stories for social gatherings, whether in church or in the home. Since there is widespread belief in the possibility of the miraculous, there is, no doubt, more incentive to follow the standards of the group in regard to right and wrong which is easily seen in the interpretation of miracles which are supposed to have happened. Their frequency is further evidence of their acceptability. Miracles have apparently given courage to many in distress merely through the beliefs the church has built up in the minds of the people.

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[5] Sigurd Johansen, Rural Social Organization in a Spanish-American Culture Area (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1948), p. 121.

With the Dancing-Dervishes, the church is the very center of social life. It has made the "spiritualization" fitness of the whole Moslem a concerted attempt in the life of these people. Their idea of moral virtues and altruism, for which has dominated, humanment ideals, thereby, leading them to have realized the idea of culture within the confines of the country. Men of this behavior are not only brought to means values and experiences. Thus, in fact we identify with the work in the moral action of the individuals dervishes with a role in giving the whole psychological realize through social intercourse.

Literally, speaking, the life of the dervish with a strongly based of action, that of individuals the social partnership, which is always with him. Since there is without original in the practical of the dervishes, there is, no doubt, more practice to follow the examples of the group in regard to a right economy which is usually seen in the increase of attention which are used to have happened. This feature is different from other and their superiority. Without this strongly this case is way in external which is which the Malaysia has proved has built up in the minds of our people.

Ibrahim Tolkom. Sufi Orders and Sufism in Sunnah-Jamaat. Lahore: Sufi Publication Company, 1970, p. 11.

Religion, in any culture, has certain beliefs in the work of the supernatural and the power of the spiritual laws which must be interpreted according to the attitudes of the group. Attitudes built up from social contracts, and the practice of magic may come to mean much in the formation of those attitudes which may be transferred from one individual to another until they become the attitudes of the group. Once fixed and conditioned emotionally, these attitudes are extremely difficult to change. The practice of magic is convincing because a mental state of faith in it has been achieved.[6] Miracles may contain group rationalization of behaviour and represent judgment of the welfare of all. The cohesiveness produced by such attitudes and acceptance of beliefs may cause a society to stagnate. "A lack of cultural contacts may permit a society to fall asleep in its tracks."[7] There might be a tendency toward fatalism with the expection of help from some supernatural power, as is seen in prayer

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[6] E. T. Krueger and Walter Reckless, Social Psychology (New York: Longmans Green & Company, 1931), p. 286.

[7] E. A. Ross, Social Psychology (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908), p. 14.

Religion, in our nations, has partook [illegible] in the work of the supernatural and the [illegible] of the political laws which must be interpreted [illegible] to the intuition of the [illegible]. Attitudes built on [illegible] social conditions, and the practice of [illegible] may [illegible] in the formation of [illegible] from our individual [illegible] upon [illegible] the existence of any [illegible]. [illegible] emotionally, [illegible] to change. The [illegible] in our lives [illegible] mental [illegible] of [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] may [illegible] [illegible] judgment of the [illegible] by [illegible] [illegible] society to [illegible]. [illegible] permit a [illegible] to [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] might be a [illegible] [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] Survey of [illegible] Society, [illegible] (New York: [illegible], [illegible]), p. [illegible].

[illegible] A. [illegible], [illegible] (New York: The Macmillan Company, [illegible]), p. [illegible].

and in pilgrimages to holy shrines.

Miracles may be a manifestation of abnormal suggestibility in society, perhaps in the form of messianic movements where collective behavior is demonstrated in the form of mass auto-suggestion or even hysteria. It is thought that probably the clue to the miraculous element in the lives of the saints, even Christ, has been produced through autosuggestion, with susceptibility being induced by a person or a group with prestige.[8] There seems, however, in some cases, to be a scientific explanation. Modern science explains the possession of one's body by an evil spirit as a split personality or schizophrenia, at which time the personality is temporarily shifted so that it takes on a different character. To a minor degree this happens constantly to most people; only the extreme cases are reported.[9]

There are arguments for and against miracles as an actuality. One author says, "It is true that the position that miracles are "impossible" cannot be sustained."[10]

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[8] Ibid, p. 30

[9] L. L. Bernard, Social Control and its Socialogical Aspects (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939), p. 461.

[10] Thomas H. Huxley, Science and Christian Tradition (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1896), p. 207.

and in [illegible] to [illegible].

[illegible] is a [illegible] of [illegible] intelligent-
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that [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] in the
lives of his [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
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by a [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible],
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modern [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
as evil [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible],
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that is [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible]
this [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
cause are [illegible].

[illegible] are [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

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[2] Ibid., p. [illegible]

[3] L. [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] (New York: [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], [illegible]).

[4] Thomas H. [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
(New York: [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], [illegible]).

It appears that the people involved have much to do with this belief according to their fixed mores. Another replies: "Normal persons frequently have delusions and hallucinations of a mild sort."[11] Another author gives his views in the following:

> . . . Religion preeminently is a philosophy of life for the individual. It is a shock-absorber; it relieves the stress and strain of clashing ideas and beliefs. It furnishes a rational scheme of life within which the individual may find mental security. It is profoundly an organization of moral principles which gives the adherent a sense of personal worth and value.[12]

Some hold to the belief that some people are more susceptible than others to belief in the supernatural. "The American Indian is an extremely susceptible type."[13] Such a susceptibility seems to parallel that of the Spaniards, who are classified as Latins, which are termed more dramatic and emotional than the people of the northern countries of Europe.[14]

Since the concept of miracles seems to be a phenomenon of religion, the church is the medium through which their meanings are expressed.

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[11] Krueger and Reckless, op. cit., p. 285.

[12] Ibid, p. 374.

[13] Ross, op. cit., p. 14

[14] Ibid., p.30.

Therefore, the miracle is apparently an important factor in history for its cultural and social significance as related to group behavior within the framework of the Christian religion-one of the most powerful institutions in the history of the world.

This is a study of the historical aspect of miracles gleaned from printed sources. The case study method is followed with a classification by social types rather than in a chronological order. Chapter two of the study contains an analysis of the miracles in their historical relationships.

Since the historical sources of these miracles should be subjected to careful evaluation by the canons of historical evidence, attention is given in the bibliography to a critical analysis of the materials.

CHAPTER I

CASE STUDY I

The Christ Child

The Christ Child, or Santo Nino, as he is also called, seems to have become as revered in New Mexico as the Virgin herself. He seems to be replacing her in recent times by becoming as personal to the people as the Virgin was at the beginning of the Spanish settlements.

His image resides in the little Santuario of Chimayo, where people from many sections come to pray to the little statue for divine help in many forms. Chimayo is a shrine for the cure of diseases, and a visit to this holy place is the last hope for many suffering invalids.

It has been said that any day in the year, the sick and diseased can be seen entering the shrine with the faith that supernatural cures will be given.

Just when this spot became a haven for the crippled and deformed, does not seem to have been recorded, but the present church was apparently erected early in the nineteenth century by a more prosperous citizen of the little village. Since he had been given more of the wealth of this world than his less fortunate neighbors, he wished to show his thanks to God by having a sanctuary made of the

place which contained soil possessing curative powers. It seems that for many years pilgrimages had been made to the spot where wonderful cures had been performed by the strange composition of the soil.

In the year 1816, the present church was completed, during a period of rejoicing to celebrate the tabernacle for worship which would be a symbol of the restoration of health and strength.

A small portion of the sacred earth is usually made into a drink which is supposed to produce the desired results. It appears that thousands of people must believe in this method of curing diseases since it is common folklore that the good health enjoyed by so many is due to the pilgrimages made to the sacred place. Among the virtues attributed to the unusual soil is that of warding off storms. It is thought that a small amount thrown into the fire during a wind will change the course of lightning so that it will not be harmful.

Along with the dirt at Chimayo, resides the Christ Child who does His part in healing the sick. It is believed that He sometimes plays with the children and acts as their protector. He wears out so many clothes and shoes while performing duties for the people that they are constantly having to replace them for Him.

Once a lady prayed for the Christ Child to help her little son who was ill. Before many hours had passed, a doctor entered the house with the explanation that someone had called and instructed him to visit that address. Almost immediately the boy was well again, and the mother was certain that the Christ Child had gone across the field from the church because she found Him in the chapel with his clothes torn. She was certain that this occurred as He climbed the wire fence on His way to call for help.[1]

During a period of drought, at one of the pueblos, the little Christ Child behaved in a manner which could not be easily understood by those concerned.

Since the fields were parching in the hot sun without any hope of rain, the decision was reached that the Christ Child might help relieve the situation. His image was taken into the fields so that he could get a first-hand look at the dying crops.

After a procession through the fields, the image was replaced in the church, and the eager Indians waited for the much needed rain. Suddenly the rain came, but not as was anticipated. Instead of the desired amount of water, it came

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[1] Nina Otero, Old Spain in Our Southwest (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1936), p. 150.

in a downpour which flooded the fields inflicting harm to the wilted grain.

This was the most terrible behavior one could imagine the little Son committing, so the image of the Virgin, as our Lady of Sorrows, into the fields to show Her what her Son had done. Tears ran down the face of the Virgin when she saw the damage that had been done. Even today, the Indians believe that there are still tear-stains on Her face, she cried so much about what Santo Nino had done.[2]

Santo Nino seems to be considered in much the same real and human manner as the Virgin, among the people of New Mexico. He appears to be considered more a personal saint than the Virgin in this area, since He is called upon to do more for the ones who are in need.

Another story concerning Santo Nino, had to do with the difficulty a man was having while trying hopelessly to get his wagon and team across the surging waters of a rising stream. Since no help came, and the stream continued to rise, the man prayed for the Christ Child to help him get out of the water and prevent the quicksand from killing his horses. Immediately after having told

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[2] Loc. Cit.

In a dangerous state. Thanks the Indian Legislature, now in the United States.

This was the most terrible convulsion we could imagine the little Son-in-law, in the image of the Virgin, our Lady of Guadalupe, have [illegible] to their Son that we had done. [illegible] of the Virgin which she saw the [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible], the Indians believe that [illegible] face, also great [illegible].

Santa Ana [illegible] to be [illegible] and burned [illegible] New Mexico. [illegible] to be [illegible] salut than the [illegible] to do [illegible] to [illegible].

Another [illegible] the difficulty [illegible] to get his [illegible] rising [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] from [illegible] [illegible].

[illegible]

his troubles to the little saint, the team pulled the wagon out of the mud.

When he went into the church to give his thanks, he found the little Son had personally gone into the water and lifted the wagon, the evidence being shown by the mud and water on His clothes.[3]

During the time of an epidemic, when many children were dying, the man who had been playing the fiddle at the funerals decided that he was tired of playing so much when he could be doing other things, so he refused to play for this particular funeral and instead went into the woods to gather some wood. Along the way his burro suddenly stopped, refusing to go any farther. The man noticed that the burro kept looking behind a certain rock, and upon investigating, he saw little Santo Nino Himself, standing there. With further notice, he saw the mark in the road which had been drawn by the Christ Child, and he knew that the mule could not possibly pass over that mark.

He never missed playing for a funeral for the little children after that. He realized that his playing was more important than the other chores he thought he was supposed to attend.

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[3] Ibid, p. 151.

his crowbar to the little [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] out of the mud.

When he went into the village to give his report, he found the Indian and [illegible] [illegible] lifted the wagon, [illegible] [illegible] water on its [illegible].

Shortly [illegible] [illegible] were drawn, the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] stopped, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the horse [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] investigating, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] there. With [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] which had been [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the male [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] children [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to [illegible].

[illegible], [illegible].

There is a picture of the Christ Child in the church at Cristo Rey which when viewed in one way shows Him holding a basket of grape vines and some bread on his head. The expression on His face is very happy in this picture, but there is another way of looking at the same picture which gives an altogether different view of the Christ Child. This appearance is that of the grief-stricken face of Christ wearing a crown of thorns upon his head.

This double view of the painting was first noticed in 1942, on Good Friday. Now that this has been noticed by one person, it can be seen by anyone who sees the carving.

Some believe that the lines were drawn in such a manner as to give the two aspects of Christ. There are others, however, who believe that God guided the hands of the one who made it.[4]

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[4] Elizabeth Willis De Huff, Say the Bells of Old Missions (Saint Louis: B. Herder Bood Company, 1945), pp. 156 - 157.

CASE STUDY 2

Maria de Agreda

One of the most interesting of all the miracles is the one concerning the nun Maria de Agreda of Spain. The Arabian influence is shown in this one by the transportation from one place to another of this mysterious woman.[5]

She was born of wealthy parents at Agreda, Spain. Her real name was Maria Coronel. Through some supernatural manner, she, supposedly, made trips from Spain to New Spain when Frey Alonso de Benavides was custodian of this territory. During his stay at Isleta in 1628, he was visited by a group of Jumano Indians from the eastern part of this section, who asked that he send them missionaries. He found that their reason for such a request was that they had been instructed by a young woman who had visited them, preaching in their language. When shown a picture of Madre Luisa Carrion, the Indians said that she wore the same kind of clothes as the "Blue Lady" who had come to them.[6]

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[5] Frank Calcott, The Supernatural in Early Spanish Literature (New York: Instituto de las Espanas en Los Estados Unidos, 1923), p. 132.

[6] Alonso de Benavides, Revised Memorial of 1634 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1945) pp. 316-317.

When Benavides returned to Spain in 1630, he visited Maria de Agreda. Shoe told him that she had made visits to the Indians in New Spain, with the explanation that her visits were made while she was in a trance, that she was the one who had sent the Indians to him, and that she sometimes made several visits in one day. To make her story more convincing, she related one incident that had occurred in his presence in New Spain, where she also was present but was invisible to him though the Indians could see her. Thereupon, she began to describe the land that is now New Mexico. The Indians verified that she wore a blue garb, which was the dress of the nuns of the particular order in Spain at the time to which Luisa Carrion belonged. Maria de Agreda and Luisa Carrion both belonged to the same religious society.[7]

In 1689 Alonzo de Leon was told about Maria in southwestern Texas, where she had baptized many of the Indians. In Arizona, there was a story that she had risen from the dead after having been shot with an arrow.[8]

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[7] Cleve Hallenbeck, "The Blue Lady," New Mexico Magazine, 23:17, Feb., 1945

[8] Ibid, p. 29

When Darwinian successor to the in 70 years, he's lighted Maria de Agrada. Dona Maria has said the had made visits to the Indians in her youth, with the mechanics from her village were made while she was a [illegible]. Some also was the one who had sent the Indians to him, and that she sometimes made several visits on the [illegible]. In such an story some discrepancies, the [illegible] was [illegible] occurred in his interview in [illegible] Dona Maria also was present but was invisible to her [illegible] Indians would see her. Therefore, she began to [illegible] the story as it is now [illegible]. The Indians [illegible] this [illegible] a blue [illegible], which was the [illegible] of the [illegible] order to [illegible] the [illegible] belonged. Dona Maria [illegible] Indian [illegible] passed to the [illegible] Indian's mother.

In 1938 [illegible] Indian [illegible] southwestern [illegible], [illegible] Indians. In [illegible], [illegible] from the [illegible] [illegible].

[illegible] Darwin [illegible], [illegible] Indian [illegible], [illegible], 1938, [illegible].

Ibid., p. [illegible]

There seems to be no evidence that the Indians considered her supernatural. Supposedly, she came to this country spiritually, leaving her body in Spain, but the Indians seemed to think of her as a real person, and not as a spirit. However, there is apparent evidence that she was never out of Spain since she was never absent a day from her convent.[9]

Some have explained that another young woman had been wearing the blue dress of Maria's order, but this does not seem to be a logical explanation since someone else would have most likely been with her, and Maria was always seen alone. Any real Spanish girl would have, it seems, been sent by her country and have expected aid from the church here. There seems to be no record of such a young woman other than Maria de Agreda of Spain.[10] The hardships suffered by the padres were tremendous, and they had the support of the Spanish government until they had at least built missions and had some means of subsistence. Therefore, it seems unreasonable that a woman could endure such things without some special aid.

The help and kindness that she gave to the Indians has come down through the years in the memories handed on from

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[9] Ibid, p. 31

[10] Ibid, p. 33

There seems to be no evidence that the Indians considered her promiscuous. Interestingly, in contrast to young country girls, Lorena Hart felt it likely that the Indians seemed to think of her as a hero, not only as a spirit. Somewhere, Hart is quoted as saying that she never had an Indian attempt to molest her except a drunk Ute bar customer.

Some have speculated that anyone who had been meeting the Utes alone of course under big tipis does not have to be a logical conclusion. Some others would have work locally been with Utes, and yet they always seem alone. Two small exceptions exist, however, of course, been part of the country and therefore with the church work. There seems to be no evidence if even a young woman walks then [illegible] of [illegible] mediation difficulty. [illegible] and they had the support of the [illegible] which they had at least built [illegible]. Therefore, it seems [illegible] such things without [illegible].

The half and [illegible] Utes are [illegible] come down through the [illegible]

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[9] Ibid., p. 34.

[10] Ibid., p. 32

one generation to another of the beautiful "Blue Lady" who came to them during the time when they needed the help and advice that she extended to them.

The story makes interesting conversation even today for the inhabitants of this section of the country. Most of the Spanish Americans can tell about the shrine which has been left in her honor.

This miraculous occurrence shows the apparent influence of the blending of the Spanish and the Indian cultures which had its beginnings in Arabian deserts, being handed on to the Spaniards, who later transplanted their cultural beliefs to New Spain.

CASE STUDY 2

The Virgin Mary

Our Lady of Guadalupe performed miracles in Mexico before the Spaniards brought her to this country, where she is now numbered among the many saints of New Mexico. She is said to have appeared visibly, along with Santiago, in the battle of Acoma, in 1599, when the Spaniards took control of that pueblo. Since the pueblo of Acoma is located upon a high rock formation, it must have taken a great deal of faith and courage to attack it. The above saints were said to have appeared in great clouds of fire which blinded the Indians so that the Spaniards were able to take the village.[11]

De Vargas is supposed to have received the aid of the Virgin in the image of Our Lady of Victory, or the "Conquestadora" in his reconquest of Santa Fe after the Great Rebellion of 1680. He reportedly promised the image that if she would enable him to recapture the city, he would have a church built in her honor. After a few hours of fighting, the Indians surrendered, and the church was

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[11] Mrs. William T. Sedgwick, Acoma, The Sky City (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926), p. 84.

built as promised. She is the special guardian and protectress of Santa Fe. Many believe that she still performs miracles in the City of the Holy Faith.[12]

About the year 1674, a girl of about ten years of age was brought to the image of Our Lady of Toledo to be cured of a paralyzed condition which was causing her great pain. After entering the shrine, she was immediately cured. The Virgin spoke to her personally, instructing her to rise. The little girl was then told that the particular custody where she was residing would soon be destroyed because of the lack of reverence which it had for the priests. She told the child that the above miracle would be the testimony of her words. This was six years before the Great Rebellion of 1680 when all of the custodies were destroyed in New Mexico.[13]

In the small towns and villages of this area, the Virgin cures sick babies, soothes the hearts of deserted sweethearts and brings back wayward husbands. This image of the Virgin is called Our Lady of Carmel.

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[12] E. Boyd, Saints and Saintmakers of New Mexico (Santa Fe: Laboratory of Anthropology, 1946), p. 24.

[13] _____, "Causes of the Pueblo Revolution," El Palacio, II:32, July 15, 1921.

In connection with this particular image, there is a story told that since the image was getting old and worn, one woman decided to replace it with a new one. To show their loyalty to the saint, the villagers would not consider such a move. The little image still stands in the church at Santa Cruz.[14]

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[14] Elizabeth Willis De Huff, Say the Bells of Old Missions (Saint Louis: B. Herder Book Company, 1945), pp. 68-69.

CASE STUDY 2

A Human Sacrifice

There is, supposedly, only one record of a human sacrifice in this section of the country. In this instance, there had been a series of battles among a number of Indian tribes, when several of the leaders or wizards decided that there had been too many people killed and perhaps a sacrifice would appease the gods, or the devil, whichever was displeased with the way things had been going.

After conferring for a while, they decided that one person would be enough for the sacrifice, representing all the groups involved. A young girl was selected for the victim. This act of horror was to stop the fighting among the tribes and to bring the water which had been needed for so long.

The river resumed its course the same day that the gruesome ceremony took place, leading the Indians to believe that the sacrifice had achieved the desired results.[15]

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[15] Jean Baptiste Salpointe, Soldiers of the Cross (Banning, California: St. Boniface's Industrial School, 1898), p. 68.

CASE STUDY 3

The Saints

(1) San Isidro

One of the best known saints in New Mexico is San Isidro, patron of farmers and protector of the fields. It is believed that before becoming a saint he was an ordinary hardworking rancher who lived near Agua Fria on Rio de Santa Fe.

Since he was anxious to finish a certain amount of work that had been neglected, he decided to plow instead of attending church one particular Sunday. After a while, a man came to the field and told him that if he did not leave the work and go to church, God would send rains and destroy his crops. This bit of information failed to affect the rancher. Then he was told that God would send insects which would ruin his grains. Seeing that this threat would not get the man to leave his work, the stranger told him that God would send a bad neighbor to live near him. This was the suggestion needed to do the trick, for the rancher left his oxen in the field and ran all the way to the church.

When the people came from the church, they saw an angel plowing in Isidro's field. It was then that he realized that God had paid him the visit in the field.

It is said that because of this strange visit of the supernatural being, the rancher became so devoted to the church that he was made a saint. He is well known through New Mexico today by the faithful who look to him for help in times of drought and pestilence.[16]

(2) Saint Francis

In the chapel at Santa Cruz, the image of Saint Francis stood for many years. Once, when the river rose and overflowed, threatening the surrounding area, one of the hands of the saint was thrown into the raging storm, and the river immediately ran back into its normal stream.

During an epidemic of illness, the other hand of the saint was broken off and burned to ashes, which were used as a medicine. They were placed upon the foreheads of everyone on Ash Wednesday with the result that there was no more sickness within the pueblo.[17]

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[16] Elizabeth Willis De Huff, Say the Bells of Old Missions (Saint Louis: B. Herder Book Company, 1945), pp. 131-134.

[17] Ibid, p. 67.

Once a rich man, who lived near Abiqiiui, had hoarded an enormous amount of gold and silver which was to benefit him for his own desires - except for the amount which he gave to the priest. When he heard that the Navajo knew of the treasure, he was sure that they would search the place and take it from him. He asked the priest to allow him to hide his money beneath the church altar so that Saint Francis would protect it for him. Since the man had shared his riches with the priest, the request was granted. The rich man also asked that there be a curse put upon anyone who disturbed the chest of gold and silver. The priest replied that such an act would be a sin, but he did consent to asking that the treasure bless only its owner and his son.

At last the fatal hour came and the fierce Navajos entered the church. They searched in vain for the hidden treasure.

Later, a group of bandits learned of the hidden chest and entered the church to look for it. One of them reached the place where the treasure was buried and began digging. He had hardly begun removing the dirt ~~until~~ when he fell dead. This frightened the rest of the treasure-seekers away, and

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the treasure is, no doubt, still there since the owners are dead and no one has dared dig for it since in fear that there was a curse put on the treasure and no one will be permitted to use it.[18]

(3) Saint Joseph

The saints seem to have played quite a part in personally helping the Indians. Saint Joseph has special authority over such matters as the home and marriage, and he reportedly came to the aid of many who needed such protection.

In one of the pueblos, one girl had difficulty getting a husband, and the situation became extremely embarrassing when her younger sister married. Among the Indians of this group, being an old maid was a grave misfortune, and the girl knew that everyone felt sorry for her. As a last resort, she went to the bedroom to pray to the image of Saint Joseph to send her a husband.

It seems that she arranged the time and the place well, since the man she was to marry happened to be at her house that night, yet she had never seen him before. By an

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[18] De Huff, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

accident,which occurred that night, she had hardly finished praying when she met the man who was to become her husband. Sure of the knowledge that she had met her future husband, she enjoyed the party which was being given at her home that night.[19]

One of the most convincing sources of information concerning the degree to which the belief in the miraculous has been carried was preserved in the records of the Supreme Court of the Territory of New Mexico in 1857 under the title of the "Pueblo of Acoma versus the Pueblo of Laguna."

This lawsuit was to determine which one of the two pueblos legally owned a picture of Saint Joseph, which was said to have been given to the pueblo of Acoma in 1629 as a present from King Philip IV of Spain. Fray Ramirez supposedly delivered the picture when he began his stay at Acoma where the picture remained until the Indians of the Laguna pueblo decided that the Acomans were blessed with such fine crops and general prosperity because of the

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[19] Ibid, p. 130

magic connected with the picture. Naturally, they believed that if they could only possess the picture the good fortune would relieve them of the long droughts and epidemics which had ravaged their homes for many years.

Saint Joseph was appealed to in times of stress and seemed to have a great effect in preventing serious consequences from the raids of the Apaches or from the lack of rain. The inhabitants of Laguna were envious of all this good fortune being given the Acomans while their coprs withered under the hot rays of the sun.

After a conference was held among the Laguna Indians, they sent a commission to Acoma asking them for the picture of the saint so that prosperity might be restored. After a series of meeting, the Acomans decided to lend the picture to the people of Laguna. Father Mariano de Jesus Lopez, the superior of the Franciscans, ordered a period of prayer and penance in the two villages. At the end of the time of prayer and fasting, the representatives of the two pueblos were to draw lots for the picture, believing that God would direct the proper result. The draw decided in favor of Acoma, causing the Indians of Laguna to become so infuriated that a group of their warriors broke into the chapel and took the picture. At the insistence of Father Mariano, the Acomas

let the picture remain at the Laguna pueblo for a while so that the people could enjoy the miraculous benefits of the saint for a while.

After a lapse of time the people of Laguna came into a period of great plenty while the village of Acoma was facing a possible famine. When the Acomans asked for the picture's return to help them in their period of unhappiness, the possessors of the picture made it known that they intended to keep it as their own. Guards constantly watched so that the magic image could not be taken away.

After a period of more than fifty years, the people of Acoma took the matter to court, with the result that both sides paid high fees to have the matter settled. The verdict was that the original owners were entitled to the picture, and that it must be returned to them.

A delegation was appointed by the happy winners to get the picture and bring it home so that they could again have the blessings of Saint Joseph bestowed on them.

About halfway between the two pueblos, they saw the picture resting against a mesquite tree. They were sure that there could be no other reason for this phenomenon than the magical capacity of the supernatural involving the saint. This proved further that the image was a fine

gift from divinity, since Saint Joseph was so happy when he heard the news that he was going to be given back to the ones who rightfully owned him, that he started back to Acoma by himself.[20]

In the year 1878, Saint Joseph was still performing miracles for those who deserved them - or so the story goes.

This particular place was the little Loretto Chapel at Santa Fe which was almost completed at that time. To the despair of the sisters, they found that no space had been left for a stairway leading to the choir. They tried desperately but failed to find a carpenter who could build the stairs to fit the framework of the already constructed chapel. After a period of meditation, the sisters decided to make a novena to Saint Joseph, who is also a great carpenter, to ask for his help. They diligently prayed their novena, and on the ninth day an old man with a long, white beard came to the door of the convent with the news that he had come to build the stairway for them.

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[20] L. Bradford Prince, Spanish Mission Churches of New Mexico (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1915), p. 209.

When the old carpenter had finished the staircase, the sisters went to thank him for his kindness, but they found that he was no longer there. After considerable inquiry, they found that no one seemed to know anything about him. He had not been seen on the streets nor on the roads leading from the town.

With tears in their eyes, the sisters realized that Saint Joseph himself had built the stairway in answer to their prayers. Apparently he built an extremely durable stairway, since it remains even today and is in almost perfect condition.[21]

There is a miracle recorded about the bell in San Miguel Chapel which has its setting in Spain and shows the dominance of Moorish culture in the Spanish beliefs. The bell was supposed to have been made in Spain in 1356. At that time the Moors were in possession of most of the country. The priests told the inhabitants that if they did not attend mass as they should the Moors would take their homes. The people made the bell in honor of Saint Joseph, since he is the protector of the home who would pray for them. During the time the bell was being made

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[21] De Huff, op. cit., pp. 59-63.

a great fiesta was held, and while the dancing and rejoicing was reaching its intensity, a girl threw her jewels into the mixture which was to become the bell. The result was a bell of such beautiful tone that the Moors were frightened away, and the homes of the people were saved.

Later this bell was brought to Mexico and finally the Ortiz family placed the bell in the chapel at San Miguel. There an old blind man entered the chapel each day for many years to pray and give thanks to God. As he prayed, the church bell would ring clearly and beautifully of its own accord. During the time the bell was ringing, the old man would point out various objects in the church, including the different saints and the decorations in the church to the amazement of the people who were present. As soon as the bell stopped ringing, he would feel about with his cane to find his way out of the church. He is supposed to have made these trips each day at noon until he was at last relieved of his loneliness and darkness by death.

This occurrence supposedly shows the goodness bestowed upon one who believes strongly enough in the Catholic religion. Although the restoration of sight was not permanent, the moments spent in reverence were filled with enjoyment as a reward for his belief.

In 1872 there was a storm and three towers of San Miguel fell.[22] The bell was taken with them.

There is a story about the image of Saint Joseph which occurred, allegedly, at Cienega. According to this tale, a rich man allowed the life-sized image to be placed into the private chapel at Cienega so that the people could go to the saint for prayer.

When the rich man died, his son decided to sell his possessions and to give the chapel to the community, whereupon he moved to another village. Later he came back to get the image of the saint so that he might put it into the new family chapel.

The statue was placed upon an ox-cart which was to carry the image to its new home. As the cart moved along, its load became unbelievably heavy. Before the end of the journey, the oxen fell dead of exhaustion. In order that they might continue the journey and deliver the image safely, four other oxen were hitched to the cart, but they were unable so much as to move the load.

When the people of the little village heard of the removal of Saint Joseph, two of the men ran down the road

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[22] Ibid, p. 54

to bring the statue back. As they reached into the cart to lift the image, they found that it had the weight of very light wood. They easily walked back carrying the object which could not be moved by four mules.

It was believed that Saint Joseph deliberately made himself too heavy to be taken away because he desired to remain at Cienega to protect and to bless the people.[23]

(4) Saint Anthony

The thirteenth of June is the day of the priests held in honor of the patron saint in San Antonio Arriba. It is thought that on this particular day the saint is likely to appear in disguise in order that he may test the hospitality of the people; therefore, the inhabitants of that particular village give food to anyone who wanders among them on that day.

Once the villagers became negligent in this regard, and so caused a series of misfortunes among the pueblo people. It seems that this incident occurred when Saint Anthony appeared in the little village dressed in rags, as if he were a beggar.

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[23] Ibid, pp. 89-90.

Naturally, none of the people who saw him recognized the old ragged man as being their patron saint, who had visited them in person. When he failed to receive the treatment befitting a saint, his image, which stood in the chapel, turned its face to the wall.

This form of behavior of an image seems to have become rather well-known in the old mission churches of New Mexico. When the saints become offended by the manner in which their subjects behave, it seems that they show their disapproval in this manner. By doing this, the saints show that they refuse to perform anymore miracles, at least for a while.

After the image of Saint Anthony turned toward the wall, much sickness and drought came to the little village. The people waited patiently for the thirteenth day of June to come again. They eagerly waited for anyone who might be the patron saint visiting them incognito. Instructions were given that no visitor should be allowed to go hungry on that day, since they dared not antagonize their protector again.

As the noises rose from the dancing crowd on this important day, someone announced that he was certain that the saint had arrived and was walking among them. It seems that two men were arguing, and one of them was trying to escape with the image of the saint. When the man succeeded

in leaving with the image, the people became very much alarmed believing that they would no longer receive aid from the saint. The Indians thought that the saint had come personally to take the image away from them. Later the image was found in a shop window downtown. The people then wondered why Saint Anthony preferred that place to the niche in the church. Promising that from that day forward they would observe the fiesta of the saint's day more carefully, they succeeded in getting the image back into the chapel.

One explanation for this event has been given as sheer planning by two men who took advantage of the belief in the saint. It is said that the Indians failed to hear the car which left about the time the image disappeared.[24]

One night the bells in the church at Los Lunas began ringing loudly during the time when a storm was sweeping across the mesas. This was considered a miraculous call for the people since they hastened to the church and found such surging waters that the foundations of the church

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[24] F. G. Applegate, Native Tales of New Mexico (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1932), pp. 103-104.

seemed to be shaking from the pressures of the water and the wind. The image of Saint Anthony was carried out into this storm, with the result that the waters immediately subsided, leaving the church unharmed.[25]

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[25] De Huff, op. cit., p. 26

CASE STUDY 4

Conversion and the Cross

During the early days, the padres sometimes found it difficult to win the Indians over to the Catholic outlook. One of the best ways to convert the people of the pueblos was to encourage them to believe there had been an intervention of some supernatural power.

One of the groups of Spaniards who settled in New Spain stopped at what has come to be known as San Juan pueblo and decided to settle in that vicinity. Not long after their arrival, the settlers heard a cry of desperation go up from the Indians. The reason was found to be that the crops had been without rain for so long that the Indians feared that there was no hope for saving their grain. One of the Spaniards told them that if they would pray to God He would send them all the water they needed. The friars joined the Indians in prayer, and within a few minutes the clear skies began to pour water, and at the end of twenty-four hours there had been so much rain that the crops recovered miraculously. After having seen what prayer could do, all the people of the

pueblo asked for baptism.[26] This bears out the belief that miracles were performed to show the non-believers that the Christian faith was God's chosen religion.

While making the long, tiresome trip across New Mexico, one group of colonists and soldiers soon saw that they could travel no farther across the hot wasteland without water. Their water supply had given out, and they knew that there was no hope except for rain. When the heat became almost unbearable, and their parched throats could stand it no longer, they decided to pray for rain so that they might be relieved of their misery. Immediately after having said their prayers, one-half of the sky became black while the sun shone brightly from the other. Suddenly the rain came down in such abundance that they happily made the journey across the desert country. This rain has come to be known as the "Miraculous Shower."[27]

This miracle is obviously of Spanish origin and had nothing to do with the Indians. It demonstrates the great

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[26] Benavides, op. cit., p. 58.

[27] G. P. De Villagra, tr. by Gilberto Espinosa, History of New Mexico (Los Angeles: The Quivira Society, 1933), p. 128.

influence the introduction of the Christian church was to have upon these people.

This type of miracle shows immediate need of help in regard to the bare necessities of life. Apparently, there is little else one could do under such circumstances except have faith that God might send aid.

During the early days of the padre's missionary work, an attempt was made by Captain Quinn, the tribal leader, to convert the members of a particular group to the Catholic faith. He had fallen under the spell of the teachings of the priests and therefore favored the conversion of his group. Since most of the tribe did not care to take the new religion, one of the Indians shot the leader with an arrow, which penetrated the chest, and seriously wounded him. When Fray Geronimo asked if he might be permitted to remove the arrow, he met a great deal of opposition from the non-believers. Since the priest could do little without the cooperation of the group, Father Ortega gave Captain Quinn a copper medal with the image of Our Lady and asked him to have faith in it. He placed it over the wound and bound it so tightly with a cord that it penetrated the flesh. When the priest visited the patient the next day to care for the wound, the medal came out with

the poisonous flint adhering to it.[28]

This was supposed to have been a miraculous act of healing power since the medal was the only remedy used to bring about the cure. The captain of the tribe became a Christian and influenced the conversion of many other.

One night while Fray Cristobal Ramirez was catechizing some people at Acoma in order to baptize them, an Indian came with the news that the sorcerers had bewitched a little girl, and that she was dying. The friar was afraid that the child might die without having been baptized. Her mother, then, permitted the child to be baptized before death. Scarcely had the child reached the water when she was cured. She showed great joy by gestures and expressions even though she could not talk. As a result of this, all the people in the pueblo became Christians.[29]

In the same pattern of conversation is the story told about some friars who tried desperately to convert the Indians of one village, who even refused to take the

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[28] Benavides, op. cit., p. 89

[29] Ibid, p. 73

trinkets offered by the padres. The Indians explained that there had been a prediction made among the members of the tribe that if they accepted anything from the white men they would die. Benavides explains what happened thus:

> . . . They were, however, freed from all their doubts and were converted to our holy faith through a great miracle which our Lord brought to pass in that village through the intercession of His servants, but about which we do not wish to report as yet because its authenticity has not been established. [30]

In 1864 a report was sent from the governor to the senior viceroy of Spain that on October 20, of the preceding year more than two-hundred Xumanas Indians had come begging to be baptized by the padres. They reported that they were representatives of some thirty nations among the Indians who wanted the Catholic religion.

They were sure that the holy cross produced miracles since they had just been saved by its intercession when they had encountered and fought a much larger group of enemies than they had anticipated. Although they were fewer in numbers and wholly unprepared, the aid of the cross had caused a cross, adorned with brilliant colors to descend through the air, enabling them to conquer their

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[30] Ibid, p. 218

enemies without a single loss. Along with this, they had fallen possessor of many rich spoils of war. Knowing this to be a miracle, they had come to beg for baptism.

This apparition of the cross was found to be a deceptive means by which an Indian of the Tezas managed to get help to return to his home on the other side of the Rio Grande.[31]

With the aid of the cross, Fray Francisco de Porras performed a miracle on the western border of what is now New Mexico. In this case, he restored sight to a blind boy with the cross which originally belonged to Luisa de Carrion. This induced conversion among the Apaches.[32]

During Juan de Onate's journey across the desert country of New Mexico, he suffered many hardships in an attempt to colonize this area. The devil, among all the other things, tried to hinder his progress by bringing about such a terrible hail-storm that the expedition was almost lost. The priests prayed for the help of God, and a miracle

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[31] C. W. Hackett, Pichardo, Limits of Louisiana and Texas (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1934), p. 326

[32] Benavides, op. cit., p. 79

was performed when the crucifix was used for that purpose. The storm quickly passed away to the astonishment of both the Spaniards and the Indians. The Spaniards were well-received by the Indians, and many of them became Catholics because of this supernatural demonstration.[33]

One does not ordinarily think of witches in connection with miracles, since they usually use their power to do evil. However, one old woman, who had the reputation of being a witch, did show that she could get in touch with the supernatural. She warned the people of a small village in New Mexico, that a great storm was coming and that they should pray for help from God. Since the skies were clear and the sun shone more brightly than usual, they only laughed at her prediction and dismissed her warning as the talk of the feeble-minded.

She insisted that the people place little crosses in their fields to prevent the loss of the crops. The crosses were to show that their prayers to God were sincere. He would then protect them. Though most of the people thought her to be a fool, one old couple placed the crosses in their field as she had advised. Later that day the wind became unusually cool and descended at a rapid rate from

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[33] Ibid, p. 57

the mountains. This was thought to be a sign of spring rains which would help the crops. Anxiety grew among the people when the storm became violent, but it was too late to do anything at that time. In the field where the crosses were placed, the grain stood straight and tall, but the other fields of grain were destroyed.[34]

In the land of the Zuni's, there was an old sorcerer who tried to pervert his son and change his belief from that taught by the padres back to the more primitive beliefs of his forefathers. When the priests were informed of the perversion of the soul of the boy, one of them made a visit to the old man. The friar explained to him that he should not try to cause his son to go to hell along with himself. He made it evident that the boy could be saved by becoming a Christian and that he should not be denied the privilege. The padre had taken the crucifix along with him. This annoyed the boy's father with the result that he cruelly mistreated the padre. The crucifix came in as a miraculous intervention of the supernatural, causing the kind and benevolent priest to be saved for a more important mission

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[34] Nina Otero, Old Spain in Our Southwest (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1936), p. 124

later on. However, strange as it may seems, this miracle did not convert this group of Indians to Christianity; they refused to allow a friar to preach the Catholic religion to them for several years.[35]

This shows a lack of conversion, even though the Indians saw the supernatural force in action.

Among the Taos Indians, it was the custom to permit a man as many wives as he could support. The friars had preached diligently against such behavior and had even managed to convert many of the Indian women to their way of thinking in this regard. However, the devil was working among the people by having an old woman try to persuade the others against monogamy. She planned her work by inviting a group of women, who had lived alone with their husbands, to go to the country with her for an afternoon. The old woman lectured to the women all the way there and back to the pueblo in the late afternoon about accepting the advice of the friars.

The skies were clear and blue as they walked along listening to the evil woman, until suddenly a bolt of lightning came down from heaven and killed the evil one

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[35] Benavides, op. cit., p. 78

among them without touching the good Christian women who were walking near her. The Lord had revealed to them that the holy sacrament of matrimony, which the friars had preached was the right way to live. The Indians who had disobeyed the teachings of the Catholic religion, changed their ways because of this miracle, whereupon, the wayward ones became Christians.[36]

This miracle shows how the Spaniards used their interpretations or superimposed interpretations of their religion to help in the conversion of the Indians.

Within the entrance of the church at Las Trampas, there is an opening which leads to the room in which the death cart of the mysterious Penitente Order is kept. The cart, along with the other objects used by this order, is a crude piece of handiwork which looks as if it belongs to another age. Upon the small, two-wheeled cart is placed a carved skeleton draped in black cloth. The figure is called Dona Sebastian, and she allegedly has been known to shoot an arrow at sinners who have failed to repent.[37]

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[36] Ibid, p. 72

[37] Writer's Program: New Mexico (New York: Bacon and Welsh, Inc., 1941), p. 289

CASE STUDY 5

Buried Treasure

Many miraculous stories have been told in connection with buried treasures, one of the most important incentives to the conquistadores. The Indians misled the Spaniards with their tales of buried gold and silver, and the belief in their existence remains today. Coronado hunted this mythical Quivira, but he failed to find any such treasures.

Occasionally, the story is told that a passageway has been opened in some strange manner, so that the stores of jewels and nuggets of gold could be seen.

Others have been informed of the hidden treasures by the roar of a great subterranean river, or a great white snake had risen from the ground at midnight to point the way to a passage filled with gold and silver. One prospector was led to a buried treasure by a spectral goat.[38]

Charles F. Lummis, The Land of Poco Tiempo (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), p. 86

CASE STUDY 6

Miracles of the Priests

Father Padilla came with the Coronado Expedition to New Mexico in 1540, and remained in this district when the conquistador returned to Mexico.

While out on sick call, in 1542, he lost his way in the barren mesaland. Finally, he reached a house where he was given food and drink. While he was eating, the man of the house came home in a drunken stupor, and without realizing who the visitor was, he thrust a knife into his back and killed him. The story is told that when he found that he had killed the priest, he tied the body to a horse and ran him away. The next day the horse reached the gate of the church at Isleta, and the Indians buried the body near the altar in the church.[39]

There is supposed to have been the miraculous occurrence of great prodigies at the time of his death, with the shooting of comets and the appearance of great globes of fire.[40]

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[39] Rev. Stanley Crocchiola, "Gaspar Castaro de Sosa reached Isleta, only to be arrested and put in chains," Santa Fe Register, October 4, 1946, p. 6

[40] Woodbury Lowery, Spanish Settlements within the Present Limits of the United States (New York: G. Putnam's Sons, 1905), p. 408

Many years later, great numbers of the Indians were dying of illness at the Isleta Pueblo, and the inhabitants went to the church to pray. During the period of prayer, the lid of the coffin, in which Father Padilla was buried, rose above the surface of the floor. The Indians were sure that this occurrence was the work of God, so they touched the remains of the priest in order that they might receive his blessing. They reburied him at a depth of seven feet within the hard ground, and the sick were immediately cured.

About every twenty years the body of Father Padilla rises above the level of the floor in the church. This strange phenomena is explained scientifically by the fact that the body was buried on a large flat rock, and when the river-bed shifted with the change of the course of the river, the big rock was forced upward, raising the coffin with it.[41]

Soil conditions, supposedly, produced the mummification of the body; however, other bodies have been buried in the same locality and are now mere bones.[42] The body of Father Padilla was reported to have been flexible after having been buried in those sands for more than sixty years.

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[41] Crocchiola, op. cit., p. 6

[42] Fray Angelico Chavez, O. F. M., "The Mystery of Father Padilla", El Palacio, 54:268, Nov. 1947, pp. 251-268

During the first twenty years that the body was buried, it was without a coffin, apparently, being placed into a coffin by the Indians who sought to appease the holy body.

It has been said that the reason the coffin rises on occasion might be the fact that it is made of a piece of hollowed-out cottonwood, being light enough to be forced up easily.[43] However, this does not explain how the body rose the first time without a coffin.

The church has never concluded whether or not there is a supernatural explanation for the rising of the body.

In connection with the miracle of Father Padilla, there is one which involves Father Docher, who was the Padre at Isleta for many years. While the churchmen were examining the body of Father Padilla, Father Docher found the wound that had caused the death of the earlier padre. One of the white worms from the wound bit him, causing his arm and hand to become so badly infected that the doctor in charge said that the arm must be amputated in order to save his life.

Instead of following the advice offered, the priest resorted to prayer to relieve him of the pain. He promised

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[43] Loc. cit.

a novena of masses each year for Father Padilla if the infection would recede. The arm did not have to be removed since this cure was brought about by a miracle in answer to faith in the power of prayer.

After that time, Father Docher celebrated the Masses of Thanksgiving in honor of the priest who had helped him in time of need.

The body of Father Docher was buried in front of the altar by the side of Father Padilla, when he died in 1928.[44]

Among the most common miracles is that of controlling nature in her more destructive moods. One of these is the interesting story told of the miracle of the Scapular at Los Lentes. During a raging storm, which threatened to sweep the church away and flood the land, Father Docher walked out into the tempest and threw his scapular into the surging stream. As soon as he did this, the water ran back into the river bed and resumed its normal course. This saved the mission from being swept away with the raging water.[45]

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[44] Julia Keleher and Elsie Chant, The Padre of Isleta (Santa Fe: The Rydal Press, 1940), p. 109

[45] De Huff, op. cit., p. 24

Father Docher's scapular also came in handy one time at the mission at Los Pajaritos when the church caught fire during a time when no one was present to put out the flames. Arriving in time, Father Docher threw his scapular into the flames and extinguished the fire miraculously.[46]

There are many tales told about the supernatural powers displayed by the padres who came to New Mexico to help convert the Indians in the early days of Spanish colonization. Many of them apply to nature, apparently, because of the surroundings plus the strong feelings displayed by the Indians concerning objects and forces of nature.

In relation to the supernatural surrounding the early priests of New Mexico, there is a story told of a miracle which happened near Bernalillo. This story is known as La Mano Negra. An elderly priest, who had been in charge of the missions near Bernalillo for many years, was not well for some time prior to his death. Because of his ill health, he did not attend all the masses his last few years, although he had kept the offerings. After his

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[46] Ibid, p. 25

death, he could not rest peacefully because this negligence burdened his conscience. Some of the Indians heard a bell tinging inside the church on several different occasion. Finally, one man went to the church to see what was causing the bell to ring. Upon finding no logical reason why the bell should be ringing, he decided to wait inside the church the next night to see what would happen. He and the sacristan waited the next night in the silence of the dark church until a ghost, clothed in white, appeared by the altar. The two could clearly see their former priest opening the missal and watched in amazement as he proceeded to go through the celebration of the mass. Once the old priest looked around for his acolyte to ring the bell for communion. He rang the bell himself when he saw that there was no acolyte to ring it for him. When he saw that there was no one at the altar rail, he disappeared.

A group of people waited in the church the next night to see whether or not the priest would come again. After a while, the priest came and celebrated the mass and would have rung the bell had it not been that a woman became so excited that she screamed at the first sound of the bell. With this interference, the padre turned as if surprised, placing his hand upon the open missal and disappeared again.

Since that day he has never been seen or heard, nor has there been any report of anyone having heard the church bell ring except in the normal course of religious activity.

The next day, the people discovered that the old priest had left a scorched place upon the missal where his hand had burned its shape through several pages, making *la mano negro* upon the mass book.[47]

Fray Francisco de Porras is said to have restored sight to a Hopi boy by spitting on his hand, then rolling some mud into the saliva and placing it on the boy's eyes while saying the word "Epheta." This also resulted in conversion of thousands of Indians.[48]

In April, 1760, Bishop Tamaron of Durango paid a visit to the northern part of his diocese, where he remained until July of the same year. The journey was considered to be such an important affair that all the inhabitants watched by the roadsides to get a look at the dignified priest.

There had been less rain than usual, and there was

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[47] *Ibid*, p. 31-36

[48] Benavides, *op. cit.*, p. 300

hope that something would happen to relieve the perilous condition. For some reason or other, the rains began about the time of the bishop's entrance into that part of the country and continued all during his stay, resulting in such long-continued rains that the crops grew miraculously. The dry lands were covered with pools of water which remained all during the visit, where before had been only parching sand.[49]

As plans for the rebellion of 1680 were taking shape, the Indians of Cochiti were making arrangements to kill their priest. The sacristan told the priest about the plan and helped him to escape to a small island in the middle of the Rio Grande. The priest was wearing a brown coat, and the Indians thought that they had sighted a bear prowling about among the shrubbery. For the Indians, a bear has great supernatural powers, and they believed that since Fray Cisneros had been mistaken for a bear there must be some magical power in connection with him. The Indians from San Felipe took charge of the Father and refused to return him to the Indians of Cochiti. The two groups

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[49] L. Bradford Prince, Spanish Mission Churches of New Mexico (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1915) p. 80

fought all the way to the pueblo at San Felipe. The fighting continued with the Indians of San Felipe retreating to a mesa behind their village, still keeping their mystical captive. After hours of fighting, the surrounded Indians found that their water supply had given out. They were at a complete loss as to what to do, when the priest proved that he did have some of the magical essence attributed to him. Finding a small piece of paper, he picked up a small piece of charcoal and wrote some words upon it. He gave the piece of paper to the sacristan, with the instructions that he take it to a certain place, put the paper down with the writing down and place a stone upon it. After his orders were carried out, the priest prayed. When daybreak came, he asked for the piece of paper to be brought to him. Upon the other side were written the instructions which would solve the problem which faced them. The priest asked for a piece of black volcanic glass, which he sharpened to a sharp point. He told the people to bring him their water vessels and that they would be filled for them. To the amazement of the excited group, water poured forth in abundance from the small wound which he made in his arm with the piece of glass. When water was needed, he refilled the containers. When the news reached the

Cochiti that the padre had such magical powers, they immediately went home for fear he might be able to miraculously do them harm if he so desired.[50]

Fray Juan Ramirez was saved in a similar manner when he went alone to Acoma to teach Christianity to the hostile Indians, who threw him from a cliff, but he was saved by the miraculous intervention of saints.[51]

Between the years 1608 and 1680 there was a time of great strife among the Indians as well as among the Spaniards. Several rebellions had been put down with great vigor.

There was a common belief among the pueblos that their ancestors came to help them in times of strife and battle. The forefathers were known to be inside of the kivas when their help was most desired, so that they might be able to instruct and guide the ceremonies against the foe. The spirits were represented by almost naked figures painted in death colors, which made them invisible, though they were

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[50] De Huff, op. cit., p. 84-88

[51] G. W. James, New Mexico, The Land of the Delight Makers (Boston: The Page Company, 1920), p. 151

present.

In one of the battles with Pope, the leader of the Rebellion of 1680, the Spaniards believed him to be under the spell of three spirits, which had been seen ascending from the subterranean kivas to throw their spell onto the pueblos.[52]

Whether or not the Spaniards really believed the above occurrence would be difficult to determine, but it seems rather well known that during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries ideas were prevalent throughout Europe that there was the magic of miracles. Miracles were accepted by most people as nothing to become alarmed about. Therefore, it is quite possible that such a spell might have been cast.

Also in reference to the miracles which seemed to happen to the padres was the one which occured at Acoma. A Jesuit priest, who was in charge of the mission at Acoma, told a story of having heard voices in the night and after listening for a while, was snatched from his bed by some invisible force. He was hurled out through the door onto

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[52] "The Story of Old Santa Fe," El Palacio, 10:3, Jan. 29, 1921

present.

In one of the familiar [illegible], the legend of the Rebellion of 1880, the [illegible] are [illegible] to be under the spell of these [illegible], [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] from the [illegible] never [illegible] [illegible] only [illegible] question.[82]

Whether or not the [illegible] really believed the above occurrences would be difficult to determine, but it seems rather well known that during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries there were [illegible] throughout Europe that there was the [illegible] of [illegible]. [illegible] were accepted by most people as within the [illegible] of [illegible] about. Therefore, it is quite possible that such a [illegible] might have been made.

Also [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to happen to the [illegible] was the [illegible] [illegible] of [illegible]. A Jesuit priest, who was [illegible] of the [illegible], [illegible], told a story of [illegible] [illegible] in the night [illegible] listening. [illegible], [illegible] from his [illegible] invisible forces. He was [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] his [illegible].

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[82] [illegible] of [illegible] No. 1 [illegible]. 10:3, Jan. 17, 1931.

a terrace. The deduction made by the Father was that he was not wanted there and that this was a spirit showing him the way. He asked to be transferred to another mission because he was sure that he was not to stay there.[53]

Sometime later another priest and a young man were visiting Acoma, and they heard voices after having gone to bed. They were not moved about by any unseen force, but some being or power slammed the door so hard that the hinges were bent by a supernatural element of some kind. After half an hour of working desperately, they opened the door to safety. They concluded that the closed door kept them from being thrown from the room.[54] How this deduction was reached seems vague, unless there is more to the miracle than has been recorded.

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[53] De Huff, op. cit., p. 50

[54] Loc. cit.

CHAPTER II

Historical Significance of Miracles

In the following chapter, I am going to use a chart placing the various miracles of New Mexico in chronological order as nearly as possible, based upon the data in chapter one. The miracles will be divided between the Spanish-speaking communities and the Indian villages, showing the persistence of beliefs in miracles through the centuries since the infiltration of the Spanish culture into the land which is now New Mexico. This chart will show the acceptance of the Christian faith among the Indians and how it has come down to the present in the belief in miracles.

The chapter will be divided into two parts in order that a more thorough evaluation of the two cultures may be discussed separately. The conclusion will show the relation between the two as it exists at the present time.

		SPANISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES							INDIAN VILLAGES				
Number	Century	Christ	Virgin de Agredo	Saints	Priests	Conversion			Christ	Virgin	Saints	Priests	Conversion
I	Sixteenth		Virgin Mary	St. Joseph								Padilla	
II	Seventeenth		De Agredo Shrine of Toledo Lady of Victory								St. Joseph	Ramirez de Porras	Baptism Prayer Storm Cross
III	Eighteenth											Fray Cisneros Fray Tameron	
IV	Nineteenth	Christ Child							Christ Child		St. Joseph St. Francis San Isidro		
V	Twentieth	Christ Child	Lady of Carmel						Christ Child	Lady of Sorrows	St. Anthony St. Joseph	Padilla Pocher	

From the foregoing data, it seems evident that the Spaniards brought their own ideas of the miraculous intervention of some supernatural power; therefore, the miracle appeared early in the history of the Spanish settlements in New Mexico. Obviously, the persistence of the belief in miracles has continued from the beginning of the Catholic domination in this section to the present among the descendents of the early Spaniards.

The little Christ Child seems to have become more revered in this area than the Virgin herself, and seems, in many ways to have replaced her in matters of personal importance to the people, even though she remains the most outstanding of all the saints of the Christian religion. Miracles performed by the Virgin in response to prayer existed in Spain after about the thirteenth century, and were brought to this country by the early friars, who considered it their mission to save the souls of the savages. Shrines have been built in her honor in various sections of the state. Dating back to the conquest and continuing to the present, the Virgin has been worshipped in the form of many different images in New Mexico.

Maria de Agreda of Spain reputedly came to the Spanish settlements in the early days of the missionary efforts of the priests. Her visits were reported as being spiritually rather than actually in person. She is credited with having performed numerous miracles, but she has not been made a saint according to the accounts which were examined for this study, even though she seems to qualify, since in the Catholic church, one may become a saint by performing a number of miracles.[55]

Some of the saints, other than Mary, were brought from Spain with the early conquistadores. They performed miracles for the Spaniards in the early days of the conquest, and they still exist in the form of images which answer prayers for those who sincerely believe in them.

Geographic factors apparently have contributed to the types of miracles, and their persistence, along with the interpretation of the Bible by the priests of the Catholic church. Since the Spanish-speaking groups mostly live in the rural sections of the state without much contact with the present-day culture of the Anglo-Americans, they have

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[55] L. L. Bernard, Social Control and Its Sociological Aspects (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939), p. 461

become an isolated group, dependent upon the soil for their livelihood. Because of the cultural and geographic isolation of these people, they have been forced to continue the mores of sixteenth and seventeenth Spain for lack of outside contacts. These areas usually consist of the poorer people of this group. This factor of isolation has tended to cause a perpetuation of the inferior and outworn practices common among their beliefs. Health practices are often those of medieval superstition, since modern medicine was introduced into the culture of the western world after this ethnic group went into isolation.[56]

As an ethnic group, the Spanish-Americans seem to have held to many of the early beliefs of the first settlers in this area in regard to the actuality of the occurrence of miracles. The records show that they occur particularly among this socio-economic group of the larger whole of the Spanish-speaking people in New Mexico. One author has said: "You can hardly understand how a man feels about his religion unless you are able to understand how he feels about his industrial position and about other matters in

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[56] George J. Sanchez, Forgotten People (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1940), pp. 4-5

which he is deeply concerned."[57]

In this study, there is one case of a human sacrifice, but it is Indian in origin and had nothing to do with the Christian religion. However, the other case studies, which occurred among the Indians are interpreted according to their relation to the Christian religion-the above miracle being only an illustration of the pagan beliefs.

The miracles, pertaining to the Indians which have been used in this study, occurred near the Catholic churches in the various hamlets and villages, showing the influence of the Christian religion on the beliefs in certain kinds of miracles.

The Christ Child has become very important among the Indians, and he is considered a real friend and guardian of the children of the Pueblos. The picture of Christ is found in the churches of the Indian villages, and stories of the Christ Child are common, everyday conversation. He has been adapted to the Indian beliefs, and performs miracles which aid them in obtaining rain by miraculous intervention of the supernatural, along with the many other duties he performs in regard to children.

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[57] C. H. Cooley, Social Process (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), p. 289

Miracles pertaining to the Virgin have taken a place of secondary importance among the Indians. She is considered important mostly in her relation to the Christ Child. However, many images of the Virgin adorn the churches in the various pueblos.

Miracles concerning the saints seem to have appealed greatly to the Indian imagination. Images of the outstanding saints are regarded as being almost human in their relation to the many families. Saint Joseph is guardian of the household and helps in such matters as marriage and love affairs. Miracles performed by some of the other saints show that the Indians have adapted them to their beliefs, as in the case of controlling the elements of nature.

Since the priests were leaders of the religious life, it is not surprising to find that they have become important in the supernatural beliefs of the Indians . They have come to be treated in much the same manner as the saints in many instances, as is illustrated by the case of Father Padilla at Isleta. The Indians sought to appease him as they would have one of the saints or a pagan god, in order that they might be helped instead of receiving punishment for lack of proper respect in regard to the divine.

There are many miracles regarding conversion and the ways in which it was achieved. The cross was the most common of the supernatural objects used in this connection. Prayer and baptism were of secondary importance in converting the Indians. These miracles occurred frequently during the seventeenth century but have become of little importance since that time.

CONCLUSION

Thus from the foregoing evidence, it seems that it is safe to say that the Indian and the Spanish cultures have mixed to a great degree in the areas studied. The Catholic church is still working to maintain a high set of social and religious values among the Spanish and the Indian villages in which they work. One author says:

> . . . At present the church is going through a period of readjustment, but character rather than creed is being emphasized. With the rise of the ideal of social service, there has been a decline of sectarianism, and it is predicted that the twentieth century will see the church fulfilling one mission of Christ, spreading the altruistic spirit throughout society and cementing the ties of civilization. [58]

As we have seen, the Spanish culture has played a very important role in shaping the religious beliefs and customs of the Indians as they exist today in New Mexico. The Catholic church has added greatly to the beliefs of the supernatural as found among the Indians. Therefore, the work which was begun by the early padres, lives on in the mixture of beliefs and customs which has produced a distinct culture in New Mexico.

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[58] Sigurd Johansen, Rural Social Organization In A Spanish-American Culture Area (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press: 1948), pp. 121-122

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