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The Cowboy & the Crusader

Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira

This Questions & Answers meeting of Americans with Prof. Plinio took place on January 16, 1978, in São Paulo, Brazil. We selected two of the Qs & As that we thought would be of interest to our Readers.-

Those of us who live on the American Continent – in both the North and the South – do not have the historic marvels or traditions of Europe. In a certain way, we are still blank pages in the History of the world. In Europe, the pages are filled with historic marvels.

Some of you could object that the United States is the leader of the West and, therefore, cannot be considered a nation that has not written pages in History. Something similar could be said of Brazil, which is the leader of South America. What I mean, however, is that our countries have such a potentiality that only when we arrive at the Reign of Mary will their full vocations unfold. Until then, our countries can be considered blank pages of History.

I am at your disposal to answer the questions you may have.

Question: What is the primordial light of the United States? You have spoken of the ideal of an order of chivalry for the Counter-Revolution: Does the figure of the cowboy reflect in some way this primordial light?

Answer: From what I can see from this distance, it is necessary to make a distinction between two United States.



The English colonist sought adventure, money, a less complicated culture and life



First, there is the U.S. originally formed by the English colonists who moved there;

Second, there is the U.S. of the later immigrations, that is, people of many different nationalities who went to the U.S. and were influenced by that first English environment.

So, there is a first primordial light and capital vice related to the English who left England and entered a New World and a second primordial light and capital vice that is an amalgamation of the former with the various characteristics of the new waves of immigrants.

An answer to your question supposes a somewhat complex explanation, which I will try to simplify as much as I can.

Let me note, first, that I am not referring to that first group of Quakers who journeyed from England to the U.S. to flee persecution. I want to focus on those who left the Old World voluntarily.

The England that sent its people to the U.S was an England in crisis. The same applies to Ireland. These colonists came from an aged world that had reached an apogee and was starting to decline. In this situation people started to leave to establish themselves in a new and unpopulated world. It was the more audacious and restless persons who left, those who did not like the cadenced march of the European world. They went to the U.S. bringing a spirit of adventure.

Those who left England were the persons of a simplifying spirit, who did not like the complications of European and English culture. For example, in the religious field, there were, on one hand, Anglicans fighting against Baptists, Anabaptists and Quakers; on the other hand, all those Protestants sects were fighting against the Catholics. In the political sphere on the British Islands, the English were fighting with the Irish and the Scots. Internationally, England continued its historic rivalry with France and Germany, with its constant resentments against what it deridingly calls Continental Europe. Each of those antagonisms originated from complicated causes.

So, these persons who left England were tired of those complications; their mindset was turned toward simplifying and reducing all those problems in view of two intertwined goals: an adventure in order to make money.

The points that make the Americans different from the English are their love of adventure, their practical spirit, their ability to improvise and to avoid everything complicated; also, they have the tendency to reject tradition, blaming it as a source of those complications they do not like. This is the mentality that I see in the cowboys as well as the pioneers who settled and expanded the United States, from its beginning up to the 19th century.



A second wave of immigrants soon left off their traditional customs to adopt American ways; *above*, arriving at Ellis Island; *below*, Little Italy in New York City



The immigrants who came later also abandoned their traditional characteristics, as the English had done. In this, the English who came to the U.S. were the trailblazers. Just as they “de-anglicanized” themselves, so the descendents of Germans “de-teutonized” themselves, the Syrians “de-syrianized” themselves, etc. They were all patched together, making a quilt of faded materials, which is what the United States is today.

So far, you have the description of the American capital vice, rather than its primordial light. From this description of the capital vice, however, we can move on to focus on the primordial light.

From this ambience emerged a group of discontented persons: Onto the scene came a category of North-Americans with universal concerns, something that conflicted with the capital vice of America.

These persons were seeking a more profound way of thinking but did not find it; they were looking for the marvelous and did not find it; they wanted the noble spirit of dedication and seriousness and

did not find them. These persons began to unite in order to search for these values. These are the ones who make up the Counter-Revolution. They are a family of souls that found such values in the pure fountain of the Catholic Church. They found what America’s capital vice had expunged from the American ambience.

So, in this we find one aspect of the Reign of Mary: those who, with the daring of the cowboy, place themselves at the service of Our Lady. They do not ride after cattle, but rather souls; they

seek not only souls to conquer, but enemies to defeat. This is the description of a Crusader. This is how Americans can become part of a chivalric order to establish the Reign of Mary.

Here you have a short summary of how I consider the History of the United States from its foundation until today.

Question: What is the role of the American Counter-Revolution during the Chastisement predicted in Fatima?

Answer: North America accumulated in an archetypal way everything the revolutionary world wanted to spread. If the Chastisement must destroy the fruits of the Revolution, then it should be particularly destructive in the United States.

Thus, the role of the Counter-Revolution in the U.S. is to have a power to construct, order and decide that is equal to or greater than the energies of the Revolution that led to build this revolutionary establishment.

This force of spirit can only be the fruit of a special mentality, the mentality of the Crusade. I am sure that if the Crusaders had remained in the Holy Land, the history of the Middle East would have been completely different. Their mentality was different from the Muslim world, but they would have built something much greater, of a different grandeur.

I hope that the Counter-Revolution in the U.S. builds a much greater civilization than the modern civilization the U.S. has raised up today, one with a different grandeur. It should attract all the souls who long for the marvelous, who desire all the things the modern world wanted to eliminate.



Cowboys on the open range, something of the crusader spirit

Columbus and the First Christmas in America

Margaret C. Galitzin

To people who go into a new country to live, Christmas, which is so generally a family feast, must of necessity be a lonely, homesick one. They carry with them the memory of happy customs, of loved ones far away, and of familiar customs. Most especially was this the case with the first Christmas spent by the Catholic Spanish explorers in the New World.

Since land had been sighted in October of 1492, Columbus had continued exploring the Bahamas, the northeast coast of Cuba and the northern coast of Hispaniola in the Caribbean. The intrepid mariner, Christopher Columbus, entered the port of Bohio, in the Island of Haiti, on St. Nicholas Day, December 6, 1492. In honor of the day, he named that port Saint Nicholas. The caravel *Pinta* with its crew had parted from the other two ships and gone its own way, so the *Santa Maria* and the *Niña* sailed on together, occasionally stopping where the port seemed inviting. While in one of these, Columbus heard of rich mines not far distant and started out for them.



The grounding of the *Santa Maria*

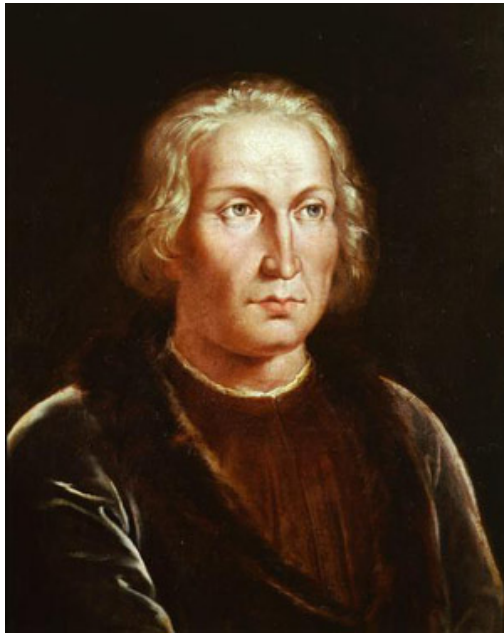
On the *Santa Maria*, the Admiral and his men were tired from continuously keeping watch, and as the sea was smooth and the wind favorable, they retired to their quarters below deck to sleep on Christmas Eve, leaving the ship in care of a boy. Instead of smooth sailing, however, the ship ran into trouble and struck a sand bank and settled, a complete wreck in those waters so close to land. Fortunately no lives were lost, and the wreckage furnished material for the building of a fortress. This task occupied the men's time during the remainder of the Christmas season.

The *Niña* was too small to accommodate two crews. Therefore, on Christmas Day many of the men were wondering who were to stay on that far-away island among the bizarre looking natives of whom they knew nothing.

Guacanagari, the chief of the nearby tribe, who had already heard about these strange men sailing the waters, sent many of his men in canoes to assist the strangers and did what he could to help them during the day. Spaniards and natives worked until dawn on Christmas morning to bring ashore what they could save from the wreckage and stored it away on the island for future use. Fortunately, they succeeded in saving almost all of their provisions, the spars and even many of the nails of the wrecked *Santa Maria*.

But what a difficult Christmas morning for Columbus and his men, stranded on an island far from home, among a strange people! There were no festivities to be observed by that sad, care-worn company of 300 Indians on that day. The following morning, however, chief Guacanagari visited the *Niña* and invited Columbus ashore, where a meal was prepared in his honor, the first public function attended by Columbus in America.

We can imagine that beautiful island, which to many probably seemed a paradise on earth, with tall trees waving their long fronds in the warm breeze and myriads of birds such as they had never seen filling the air with song. Columbus stood, attired in his full uniform, as it befitted him to be, beside his host who was dressed just in a shirt and a pair of gloves that Columbus had given him, with a coronet of gold on his head. The other Indian chieftains also with gold coronets moved about in nature's garb, among the more or less "thousand" who were present as guests. The meal consisted of shrimp, cassavi - the same as the native bread - and some of their nutritive roots. It was not a sumptuous repast although it may have been a bountiful one.



Christopher Columbus

The work of building the fortress began at once. Within 10 days the Fortress of La Navidad (present day Môle-Saint-Nicolas) was completed. It stood on a hill and was surrounded with a broad, deep ditch for protection against natives and animals. This was planned to be the home of those Spaniards who would remain there, for, as mentioned before, the *Niña* was too small to host the crews of two ships. Nothing had been heard of the *Pinta*. Leaving provisions sufficient for one year, Columbus bade farewell to those 39 men whom he would never see again, and sailed to Spain on January 4, 1493 to report the news of his Discovery, which thenceforth would be called the New World.

What for Columbus seemed a cruel fate – losing the *Santa Maria* and leaving his men behind in that fortress - was actually the means of his bestowing a valuable gift to History. Had the *Santa Maria* not wrecked but continued her course in safety that Christmas Eve, the fortress of La Navidad or any

European settlement probably would not have been founded in the New World on Columbus' first voyage. So, although it was a sad, troubled Christmas for the Spanish adventurers, it proved memorable in the annals of America.

Four hundred years later, the anchor of the *Santa Maria* was discovered and brought to the United States to be one of its treasured exhibits at the great Columbian Exposition, where a descendant of Columbus was the honored guest of the Government.

Rebuttal to the Lies about Columbus

Phillip Mericle

We are at the end of the 16th century. The Habsburgs reign in Spain and from there extended their Catholic Empire over the world. With globe straddling territories and victorious armies Spain was hated by Protestants. Facing defeat on the battlefield, these Protestants turn to the pen to try and defame their hated Catholic enemies.

In the Netherlands printing presses churn spreading tales of Spanish “infamy” with no bother to adhere to reality. That old ill-informed habit of denigrating Spanish accomplishments persists to this day, finding a curiously modern incarnation in the controversy surrounding a non-Spanish figure: the Genovese sailor Christopher Columbus, who was, nonetheless, sponsored in his trips by the Spanish Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella.

Today, it is becoming increasingly popular to depict Columbus as an archetype of colonial wickedness. He, who once was venerated in schools, is now defamed for a whole host of alleged crimes. Influenced by this defamation campaign, many Americans are replacing Columbus day with “indigenous peoples” day. Often he is blamed by extension for all the atrocities committed by later explorers. Personally, he is depicted as a gold-crazed madman.

But, these stories are false. Like the [Black Legend of the Inquisition](#), an investigation into the actual documents of the period reveals a startlingly different story. Further, these myths are not only perpetuated in our days, but they are actually increasing indicating no regard for intellectual integrity.

From newspapers to blogs the story that Columbus “sailed in 1493 and stole all the he could see” continues to spread with ever more virulent permutations. Like a snowball traveling down the mountain, a single lie gains in size and momentum as other untruths and exaggerations are added to it, until the myth becomes entrenched in the public imagination and people assume it is truth without question. It is a sad testament to the low intellectual level to which our modern times have sunk in respect to truth.

Few researchers could claim Columbus was perfect; he was not, but to unquestioningly subscribe to the myths surrounding him is to buy into a highly ideological lie that holds historical truth subservient to ideological agendas.

Responding to myths

Today, I respond to the following myths slandering the name of Columbus readily found on the internet.

Myth 1: “Columbus never set foot on America.”

Response: On Columbus’ 3rd and 4th voyages he landed in Central and South Americas. Thus, Columbus can rightly be said to have discovered “the Americas,” regions previously unknown to Europeans. To anyone else but North Americans, the three Americas – South, Central and North – form an ensemble with many points of unity: it was inhabited by Indians and was colonized almost at the same time by Europeans.



Columbus' landing on Hispaniola in America

This general process started with Columbus discovering the Isle of San Salvador in 1492 and it is more than logical that the discovery of one part of the New World should be considered the discovery of the whole.

The difference is that most of Central and South Americas were colonized by Catholics, while North America was initially colonized by Protestants. Hence, it is understandable, therefore, that the Protestants would induced North Americans to believe that they are different and superior to their Central and South American brothers and the only ones who deserve the title of Americans. It is based on this pride and lack of objectivity that this myth took root.

Myth 2: “Columbus brought violence and disease to the Indians.”

Response: The Native Americans were used to warring, committing genocide, enslaving and even practicing cannibalism long before Columbus. The word ‘cannibal’ itself is a derivation of the name for the *Carib* tribe, the same that give the Caribbean its name. Therefore, it is completely out of reality to attribute all these evils to the Europeans who set foot in the Americas.

Disease was an unintended side effect of Spanish contact, and would have occurred regardless of who traveled between the Europe and the New World. Indeed, it is not difficult to understand that since the Indians had not developed resistance for the habitual diseases Europeans had, when the latter arrived in the Americas their diseases produced devastation among the Aborigines.

Out of context sentences

There are also “quotes” reinforcing other myths by taking single sentences of Columbus’s writings in an attempt to portray him as a monster. From racist to child trafficker, Columbus is accused of a whole host of atrocities relying on “citations” from his journal to prove the point.



A sketch showing the Indians as cannibals, an actual fact

All one must do is look at the original documents written by him and his record keepers to see that these depictions are egregiously false.

The book *The Northmen, Columbus and Cabot, 985-1503* gives us the texts. Edited by a Yale professor it is translated and freely available in multiple formats [here](#). The following citations are from its 1906 edition. The following are some of commonly quoted lines to prove Columbus was evil:

Myth 3: Columbus offended the Indians, based on the quote: “*Savage cannibals, with dog-like noses that drink the blood of their victims.*”

Response: Alleged to be Columbus’s description of natives, *in reality* this was Columbus’s recording the description *given by Taino Indians* about the cannibal Carib tribe. Columbus himself dismissed these claims as exaggerations until he and his men came across a village of cannibals and found body parts of men being cooked. (pp. 138, 157, 174, 183, 290)

Myth 4: Columbus despised the Indians, based on the quote: “*For with fifty men they can all be subjugated and made to do what is required of them.*”

Response: This entry is presented to try and depict Columbus as a power-hungry conquistador evaluating potential Indian victims. In reality this was Columbus relating to the Monarchs how establishing fortresses to protect trade routes did not seem necessary because the islands seemed quite safe. Later experience proved the natives could be quite war-like, but this initial observation is still misquoted to try and paint him as a ruthless conqueror despite his explicitly friendly gestures towards the Indians. (p. 114)

Myth 5: “[He] sold children into sexual bondage.”

Response: This particular falsehood would be laughable were it not so egregious. The lie has its origin in a letter Columbus sent back to Spain wherein he states:

“*There are plenty of dealers who go about looking for girls ; those from nine to ten are now in demand, and for all ages a good price must be paid.*”

An appalling indictment. However, citing this quote out of context removes one absolutely vital component of the text: It is explicitly ***Columbus complaining to the Monarchs of this atrocity.*** His very next paragraphs states that these traffickers “*did not deserve water in the sight of God or the world.*”

Far from engaging in such activity, Columbus tried to suppress this behavior on his return to Hispaniola, and begged the Monarchs that more upright men be sent as colonists. *Despite this, there are actually those who cite this quote out of context* in an attempt to create the narrative that Columbus somehow approved of child exploitation. Anyone who bothers to read the text they are citing can see this through this falsehood. The mendacity of those who persist in spreading this lie is staggering, particularly given how easily the truth is verified. (p. 378)

The real & forgotten Columbus

Given the falsehoods spread about Columbus, it is worthwhile to note the behavior that actually characterized this great explorer who is at the center of so much controversy. The 1906 translation of Columbus' voyages show us the following:

- Columbus was consistently the only restraining force over his otherwise lawless men, forbidding them to pillage or steal from the villages abandoned by the Indians (pp. 125, 131, 132).
- He forced his men to free several Indians that they wanted to enslave. (p. 219)
- He consistently affirmed and demonstrated that the expansion of the Kingdom of Christ, not the acquisition of riches, was the primary objective of his expeditions. Even his enemies admitted this, merely asserting that he did not do a good enough job (pp. 142, 160, 180, 187, 192, 253, 207, 355, 361, 412)
- Columbus insisted that his men do no harm the Indians and that they treat the natives well (pp. 158, 175, 180, 191). In his eyes the natives were subjects of the King (p. 187), and he expressed great admiration for them (p. 196)
- When the natives attempted to give him gifts, Columbus insisted that they be given something in return since it was unjust to take something valuable for nothing in return (p. 192).
- When cannibals attempted to capture some Spaniards, it was Columbus who restrained his men from killing in defense, commanding them to frighten the Indians away. They would also free several natives captured by the cannibals who were being kept as sex slaves and future meals. (pp. 291-293).



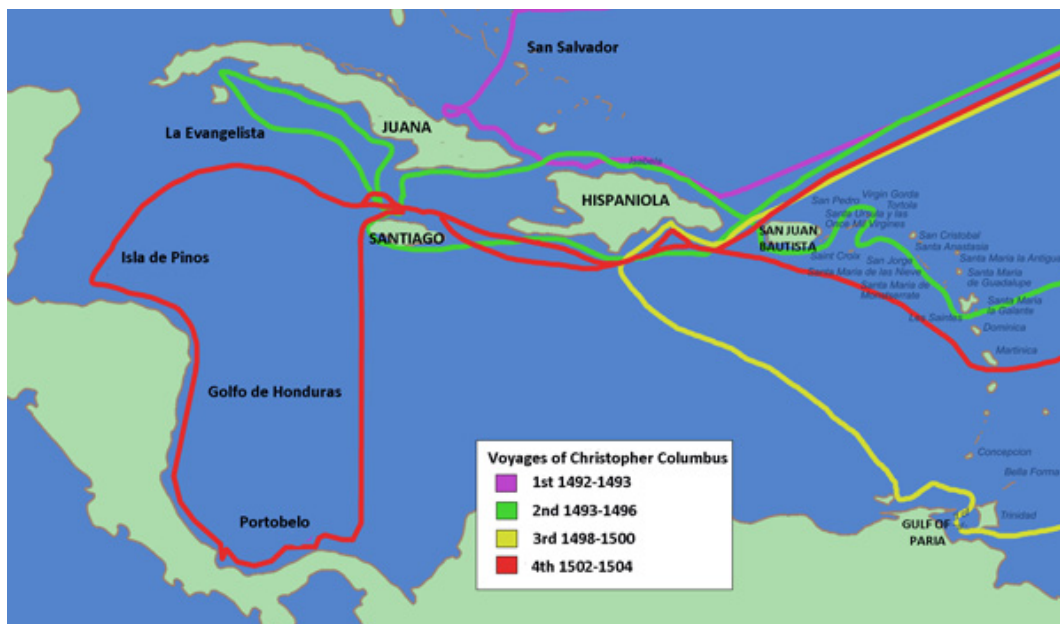
A monument to Columbus in Madrid

- Columbus received tribal dignitaries of a local chief, refused their offer of supplies and gold, and then sent them away gifted with clothing. (p. 298)
- Columbus urged that any gold be obtained through fair trade and not through plunder, which he feared would bias the natives against converting to the Catholic Faith. (p. 416)

The man who emerges from the original documents written by Columbus is radically different from the revolutionary narrative about him. Seeing as these myths can be so easily refuted by the free and open translations, the mendacity of the myth-spreaders becomes apparent.

Those who would perpetuate these slanders in the face of such obvious evidence are, at best, guilty of grave ignorance. More realistically, they are culpable of intellectual dishonesty.

Society deserves honest representation of facts rather than ideologically motivated distortions. Those who spread these lies about Columbus are following a revolutionary agenda and build their foundation upon falsehoods. Simply put, if they are willing to lie about such obvious things, what can be believed about anything else they say?



The voyages of Christopher Columbus

Why Columbus' Honor Was Maligned

Phillip Mericle

In May of 1506 there lay dying a man who had expanded the horizons of recorded knowledge beyond anyone's wildest imaginings. Over the course of his life he had undergone horrific hardships: starvation, disease, war, famine, mutiny and imprisonment. His enemies accused him of avarice, treason, mismanagement and inhuman cruelty. At times even his friends wavered in their good-faith.



A visionary pointing the way to a New World, a portrayal insistently maligned today

Yet, despite these obstacles, he had seen wonders the likes of which no European had dreamed, expanding the dominion of his royal patrons to shape their kingdom into a world superpower for centuries. His title was "the Admiral of the Ocean Sea." His name was Christopher Columbus.

Myths

Much of the contemporary history passed down to Americans about Columbus is based on fiction more than fact. Allegations made by detractors clash with fables perpetuated by those who seek to honor his memory beyond reason. Some such myths are so easily dismissed they do not bear reciting. Others carry such a semblance of credibility that they are perpetuated today as if they were the actual truth.

Tribalist and biased pro-Indian movements of our own 21st century have selected and spread many of the myths about this phenomenal navigator. Armed with slanders, they attack his memory and attribute to him a whole host of colonial evils in their attempt to vindicate the nativist position against the real or invented crimes of the white man.

Bobadilla

Many of the accusations against Columbus find their source in the accounts of the Spaniards under his own command. Here are some of the factors that can explain how unfavorable and non-objective reports about Columbus surfaced while he was still alive:

- In Hispaniola the hidalgos chaffed under Columbus's emergency order that all colonists work regardless of social class.

- Setting up a civilization where only tribes existed was a monumental task; work was hard, tropical diseases were rife, starvation ensued and the hoped-for wealth of the “tropical paradise” was not immediately forthcoming. Many Spaniards felt they had been lied to about a New World with easy gold and wealth.
- Many colonists were convicts sent to Hispaniola as laborers as Columbus did not wish to enslave natives. These men were quick to rebel against Columbus at the first opportunity.
- Columbus and his brothers hailed from Genoa in Italy, and the proud Spaniards did not take well toward being under their command.
- The strict military discipline crucial for their initial survival was necessary, but sat poorly with the sick and weary colonists.
- Columbus was often absent on explorations, leaving his less competent brother to govern the colony. The colonists quickly grew to dislike the ineffectual brother and rebelled against the Administration, pillaging the countryside and setting themselves up as lords over Indian villages. Columbus was forced to bring these obviously disaffected men to justice.

In response to the lies spread by Columbus’s enemies at the Spanish Court, a knight named Francisco de Bobadilla was dispatched to investigate the situation in Hispaniola. That Bobadilla’s bias against Columbus was firmly established is evident from his actions: He arrested Columbus without even corresponding with him to allow him to respond to the accusations.



Columbus returned to Spain in chains because of the lies of Bobadilla

Upon arrival, Bobadilla forced his way into the fortress, freed the prisoners Columbus had arrested for armed rebellion against the Crown, and professed to believe the outlandish and conflicting testimonies of colonist and criminal alike. He then pardoned the rebels who were tired of the discipline of their Italian taskmaster. These and other farces were recounted with glee by his political opponents in Spain. The Admiral himself was summarily chained and sent back to Castile.

In Spain it immediately became obvious that Bobadilla had grossly abused his authority. Columbus was released and a royal order was issued for his property to be restored. Bobadilla was recalled and died en route home in a massive hurricane. Whether by coincidence or Providence we will never know, but it remains fact that one of the only vessels to survive the hurricane was the smallest and least seaworthy: the ship carrying Columbus’s own effects.

Despite his obvious prejudice and the immediate recall of Bobadilla, the accusations reported by him are being touted today as secure proof that Columbus was more a monster than man. To this day these false allegations fuel the fire of numerous anti-Columbus critics.

'Columbus, the slave master'

In their eagerness to condemn the Admiral, many of his modern detractors resort to emphasizing a practice odious to the 21st century mind: slavery. In the 15th century slavery was a well nigh universal practice. Every nation enslaved their conquered foes. Moors captured Africans to sell or to buy back their brethren captured by Catholics.

Catholic religious orders were founded to ransom their members in exchange for captive co-religionists or countrymen. In India class slavery in effect formed the foundation of society; in America native tribesmen regularly enslaved their Indian neighbors. The Spaniards in America were no strangers to that ancient practice; they enslaved Indians.

The fact that Columbus sometimes enslaved natives is uncontested. It is a historical fact, but to cite this as sure evidence of his wickedness ignores the universal nature of slavery in the 15th century. Columbus did what everyone else at his time did.

To condemn him for the Indians he did enslave is to arrogantly assert that the standards of our own society (in many ways highly-peculiar) ought to be comprehensively applied to all centuries past. One might as well condemn Columbus and the early American colonists for not giving the Indians the State-funded education, health care and other benefits that we provide today. This retroactive judgment without considering what was normal for that epoch is nonsensical. We must also remember that slavery persists in different forms even to this very day.



Massacres & abuses took place during Columbus' trial in Spain, showing those actions were not his

The calumny against Columbus breaks down further when considering his own policies: In fact he forbade the enslavement of natives under most circumstances. Only for criminals or cannibals did he permit such a practice.

Further, in several cases he forced his men to free Indians they had captured for slaves. When a local chief was suspected of the massacre of Spaniards at *La Navidad*, Columbus refused to take him prisoner in order not to anger relatives of the chief and thus raise an obstacle to the

conversion of the natives to the Catholic Faith.

On his voyages Columbus did keep a few Indians onboard as translators, but it was his express desire that they be released after learning the Spanish language and customs in Spain. In the case of cannibals his reasoning was even comparatively legitimate:

- Cannibals should be enslaved to stop them from eating people;
- Their exposure to Spanish culture should lead to their conversion and the eternal salvation of their immortal souls;



Columbus trading with Indians; he was known for his mildness in dealing with natives

- Their enslavement would ensure the respect of other tribes that feared the cannibals.

The largest batch of slaves Columbus authorized were captured warriors and allies from the tribe that had massacred the first Spanish outpost of *La Navidad* and was now trying to exterminate the second colony. The vastly outnumbered Spanish won.

The fact that the prisoners were sold into slavery was simply application of the common practice for any victors of the 15th century. Had Columbus and his men lost they could have expected the same treatment. Indeed, much worse could have happened as some such native tribes kept slaves to be eaten.

Finally, we see that Columbus is being set up as the scapegoat for the cruel forms of slavery that developed in the Spanish colonies. Whereas many natives did die in those abuse-riddled systems, such as the *Encomienda*, it was

Columbus' replacement, not Columbus himself, who set up these structures.

in his letters and journals a genuine concern for the well-being of the natives. The fact that slavery was abused in the Spanish Empire took place despite the efforts of Columbus, rather than because of them. (1)

The Admiral himself governed as a mitigating agent to try and prevent excesses, demonstrating

It is ironic and unjust that today Columbus is being blamed for crimes that in fact he condemned, committed by men who disobeyed his commands.

The Spaniards Land in Mexico

Luiz Siqueira Campos

During his recent visit to his hometown – Curitiba in the State of Paraná, Brazil - my friend Atila Guimarães again asked me to write something for Tradition in Action. I had made [a first attempt](#) in 2007, but was unable to continue the initiative at that time.



“What topic should I broach?” I asked. He proposed that I write a series of articles on an historic topic that never grows old for militant souls: the heroic saga of the Cristeros in Mexico.

The first word of the name of this site, Tradition, obviously relates in many ways to history, but what about the second, Action? The story of the Cristeros certainly fits the term.

My goal in taking on this topic, however, is not just to feed the reader facts, but to offer him a stronger fare – to solidify his convictions, steady his faith and support his march forward amid the growing chaos around us. To do this, in my exposition I will follow the famous Catholic trilogy: to see, to judge, and then to act. *First*, we must see, to try to know what happened, to present the historical facts. *Second*, we must analyze those facts, judging them according to the eternal principles taught by the Holy Church. *Finally*, we must act, applying these convictions to our aims, judgments and actions of our daily lives.

With Cortes' arrival the Spanish saga in the New World begins

To address the theme of the Cristeros in this light, I will first establish some presuppositions with regard to Mexican history and psychology in the initial articles of this series.

Characteristics of the Aztec Empire

When the Catholic Spaniards arrived, the territory of present-day Mexico was dominated by a Nahuatl-speaking people, the Aztecs. Originally migrating from Northern Mexico, this people, through their superior warrior skills and organizational capacity, came to dominate in the Valley of Mexico and extend its power to both the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific. It was not the first time in history when a nomad, hunter-gatherer people, entering the lands of a sedentary occupant, would become the ruler of the land.

What most strongly identified the Aztecs in history was their world view and its correspondent religion. Their world was not a stable one; it was in continuous danger of collapsing. Only through a never-ceasing effort could they survive and see the next day. Transferring this perspective to their religion, they established their sacrifices asking their idols for the sun to rise again the next morning. This conception, along with their savagery, resulted in human sacrifices. According to that primitive religion, blood had to flow to maintain their social order.

Even though human sacrifices were common in almost every ancient pagan religion, it is said that no people in History spilled so much blood in this horrible practice as did the Aztecs. It is certainly a violent and primitive practice that deserves every censure. However, I would wager that even those barbarian Aztecs throughout their entire history exterminated fewer people on their blood-drenched altars than the babies that are killed today in the wombs of mothers in hygienic abortion clinics. Yet we think that we live in a civilized epoch...

That original tendency toward bloody violence runs through Mexican history in some way as a trait of the people.

The psychology of the Spaniards and their first deeds

The Spaniards who came to Central America had been shaped by what may be the longest war in history: the fight to expel the Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula. From those woeful days in the 8th century when Muslim invaders crossed the Gibraltar and soon came to occupy almost all the Kingdoms of Spain, the fight never ceased.

The heroic resistance of Don Pelayo, the chief of the miraculous victory of Covadonga in Asturias in northern Spain, gave those demoralized Christian warriors new hope and, with the help of Our Lady, became the departure point for the glorious *Reconquista*. This long war that lasted more than 700 years (711-1492) forged a generation of conquistadors who, soon after the conquest of Granada (1492), set sail for the New World. Despite some censurable weaknesses and moral excesses, they were undoubtedly a generation of brave and resolutely Catholic men sincerely dedicated to expanding the Kingdom of Our Lord Jesus Christ.



*Above, the Aztec Empire at that time;
Below, its religion demanded human sacrifice*





Cortés: a mark in the Spanish colonization of the Americas

When Hernán Cortés landed in Yucatán in February 1519, he had only 11 ships, 500 men, 13 horses and a handful of cannons. With this, he prepared to face the entire Aztec Empire that ruled over more than 20 million people. To prevent desertions, he ordered his ships to be set on fire – a chivalrous deed that earned him the admiration of even his worst enemies. For himself and his soldiers, only one choice remained: victory or death!

Both a shrewd politician and an implacable man of war, Cortés took advantage of the deep discontent that simmered in the Aztec Empire. Encouraging conquered tribes to revolt against their rulers - and thus accompanied by about 3,000 Tlaxcalteca natives, Cortés and his men destroyed Cholula, the second largest city in Central America. On November 8, 1519 the Spaniards with their ever-expanding army were received by the Aztec emperor Montezuma II in his capital, Tenochtitlan.

Beyond the native enemies, Cortés had to face internal deceits and uprisings. For example, the Spanish governor of Cuba, moved by intrigues and jealousy, sent troops to defeat Cortés, but the latter convinced them to rally to his side in the conquest of Mexico. One can see the force of the personality of this great warrior and his unswerving determination to conquer.

He also faced another type of difficulty: the imprudence of his subordinates. One of the lieutenants of Cortés carried out a massacre in the temple of Tenochtitlan, triggering a local rebellion. Lacking the support of Montezuma, the Spaniards were forced to withdraw to Tlaxcala in July of 1520 after a battle where they lost 840 men.

Soon, however, Cortés recovered from that defeat. Bolstered by Spanish reinforcements, he was able to make the siege of Tenochtitlan, the final, decisive battle that led to the downfall of the Aztec Empire and marked the end of the first phase of the Spanish conquest of Mexico.



The Battle of Tenochtitlan in 1521

The heroic character of Cortés and his legendary spirit of challenge are traits that can be seen throughout Catholic Mexican history, especially in the glorious episode of the Cristeros.

However, to define the psychology of the Mexican people in general and the Cristeros in particular, I still need to address a fundamental episode of their history. It is how the Queen of Heaven took the conversion of Mexico into her own holy hands.

Our Lady of Guadalupe will be the topic of our next article.



The arrival of Cortes in Veracruz and his reception by Montezuma's ambassadors

Long Live the Virgin of Guadalupe!

Luiz Siqueira Campos

Viva Cristo Rey! Viva la Virgen de Guadalupe! “Long live Christ the King! Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe!” These battle cries gave unity and force to the Mexican Cristeros to enter into combat, to resist torture or to defy death.

Viva el Demonio! “Long live the Devil!” was shouted in response by their opponents, the soldiers of the Federal army of Mexico, dominated by atheistic officers.

Still today, after almost 80 years since the Cristiada - the epic fight of the Mexican Catholic Cristeros for their faith in the fields and hills of Jalisco, Mijoacan and other States across Mexico – it is astonishing to see the degree of hatred shown by the enemies of the Holy Church in those dire days. To understand such a hatred, we must recall the words of God the Father to the Serpent in Genesis: “I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shall lie in wait for her heel” (3:15)



Cristeros celebrate Our Lady of Guadalupe Feastday on December 12, 1928

Not only then, not only in Mexico, but in every time and place when Catholics are truly devoted to the Mother of God, the Devil and his cohorts try to destroy them. But in the case of the Mexican Cristiada, an explanation of the name Guadalupe can explain the particular ferocity of this hatred against the Church.

The siege of Mexico City in 1521 marked the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire. But the spiritual conquest still remained, and this was a task too great for mere men, even the fervent Franciscans who began the evangelization of Mexico. The small group faced multiple obstacles: the bad example of many of the Spaniards moved by greed, power and lust was certainly one. But another less perceptible but more profound barrier was the feeling of many Indians that Catholicism was the white man’s religion, that it did not really belong to them.

In 1531, twelve years after the landing of Cortez, and ten years after the Conquest, the Franciscans could report the baptisms of about 200,000 Indians, only a small fraction of the whole population.

Our Lady appears to Juan Diego

On Saturday, December 9, 1531, shortly before dawn, an Indian peasant, Juan Diego of the village Cuauhtitlan, was on the way to Tlatelolco for morning Mass, which he attended every day that he could. Like Simon of Cyrene on his way to Jerusalem, Juan Diego was a simple man going about his daily duties, trying to live according to the will of God.

What Christ's Mother willed was for Juan Diego was for him to become her instrument to open a miraculous spring of graces for the New World, which flows until today with inexhaustible generosity.

As he crossed the summit of the hill known as Tepeyac, he heard singing and saw a brilliant white cloud. Astonished, he stopped, and he heard a voice from above calling him: "*Juanito, Juan Dieguito!*" [Little Juan, little Juan Diego!] Before the cloud, he saw a beautiful Lady of extraordinary grandeur, who told him to come nearer. Marveling at her garments that shone like the sun and transformed the rocks where her feet rested into a ringlet of precious stones, he fell to his knees.

In his own native language, she asked him, "Juanito, the most humble of my sons, where are you going?"

He answered he was going to hear Mass at Tlatelolco.

She said him: "I am truly the ever virgin Mary, Holy Mother of the True God through whom everything lives, the Creator of all things, Lord of heaven and earth. I desire that a sanctuary be erected in this place so I may in it I may show and give all my love, compassion, help, and protection to the people."

She charged him with the mission to go to the palace of the Bishop of Mexico and tell him it was her desire to have a sanctuary built there.

A failed mission and second try

Juan Diego went to Mexico City to speak to Bishop Juan de Zumarraga, a Franciscan Friar who had recently been appointed the first Bishop of Mexico. Bishop Zumarraga received and heard the poor Indian benevolently, but not surprisingly he doubted his words. So he invited Juan Diego to come again with a clearer plan from the Lady.

On the way home, at the same spot, the Heavenly Lady awaited him. Juan Diego told her what had happened and asked the Holy Virgin to send someone else who would have a better chance of being heard. "I am no one," he told her. He did not understand that it was exactly this humility that moved the Queen of Heaven to choose him.



Our Lady appears to Juan Diego



Bishop Zumarraga, the first Bishop of Mexico

She answered: “I earnestly implore you to go in my name and make known my wish in its entirety, that he must begin to construct the sanctuary that I am requesting of him. Tell him once again that I, the ever-virgin Mary, Holy Mother of God, have sent you.”

The next day, Sunday, Juan Diego went again to hear Mass and to accomplish the will of Our Lady. After Mass, he went to the Bishop’s house, and with great difficulty managed to speak again with him. This time, the Bishop – more impressed but still doubting – demanded some concrete proof of the apparition. With sorrow in his heart, the emissary of Our Lady left him.

The Bishop ordered two servants to follow him to see where he went and to whom he spoke. Near the bridge to Tepeyac, however, Juan Diego disappeared to their sight. He was with Our Lady, who promised to give the sign the Bishop had requested the following morning.

The miracle of the roses and tilma

But the next day, Monday, Juan Diego’s uncle, Juan Bernardino, became seriously ill, and he spent the day caring for his uncle. On Tuesday morning, his uncle believed he was reaching his last hour and asked his nephew to bring a priest to anoint him. The troubled emissary of the Virgin judged that the eternal destiny of his uncle’s soul took precedence over his mission to see the Bishop. So he went to summon a priest to hear the confession of his dying uncle.

To avoid meeting the Virgin, he took a different route. But she descended from the hill to intercept him, saying, “What is there, my son the least of all men? Where are you going?”

She told him not to be afflicted by his uncle’s illness, because he was already cured. He should climb to the top of the hill, she instructed him, and cut and gather the flowers blooming there and bring them to her.

The hill was a desert place and it was winter, but Juan Diego did as she ordered. He found the hilltop covered with beautiful Castilian roses of the sweetest fragrance. He gathered the flowers, and the Virgin herself took them from him and arranged them in his tilma.

The poor Indian, the ambassador of the Queen of the Universe, then went to present to the Bishop of Mexico the proof that his mission was authentic. It was not easy to be received again by the Prince of the Church, but the simple Indian persisted, saying that he had the needed proof.

When he was finally admitted, he told the Bishop all that happened and opened his cloak. The roses cascaded to the floor, and there on his tilma was stamped the precious Image of the ever-virgin Mary, the Blessed Mother of God, appearing in the same manner Juan Diego had seen her.

The portrait still exists today as it was then, in brilliant color, the cactus fiber untouched by the passage of centuries.

The name of Guadalupe

When the Virgin appeared to Juan Diego's uncle and healed him, she told him that she desired this Image of herself to be called Blessed Virgin Mary of Guadalupe.

Why should she choose the same name of a popular shrine in Spain that had no particular relation to the New World? Usually Our Lady wants to be known by the name of the place or region where she appears (Lourdes, Fatima).

It has been speculated that Our Lady actually said the Aztec word in the Nahuatl language of coatlaxopeuh, which is pronounced "quatlasupe" and sounds similar to the Spanish word Guadalupe. This word means to crush or stamp the serpent. Therefore, Our Lady wanted to tell the Mexican natives that she was the one "who crushes the serpent." The Indians would understand the meaning of this because one of their most important gods was Quetzalcoatl, a serpent.



The miraculous tilma of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Know more [here](#)

This fact could explain the incredible hatred that the forces of hell revealed in the persecutions four centuries later toward the Mexican Church and the Indians converted by Our Lady of Guadalupe. Instead of destroying the faith, however, these persecutions would cause many loyal Catholics, the Cristeros, to take up arms and write with their blood one of the most epic chapters of History, the Mexican Cristiada.



The serpent god Quetzalcoatl was crushed by Our Lady when the Indians converted to Catholicism

The warriors of Our Lady

This apparition of the Virgin Mary to Juan Diego unleashed an outpouring of graces among the Indians of Mexico unknown in History. Wherever the missionaries went, the Indians flocked to them to be baptized in overwhelming numbers. In the records of the Franciscans, we find reports of one priest baptizing 14,200 Indians in five days. There was no force, no coercion. The Indians sought out the priests and asked to enter the Faith.

When Juan Diego and Bishop Zumarraga died in the spring of 1548 – they died within a few days of each other – the total number of baptized Indians in Mexico was approximately nine million. That is to say, in 17 years, Our Lady did what was impossible for even the most dedicated missionary: she accomplished the spiritual conquest of Mexico. It was she – the Virgin of Guadalupe – who won their hearts and souls to bring them to Christ. One can see that a spark of this first fire of love for Mary remains to this day as an indestructible bond between the Virgin of Guadalupe and the Mexican people.



An enduring bond: Mexicans on pilgrimage to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe

The Mexican soul, which in the last article we saw was characterized by both the grandeur and violence inherited from the Aztecs, as well as the heroism and spirit of challenge that came from the Spaniards, now received new characteristics that define that people. What are they? Simply said: the extraordinary predilection of Our Lady for them, the capacity to quickly assimilate the Catholic spirit, and an instinctive openness toward the supernatural.

These are reasons that help explain why Mexico was the first pedestal for Mary, the place that she chose to shine over the three Americas - and from there, over the whole world. The soul of this rude but favored people was indelibly stamped with a call to follow the Virgin Mary as she showed herself on the tilma of Juan Diego. They are called to be the warriors to help her crush the head of the serpent.

'A Land So Strange'

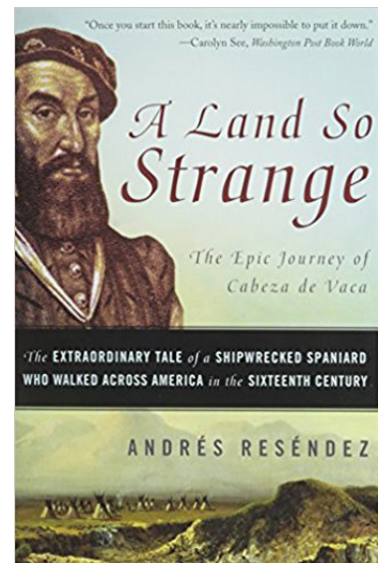
Phillip Mericle

Book review of *A Land so Strange, the Epic Journey of Cabeza de Vaca*
by Andres Resendez, New York: Basic Books, 2009, 314 pp.

In the Spring of 1536 four Spaniards on a slaving raid in Northwest Mexico encountered one of the most bizarre sights they could have imagined. A white man, clad in skins and with a beard hanging to his waist, approached them with an entourage of natives and one African. He spoke perfect Spanish. Indeed, it was none other than Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, royal treasurer and one of the only survivors of the Panfilo de Narvaez expedition to explore the unknown territory called La Florida; at the time everything between present day Texas and Florida.

Cabeza de Vaca and his companions had struggled for eight years to make it back to Spanish lands. Their adventure had seen them through the hurricanes of the Caribbean, the jungles of Florida, the Gulf of Mexico and the deserts of the Southwest. On this journey they encountered innumerable native tribes never before seen by white men as well as the most astonishing natural wonders. It was, in the words of Cabeza de Vaca, "A land so strange."

The book *A Land So Strange* is the historical narrative of the doomed Narvaez expedition and the incredible journey of the survivors. A true story, it vividly relates an incredible adventure, demonstrating the resourcefulness of men pushed to the very brink. It is a story of bravery, disaster and, above all, Faith.



The fate of the Narvaez expedition

The Narvaez expedition, a Spanish adventure which set out to colonize La Florida, was a horrible failure. After being devastated by hurricanes in Cuba, the ships were pushed off course by the Gulf Stream Current. When they landed in Florida, they mistakenly believed it to be Texas and set out on foot to conquer it.



The survivors of the Narvaez expedition start out on the long 1,500 mile trek - only four would survive

Unlike the Indians of Mexico, the natives of Florida fought successful guerilla wars. After harrowing losses, starvation and illness, the Spaniards decided to return to the ships. When the ships could not be found, the survivors had no choice but to face a grim reality: They would have to make the 1,500 mile trek to the nearest Spanish settlement on their own. Narvaez had embarked with five ships and 600 men; 300 survived to disembark on those strange Florida shores. In the end only four would live: Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Alonso del Castillo Maldonado, Andrés Dorantes de Carranza and the black slave Estebanico.

A Land So Strange recounts their remarkable story.

How did they survive? At the beginning, some Indians offered hospitality to the stranded Europeans. Cabeza de Vaca and the other three survivors were kept alive by the generosity of natives, but, as the novelty of the Europeans wore off, this kindness mutated into a brutal slavery. They suffered in that misery for six long years. It was during this ruthless time, however, that they would acquire a curious reputation that finally gained them freedom.

Healers who came from the sun

The native tribes of America at this time were deeply fixed in a mixed shamanism that centered around medicine men. To them everything had a spiritual power and they believed that the shaman or witch doctor could manipulate these powers. Some natives took these light-skinned foreigners to be “children of the sun” and demanded that they perform healings.



Cabeza de Vaca and his companions, considered healers, were accompanied by Indians

With little choice, Cabeza de Vaca and his companions made the Sign of the Cross and prayed to God that the suffering Indians be delivered from their illnesses. What resulted bordered on the miraculous! Through prayer and the Sign of the Cross, Cabeza de Vaca and his companions were able to heal.

After meticulous planning, the survivors were able to escape their captors. Their reputation preceded them and the four survivors were welcomed enthusiastically by neighboring tribes, who also demanded the "healings." With each healing their fame grew and soon they were traveling from tribe to tribe, as they moved south towards Spanish lands.

While the natives revered them nearly as gods, Cabeza de Vaca and the others saw this incredible gift as a manifestation of God's designs for North America. The Spaniards believed themselves to be mere tools in God's plans, calling the healings “the wonders that Our Lord was working through us.” (page 173). Lest they presume, they also worried their sins would impede God's grace, fearing “sins would prevent the cures from turning out well every time.”(p. 175).

Finally, they saw their healing powers as a saving grace from God, Who had provided a way for them to be welcome in this "strange land" amongst the often cruel and hard hearted natives: “In this way Jesus Christ guided us and His infinite mercy was with us, opening roads where there were none.” (p. 167)

In fact, one of these healings would lead to the historic first surgery in North America. An Indian, pierced by an arrow, lay dying; Cabeza de Vaca carefully cut open the wound to remove the arrowhead and stitch the wound closed. To this day Cabeza de Vaca is honored as the patron of surgeons in the Lone Star State. This remarkable episode is deserving of an article of its own.



Landing in Cuba, Cabeza de Vaca's started on his incredible journey of exploration

With their status as healers, the four made it to within 100 miles of Spanish territory. At last, after so many years, they were within reach of civilization, yet then it was when the daring spirit of the conquistador shone through most. In a bold move, turning their back on the safety of their old lives, the four changed course to continue to explore the unknown. With the Southwest beckoning, the four survivors travelled deeper into these uncharted territories with the sole aim of exploration.

These survivors were the first Europeans to see the American Southwest. There they met new tribes, encountered new plants and animals and even found Indians who cultivated corn and cotton. Finally, they met up with astonished Spanish slavers not far from the Pacific Ocean. It had been over eight years since they had set out from Spain on their fateful journey.

Not so noble savages

Cabeza de Vaca's testimony renders a unique insight into the pre-Columbian Indians. In Florida they encountered the outskirts of a culture that would soon collapse and leave only traces of its former existence. In the Southwest they found a culture crumbling under the pressures of slavers and disease.

The Spaniard's notes also lay a death blow to the myth of the Noble Savage disseminated later by Rousseau. Some Indians were respectful of the Spaniards. Others attacked on sight, trying to kill them for little or no reason. One raft of weakened Spaniards was entirely wiped out when they were too starved to defend themselves.

Cabeza de Vaca recounts many of the cultural practices of the Indians, showing them to be primitive, petty and superstitious to the point of killing family members (even children) over so much as a bad dream. Infanticide (particularly regarding girls) was common and women were treated cruelly. The elderly were seen as useless.

The spirit of adventure

The story of the Narvaez expedition is a testament to human ambition and cleverness. These brave Europeans, set against the most tremendous odds, managed to carve out an existence for themselves in a strange and alien world. With incredible determination, this brave band set out from Europe, crossed the vast Atlantic Ocean, landed on uncharted shores and crossed hundreds of miles, enduring the most dreadful privations.

They saw things that no Europeans had even dreamed. Animals unlike any they had seen before. In the Southwest they encountered more curiosities and wonders, glimpsing the last vestiges of tribes that would soon be wiped out or altered beyond recognition. Nor did they lose sight of their Heaven-sent mission, to bring healing to the natives in the Sign of the Cross with the hope of preparing them to receive the word of God.

Narvaez and his expedition are long gone, but through their narrative we get a glimpse into the world as it once was in a way never imagined. It was an age of brutality and suffering, but also a world of aspiration, bravery, wonder and faith. Perhaps, the title *A Land So Strange* can bear a different significance to us living now in a world steeped in godless hedonism: the whole world, mentality and spirit of the 16th century Spaniards – Catholic to their very bones – signifies *A Land So Strange*.



A monument to Cabeza de Vaca in Houston



The First Thanksgivings Were Catholic

Marian T. Horvat, Ph.D.

I have been asked to comment on Thanksgiving, the national holiday commemorating the first successful harvest season of the grim Protestant pilgrims of New England.

“It just doesn’t seem right to celebrate the prospering of a Puritan sect that established a Calvinist theocracy in the Massachusetts Colony that would mercilessly persecute Catholics,” one reader argued.

Such Catholics, gathered around their laden Thanksgiving tables enjoying the company of family and friends, should know a quite consoling fact of American History: the first Thanksgivings on U.S. soil were Catholic.

The American History books we studied as youth pretend that Colonial American History is exclusively what happened in the thirteen New England colonies. This ignores an enormous part of reality - our Catholic History. Little attention is paid to the epic northward advance by Spanish pioneers into the southern tier of States reaching from Florida across Texas and New Mexico to California, today called the Spanish Borderlands.

The first two Thanksgivings in the present day United States were actually Catholic. The Pilgrims can only claim a third one, a correction I suggest should be made in school history books.

The first Thanksgivings were celebrated by Spanish explorers, not pilgrims. It is Florida that today proudly claims [the first Thanksgiving](#), with a feast and celebration between the Spanish and Timucuan Indians on September 8, 1565, 56 years before the Mayflower landed at Plymouth in 1621. Therefore, St. Augustine - and not Jamestown - is the first permanent European settlement and oldest city in North America. Another correction for many history books.

The *second* Thanksgiving, the subject of this article, was in Texas. On January 26, 1598, a Spanish expedition set out from Mexico with the aim of founding a new kingdom. Three months later, after a long, dangerous trek forging a new trail northward, the now famous *El Camino Real* [The Royal Road], it crossed the Rio Grande and set up camp south of present day El Paso, Texas. On April 30, a Mass of thanksgiving was said, and the valiant leader of the expedition, Don Juan de Oñate, took formal possession of the new land, called New Mexico, in the name of the Heavenly Lord, God Almighty, and the earthly lord King Philip II.



The epic journey of the first European colonists to the Southwest

Then, after the Mass, the Franciscan priests blessed the food on tables abundant with fish, ducks and geese, and the 600-strong expedition of soldiers and colonists feasted. The celebration ended with a play enacting scenes of the native Indians hearing the first words of the Catholic Faith and receiving the Sacrament of Baptism.

If the New Spain colonies had not set aside their Catholic heritage, perhaps today Florida would be celebrating its Thanksgiving day on September 8, while Texas would have its own special feast on April 30. This would be more in keeping with the healthy spirit of regionalism which characterizes organic society.

Who was Don Juan de Oñate?

Don Juan de Oñate, the Basque leader of the New Mexico expedition, should become a name as familiar as Plymouth founder Captain John Smith or Puritan Governor William Bradford. His exploits, deeds, and spirit are of the sort that inspired the medieval sagas, or today, the epic film.

Juan de Oñate was from a noble Basque Spanish family that had become wealthy in the New World in silver mining. As a young man, Don Juan had led campaigns at his own expense in service to the Crown to pacify Indians near the northern outposts of Mexico. In his late 30s, he married Isabel de Tolosa, the granddaughter of the conquistador Fernando Cortes and Isabel Montezuma, the offspring of the late Aztec emperor.

In 1595 Oñate was chosen by King Philip II to colonize and explore the provinces of the proposed kingdom of New Mexico. The terms of the arrangement sound quite unusual to modern ears. Don Oñate agreed to equip and arm at his personal expense 200 men to serve as soldiers as well as provide for their families and servants, to a total of 500-600 persons. He had to purchase sufficient food, clothing and supplies for the trek north as well as during the period of building the first houses. He also pledged to bring mining and blacksmithing tools, medicine, Indian trade goods, seeds, plows, and all the other necessities.

In short, he completely subsidized the expenses of a dangerous, uncertain expedition that could easily end in failure.

Why did he bother to undertake such a venture? He already had a position of prestige and power in New Spain; he was wealthy, with the potential to become even richer in silver mining had he



Don Juan de Oñate

remained where he was. Instead, he contracted to take on the momentous expenses of equipping and maintaining an expedition of some 600 people and set out on an uncertain, dangerous, and difficult march into an unknown, hostile terrain.



Why did he go? He went for the adventure, to undertake a grand enterprise *first*, for the glory of God and King, and *second*, for his personal prestige.

First, from his detailed record book, it is clear that Don Oñate went for God; his notes show a true desire to expand the boundaries of the religion of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He marched under a personal standard of white silk stamped on one side with pictures of Our Lady and St. John the Baptist, Oñate's patron saint; on the reverse side was St. James on horseback carrying a sword.

Priests and friars were present on every colonial Spanish expedition at the expense of the Crown

The Spanish monarchy made the defense and propagation of the Catholic Faith the supreme aim of the State. In the instructions given to Oñate, the Crown clearly stated the primary goal of the expedition was to initiate conversion of the "many large settlements of heathen Indians who live in ignorance of God and our Holy Catholic Faith ... so that they might have an orderly and decent Christian life."

The Spanish monarchy made the defense and propagation of the Catholic Faith the supreme aim of the State. In the instructions given to Oñate, the Crown clearly stated the primary goal of the expedition was to initiate conversion of the "many large settlements of

Only one expense of the expedition did the Crown assume: The King provided the *Patronato Real*, the Royal Patronage, agreeing to pay the expenses of the 10 priests and friars, who accompanied the group both to minister to the men and convert natives. It is a clear demonstration of the great importance the Crown gave to the missionary effort.

Second, Oñate went for his prestige. In return for bearing the expenses of the expedition, he was promised the title of Governor, as well as the supreme military rank of Captain-General with civil and criminal jurisdiction over the Kingdom of New Mexico. These titles were granted for life with privilege of passing them on to his heirs. The Crown also agreed to award all Oñate's men by making them nobles, *hidalgos*, after five years residence in New Mexico.



So, Don Oñate and his expedition went forth in January of 1598, under the symbol of Cross and the authority of the Crown. It has been said that the Middle Ages drew its last breath in these captains and conquistadors of the New World. I think that it is very true.

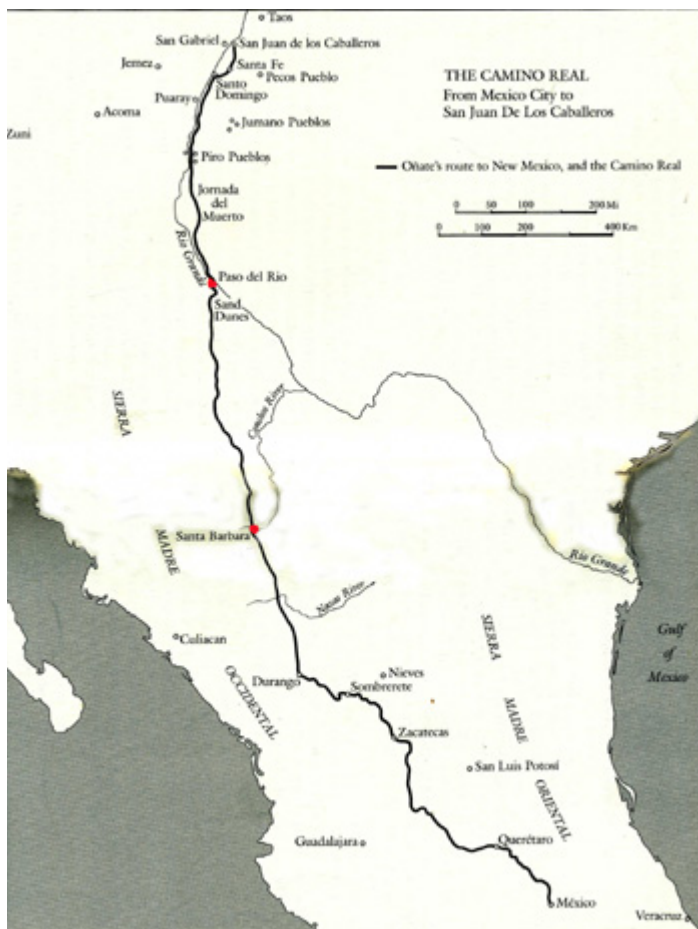
Certainly, the aims, spirit, attitudes and religion of the Spanish explorers could not have been more different from

Oñate sets forth under authority of Cross & Crown - Statue by Reynaldo Rivera

those of the Puritans who, motivated by self-interest, landed at Plymouth Rock to make a small, comfortable life for themselves and their families, with no thought of the spiritual welfare of the Indians, no dreams of heroism, glory or fame. This clear difference in spirit and mentality makes the colonial Catholic Spaniards a better model for Americans than the Puritans.

The expedition through the desert

After three long years of extremely costly delays, Don Oñate, age 43, set out from Santa Barbara, the most northern Spanish outpost in Mexico, on January 26, 1598. He aimed to establish a short, direct route due northward through 200 miles of Chihuahuan desert, a trail would later become part of the famous *El Camino Real*. The sprawling train he led was reported to spread out for three miles in length. It was a formidable sight: some 500-600 men, 175 of them soldiers, many of them in armor, 83 ox-carts, 26 wagons and carriages, and over 7,000 head of livestock.



The first significant obstacle Don Oñate faced was not the desert, but the unseasonable high waters of the Conchos River, making a crossing appear impossible. Don Oñate refused to halt or turn back. Instead, he made a rallying call:

“Come, noble soldiers, knights of Christ, here is presented the first opportunity for you to show your mettle and courage to prove that you are deserving of the glories in store for you.”

Then he ordered up his horse and without pause plunged into the foaming torrent and reached shore. His exploit set the example, and the crossing was made. Only the sheep were left behind on the south bank, unable to swim because the weight of their wool when soaked with water would pull them under. Don Juan ordered the wooden wheels removed from the carts, anchored them in pairs to rafts, and strung them in a line over the water. The bleating sheep crossed the Conchos on them, and the expedition continued.

In January 1598 the expedition left the last Spanish outpost of Santa Barbara & headed north to the Rio Grande.

Above, *El Camino Real*

Desert. Some days into the desert journey, they were desperately in need of water. Unexpectedly

they came to a small stream, which they named the *Rio Sacramento* because it was found on Holy Thursday, the feast of the institution of the Blessed Sacrament.

The next day, Don Oñate ordered a halt and a temporary chapel was erected for Easter Mass. They named the site *Encinar de la Resurrección*, Place of the Resurrection. The men passed the night in penance and prayer; Don Oñate also bared his back to take the discipline in atonement of sins, a common practice among the Spanish faithful during Holy Week.

The long march continued, and water grew scarcer. On April 1, after a night long vigil of prayer, Don Oñate made this entry in his log book: “God succored us with a downpour so heavy that very large pools formed Therefore we name this place *Socorro del Cielo* [Aid from Heaven].”

This was how the journey progressed. At every crucial moment, an aid from Heaven came. For the soldiers and colonists, those aids were miracles from God who was blessing their venture. To pay Him some small thanks, they gave the streams that they found, the sites where they rested, holy names that glorified God and His Saints.



Colonists on El Camino Real

Finally, on April 21, 1598, the exhausted expedition reached the banks of the Rio Grande. For the last five days of the march, the expedition had run out of both food and water, and the colonists had suffered a mind-numbing thirst. Don Oñate, seeing the extreme fatigue on the faces of the people, proclaimed a week’s rest on the river bank as scouts searched for a suitable place to ford the river and cross into New Mexico, what is the present-day El Paso, Texas.

Taking possession and the first Thanksgiving

Oñate ordered a temporary church to be constructed with a nave large enough to hold the entire camp. Under those boughs, on April 30, 1598, the feast day of the Ascension of Our Lord, the *Te Deum* was sung and the Franciscans celebrated a solemn high Mass, the first Thanksgiving celebration in our lands.

The moment had arrived for *La Toma*, the formal ceremony of taking possession of new land, a ritual that was both secular and religious in nature. It was a triumphant moment for Don Oñate and his Spanish priests, soldiers and colonists who had suffered much and seen their expedition often at the point of perishing. The Army drew up in formation on horseback, each man in polished armor. Don Oñate stepped forward to read the official proclamation: “In the name of the most Holy Trinity ... I take possession of this whole land this April 30, 1598, in honor of Our Lord Jesus Christ, on this day of the Ascension of Our Lord”



To the fanfare of trumpets and volleys of musket shots, Oñate signed and sealed the official act with a flourish, and the Holy Cross and the royal standard were both raised in the camp, completing the legal requirements of *La Toma*. With that, the kingdom of New Mexico came into being, at midday on April 30, 1598.

The colonists went on to celebrate the first Thanksgiving with a grand feast of fish, “many cranes, ducks and geese.” The rest of the day passed with song, foot races, and other competitive games. In the evening, all enjoyed a play, written by one of Oñate’s captains, Marcos Farfan, which enacted happy scenes of the Franciscan

Each year El Paso re-enacts the Oñate expedition’s first Thanksgiving missionaries entering the country, the Indians kneeling to receive them and asking to be received into the Holy Faith.

This is the description of that glorious festivity which represents, I am convinced, the plan of God for those lands that today comprise our country.

Since the last Thursday of November is a random date to commemorate Thanksgiving, I propose that Catholics in Texas commemorate on this day the conquest of Don Oñate and the Franciscan priests, rather than that bitter harvest of the Puritans. I am sure that this will glorify Our Lord Jesus Christ and gain his blessing for our future.

The content of this article is based upon these sources:

1. Adams, Don and Kendrick, Teresa A., *Don Juan de Oñate and the First Thanksgiving*, <http://historicaltextarchive.com/sections.php?op=viewarticle&artid=736>
2. Mattox, Jake, ed., *Explorers of the New World*, Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2004.
3. Simmons, Marc, *The Last Conquistador: Juan de Oñate and the Settling of the Far Southwest*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

Our Oldest City and First Thanksgiving

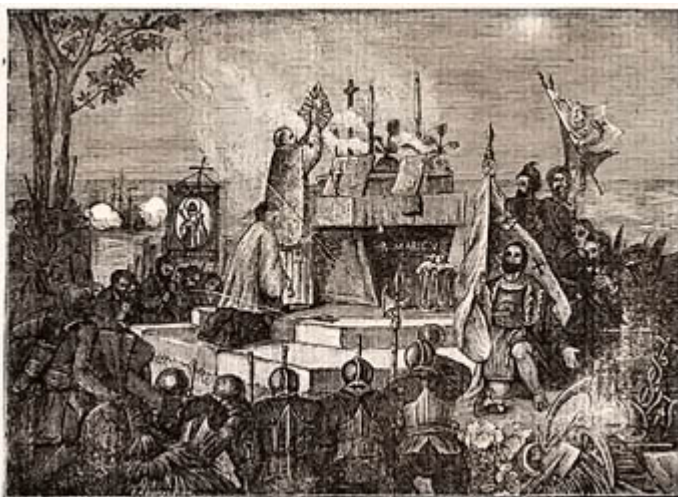
Marian T. Horvat, Ph.D.

I am glad to acknowledge a note that a reader from Florida sent me bringing to my attention the fact that the first thanksgiving in the territory that today is the United States was not the one I featured in [an article](#) on this website several years ago. It actually took place in Florida five years before.

Thus, the first American Thanksgiving was neither at Plymouth Rock in 1621 nor in Texas on April 20, 1568 when Don Juan de Oñate crossed the Rio Grande and took formal possession of present day El Paso. This honor belongs to the city of St. Augustine, Florida, the first and oldest city of our present day United States. The landing of Captain General Pedro Menendez de Aviles and his fleet of soldiers and colonists – accompanied by priests – on the coast of Florida on September 8, 1565 has all the qualification to count it as the first official Thanksgiving Day in our country:

- It was the first permanent European settlement in North America. There had been other attempts by the Spanish to establish colonies in Florida and Texas, but all were short-lived.

- In an official ceremony Don Pedro Menendez came ashore amid the sounding of trumpets, artillery salutes and the firing of cannons to claim the land for King Philip II and Spain. One of the priests, Fr. Francisco Lopez de Mendoza Grajales, who had gone ashore the previous day, advanced to meet him, chanting the *Te Deum Laudamus* and carrying a cross which Menendez and those with him reverently kissed. Then the 500 soldiers, 200 sailors and 100 families and artisans, along with the Timucuan Indians from the nearby village of Seloy, gathered at a makeshift altar, and a Mass in honor of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary was said.



The land was claimed for Spain and a Mass of thanksgiving was said

- The Mass was followed by a feast shared by the Spanish and the Timucuan Indians. The Timucuans brought wild turkey, venison, oysters and giant clams, as well as maize, beans, squash, nuts and fruits. The Spaniards contribution was *cocido*, a stew made with pork, garbanzo beans and onions, along with biscuits, olive oil and red wine.

In his well-researched book on the State of Florida titled *Cross in the Sand*, Dr. Michael Gannon duly affirmed that this Mass and feast was “the first community act of religion and thanksgiving in the first permanent European settlement in the land.” (1) Properly speaking, the history books

should acknowledge this feast as the first Thanksgiving. But, as the saying goes, the victors write the history. So, for many years, the textbooks only placed emphasis on the English settlement in Plymouth, ignoring the fact that the Spanish were here long before them.

I believe two positive factors are beginning to change that picture. *First*, many traditional Catholics – like most of the readers of this website – are interested in learning more about their Catholic roots in America, and want to know disregarded episodes like this one. *Second*, the growing Hispanic population in our country – and particularly the States of Florida, Texas and the Southwest – is sparking interest in the nation's Spanish heritage.



An annual reenactment of the founding of St. Augustine includes the thanksgiving feast

In St. Augustine, for example, the city's founding is being celebrated each year with speeches and pageantry, starting with the historical re-enactment of Don Pedro Menendez' landing and the Mass at the Mission *Nombre de Dios*. Don Menendez gave this beautiful name to the landing site, and today it is the oldest mission in the United States. In 1965 a 200-foot-high-cross was erected on the

Mission at the exact site of the city's founding. There is even a First Thanksgiving Cooking Contest that is held to reproduce the food and drink that would have been served at the original feast.

Local celebrations like these are helping to make the people of Florida aware of St. Augustine's rich past - which includes a Catholic Thanksgiving that long preceded the one celebrated by the Puritans.

The Huguenot threat

After Juan Ponce de Leon discovered the peninsula in 1513, named it La Florida (covered with flowers) and claimed it for Spain, the Spanish Crown made six attempts to establish a mission colony there. None were successful. Fierce storms at sea, starvation, hostile Indians and every genre of misfortune ended each expedition in failure.

Discouraged by those vain attempts, in 1561 Philip II decided that no further attempt should be made to colonize the eastern coast. That decision changed abruptly, however, with a French intrusion of Huguenots who established the small colony of Fort Caroline in present day Jacksonville.

This was a time of violent religious wars between the Huguenots and Catholics in France, with the Spanish Crown supporting the Catholics. The chief of the Huguenot faction was Admiral Gaspard de Coligny, who was looking for a colony in the New World to have a secure place to send his fellow-Protestants persecuted in France. In 1555, he had organized an expedition of 500 colonists who landed in Brazil on an island in the Rio de Janeiro bay. Their fort, however, was destroyed by the Portuguese in 1560. The Huguenots remained in Rio for some time until 1567, when they were definitively expelled in a battle with the Portuguese navy.



Today a 200-foot high cross marks the landing site at *Nombre de Dios* Mission

After this first defeat in Brazil, Coligny turned his eyes toward the coastline of peninsular Florida. In 1564 he sent out another expedition of Huguenot soldiers and settlers to establish an outpost called Fort Caroline. The French colony there represented a serious threat to Spanish shipping and the safety of the Indies. Not only would Spanish ships traveling with gold from the New World to the Old through the Bahama Channel be exposed to seizure by the French, but even the coastal towns could be attacked at any time. Further, the Catholic Spanish King wanted to avoid heresy spreading in the New World.

When news leaked to the Spanish court that a French fleet led by the sea Captain Jean Ribault was setting out to reinforce the struggling colony with ships, arms and food, Philip II's reaction was swift. This was foreign encroachment on Spain's claims in Florida – recognized in a 1559 Treaty with France. A Spanish fleet must be dispatched to stop Jean Ribault, destroy Fort Caroline, secure Florida for Spain and finally establish a permanent Catholic community along the coast of Florida.

The Menendez expedition

The man to whom Philip entrusted the task of driving the French out of Florida had both the experience and strong will needed to accomplish the mission. He was Don Pedro Menendez de Avilés, one of 20 children of an ancient family of the Asturias. As Captain General of the Indies Fleet, he was well acquainted with the routes to New Spain and realized the danger of having French so near the Bahama Channel that Spanish fleets regularly crossed. As a Catholic, he abhorred the prospective that the Huguenots might spread their infectious doctrine among Florida's Indians in the New World.

After a failed attempt to cross the sea because of bad weather, Menendez set sail from Puerto Rico for La Florida with five vessels and 800 soldiers, artisans and settlers, and four secular priests on August 5, 1565. His flagship bore the proud



A portrait of Pedro Menendez Aviles

name *San Pelayo*, a tribute to the warrior who started the *Reconquista* in Spain.

Thirty-four days later, under his command the Catholic colony of St. Augustine was founded – so named because land was sighted on August 28, the feast day of St. Augustine. On September 20, Menendez and 500 of his soldiers marched on Fort Caroline, captured it and renamed it *San Mateo* – St. Matthew. (2)

That month, Menendez sent a letter to the King reporting the progress of the expedition. After dealing with practical matters, he affirmed his content to see the Holy Faith established in the new land: “Let Your Majesty rest assured that if I had a million more, I would spend it all upon this undertaking, because it is of such great service to God Our Lord, and for the increase of our Holy Catholic Faith and the service of Your Majesty. And therefore I have offered to Our Lord, that all that I shall find, win and acquire, in this world shall be for the planting of the Gospel in this land, and the enlightenment of its natives, and thus I pledge myself to Your Majesty.”(3)

Once again, Admiral Coligny’s plan to establish a haven for the French Huguenots had failed. Instead of becoming the refuge for the 40,000 French Huguenots that France wanted to rid herself of, (4) Florida became Catholic. Around its corner was the Age of the Missions that would only end a century later in 1675.

1. *Cross in the Sand*, University of Florida, 1993, 3rd ed., pp. 26-27

2. For a detailed account of the Fort Caroline battle and the capture and killing of Jean Ribault and his French soldiers who were stranded after their ships were wrecked in a storm, see Gannon’s, *The Cross in the Sand*, pp. 22-28.

3. Woodbury Lowery, *The Spanish Settlements within the Present Limits of the United States Florida, 1562-1574*, NY: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1911, pp. 161-162.

4. “Queen Catherine de Medici expressed herself on this subject to her ambassador to Spain, Fourquevaux, in a letter where she wrote, ‘I wish all the Huguenots were in that country [America] over there.’ The Spanish ambassador in Vienna, who apparently knew of Admiral Coligny’s plan to send a number of Huguenots to Florida, estimated the number of Protestants in France of which ‘the country should be discharged’ at more than 40,000 men.” Henry D. Folmer, *Franco-Spanish Rivalry in North America, 1524-1763*, Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1953, pp. 88-89.



A scene from Old St. Augustine in the 1700s

Reality & Myth regarding Thanksgiving

Marian T. Horvat. Ph.D.

Thanksgiving as we know it today bears little resemblance to the supposed “first Thanksgiving” in 1621 at Plymouth. The festival with its deep Protestant roots is one shaped by myths, not real history, unlike Catholic feast days and Holy Days, firmly grounded in the events of the lives of Our Lord, Our Lady and the Saints.

In fact, until the 19th century, Thanksgiving was strictly a Puritan event, without any influence on the rest of the American people, commemorated as a harvest day ‘fast and thanksgiving’ ceremony. Further, that “day” was celebrated spottily only in the New England States, in some regions and not others, and never on a fixed date.



This idyllic first Thanksgiving painted in the early 20th century is a fable, not reality

Some celebrated it as early as October, others as late as January. And some years in its earliest history, if the harvest was not good or the weather inclement, it was simply ignored. To fix an annual commemorative feast, well, that would have just been too Catholic for Puritan tastes.

Now, here is the really surprising data: Until the mid-19th century, the event of a feast shared by the first Puritans with the Wampanoag Indians in October of 1621 was completely unknown.

It was a New Hampshire Episcopalian woman, Sarah Hale, editor of the popular *Godey's Lady's Magazine*, who came across a Puritan diary revealing the existence of the gathering of Pilgrims and Indians in 1621. She thought to take advantage of that forgotten commemoration in order to shape it into an “American” feast day.

In 1845, she launched her “crusade” to make a Thanksgiving national feast, stumping relentlessly for the festival in her popular and influential magazine and barnstorming politicians, preachers and presidents. In *Godey’s* pages, the Pilgrims with their buckled hats, the feathered-banded Indians, and the turkey and pumpkin made their first appearance, along with sentimental short stories trumpeting New England Protestant values of simplicity, economy and patriotism.



A Victorian age depiction of the Thanksgiving devised by Sarah Hale

Sarah Hale was finally successful when Lincoln established Thanksgiving as a national holiday in 1863 as one means to help mend the broken North and South relationship. It would be a national holiday of food and family values whose central point would be a meal and not religious covenant.

Instead of being turned toward heaven, in fact, the day’s focus became home, family and nation, that is, America in its “providential role” as republic builder, America as the melting pot that took in all peoples and integrated them into the democratic ideal. Hale envisioned Thanksgiving as one way to bring Americans together much the same way that Protestant women later promoted the Pledge of Allegiance to foster patriotism and national unity, which is another story.

Lincoln also established its official date as the final Thursday in November. Needless to say, the South was loathe to adopt any law coming from the hated Lincoln, and it would take many years for the holiday to achieve its goal or begin to resemble the distinctly American secular holiday we know today.

Immigrant Catholics, who still observed the Catholic feasts and holydays, were also reluctant to embrace this strictly secular feast, which they considered Protestant. It was Cardinal of Baltimore James Gibbons (1834-1921), the great champion of Americanism and religious liberty, who was the first Prelate to make public efforts to integrate Catholics into the Protestant festival.

In 1888, he published in his archdiocesan paper a circular where he called on his priests to recite this ecumenical prayer at the close of Mass on Thanksgiving Day directing its observance: “The faithful of the Archdiocese having in common with our fellow citizens, deep cause for gratitude to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, will, we feel confident, be equally desirous of evincing their spirit of thanksgiving.”



A 1869 illustration by Thomas Nast displays the new ideal: a table around which all Americans sit

This won him points with the *New York Herald*, who praised him highly for the act, and with President Cleveland. But, if the Cardinal's gesture won him admiration from Protestant quarters, it met with strong protest from many fellow Prelates, especially those in the South. Bishop Benjamin J. Keiley of Savannah (GA), complained publicly that Gibbons had "out-heroded Herod" by inducing Catholics to recognize "the damnably Puritanical substitute for Christmas." (1)

It would take many years – after the more generalized secularization and commercialization of Thanksgiving that occurred in the post World War I era – before Catholics as a body would accept the secular holiday. The 1910 *Catholic Encyclopedia* makes this revealing remark: "Catholic recognition of the day by special religious features has only been of comparatively recent date and not as yet of official general custom."

The Pilgrims' fast and thanksgiving day

So, what is the real history of the real "first thanksgiving"? Summarizing, it could hardly be more different from the story of Pilgrims and Indians meeting in ecumenical joy at a feast of fellowship, the fable we know today.

The Plymouth Pilgrims followed their English counterparts who despised the many Catholic holydays and feast days. But they went a step further, thinking the Church of England beyond reform because it was still too Roman. According to them, all these Popish inventions involved too much ceremony, too much celebration and were unsupported by Scriptures.

So, the Puritans reduced the holydays and feast days to one: the Sabbath. These first Pilgrims, who landed on American soil, hated holydays and festivity so much that they even abolished Christmas and Easter.

A custom developed among the Pilgrims, however, that of declaring special days of thanksgiving in response to God's providence. The day of thanksgiving was preceded by a day of fast. The majority of the second day was spent in their temple houses praying, singing and Scripture reading. Feasting played little and often no role in the early Pilgrim thanksgivings.

The Massachusetts Pilgrims of Plymouth did not view the 1621 feast celebrated between the Wampanoag Indians and the Pilgrims as a "first Thanksgiving;" they certainly had no intention of inaugurating an annual holiday. This "fast and thanksgiving day" that Governor Bradford called to commemorate the year's good harvest was, like all others, to note the passing of one providential moment, the good harvest of that particular autumn.

When George Washington issued an *ad hoc* proclamation of a national day of thanksgiving, he did so in the Calvinist spirit. The Continental Congress proclaimed November 1, 1777, as a nationwide day for fasting, prayer and thanksgiving for the English defeat at Saratoga that ensured a French alliance with the newly born Republic. John Adams and James Madison issued similar proclamations for other "providential" events.

The Thanksgiving we know today was invented and reinvented several times, but has little to do in fact with those original Pilgrims, Indians or turkey dinner.

In my opinion, knowing the history of Thanksgiving strengthens the argument for celebrating the Catholic thanksgivings of [St. Augustine](#), Florida and [El Paso](#), Texas. It makes more sense for Catholics to honor the first Masses said on Catholic soil than the original Protestant fast and thanksgiving day that commemorated the Pilgrim's "covenant with the Lord."

Still we can commemorate it on the fourth Thursday of November, or any other day, joining together with family and friends to thank God for our Catholic past and ask him to take up again the original plan for our Nation that it may rightly celebrate the Reign of Christ and Our Lady in all its festivals and actions.

1. John Tracy Elliot, *The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons*, Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, vol. II, pp. 5-6.



Norman Rockwell portrays the familiar Thanksgiving accepted by all Americans by the mid-20th century

La Conquistadora: Our Country's Oldest Madonna

Marian Therese Horvat, Ph.D.

The oldest statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the United States to whom a constant public devotion has been maintained is a yard-high, wood-carved statue in the Cathedral of Santa Fe in New Mexico. She is called “Our Lady of the Rosary, *La Conquistadora*,” a notable title with much significance for our own times. Why is so little known of this image and the first shrine in the present United States to honor Mary, who was later to become the patroness of the entire nation?

The answer perhaps lies in the fact that it was the English who became the almost exclusive recorders of the history of the United States. The history books in both the Catholic and secular schools of the 20th century begin the “story” with the Mayflower, the Pilgrims, and early New England settlements. We have, one might say, a Protestant version of the colonization of America. Until recently it was tantamount to historical heresy to claim that American history began, in depth, prior to 1607.

It was only many years after my primary school history classes that I learned about the Catholic past of a colonial America in the South and Southwest. In New Mexico, for example, seven years before there was a Jamestown, the Spaniards had founded Santa Fe. Almost 75 years before the landing of the Mayflower, Fray Marcos de Niza first saw New Mexico and reported on the rich possibilities to be found there. All the early expeditions into the “New Kingdom of St. Francis,” which would later be New Mexico, included Franciscan missionaries, many of whom stayed behind to spread the Faith to the Indians and were martyred.

I am sure the future will see the writing of an American Catholic history book that duly recognizes its Spanish and Catholic roots. And in that history, there will surely be a place for the story I will tell here. For, from the beginning of the Spanish presence on North American soil, the benevolent presence of Our Lady has been manifest.



La Conquistadora – America’s oldest Madonna brought by Fray Alonzo Benavidez to the Royal Villa of Santa Fe in 1624

New lands and new titles

The majestic delicately featured statue was carved from willow in Spain sometime in the early 1600s and was given her first name, Our Lady of the Assumption. Originally, her wooden garment was painted crimson and covered with gold leaf in arabesque designs, the costume of a Moorish princess. When the statue made her journey to New Spain is not documented. What the records do show is that she arrived with a group of colonists in Santa Fe in 1625 in the care of a Franciscan missionary, Fray Alonso da Venevides. In the greatest pomp and ceremony he could muster in the primitive colony, he installed the statue in the Church of the Assumption, the first shrine in the U.S. to specifically honor Mary.



The expression of *La Conquistadora* is serious and somewhat sad, remindful of the gaze of the image of Our Lady of Fatima. The statue is also titled Our Lady of the Rosary

Since a Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception already existed in Santa Fe, it was not long before the image organically assumed a second title: Our Lady of the Conception. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception had been promulgated for the Spanish kingdoms in 1617, and there was great enthusiasm for this invocation. Many of the Spanish Franciscans, including those in New Mexico, were wearing blue, rather than gray or brown, habits to commemorate the new honor shown Our Lady.

All that was needed for the transformation was to add a silver crescent moon to the pedestal, and this was done. At the same time, the confraternity in Santa Fe determined to adopt the Spanish style of the time of dressing sacred images in real clothes. The body was pared of much of its form, movable arms attached, and Our Lady dressed in a rich silk dress, brocade mantle and jeweled crown. Inventories through history list Castilian mantillas, lavish damask and gold lamé gowns and mantles, and even tiny Parisian lace handkerchiefs and ruby earrings.

It was in these early days that the statue adopted a third title as well, Our Lady of the Rosary. The constant attacks from roving tribes and unconverted Pueblos caused the Spanish colonists to turn to their most trusted weapon in times of danger: the Rosary. Still

fresh in the minds of Catholics was the memory of the victory of the Spanish fleet at Lepanto in 1571, when the Confraternity of the Rosary in Rome went through the streets praying for victory over the Saracens who threatened to overrun Christian Europe.

Facing the growing boldness of the Indians, the first colonists of the Villa of Santa Fe turned with fervor to the Rosary. Our Lady had already sent a warning by means of 10-year-old girl, who had recovered instantaneously from a violent illness. In a vision, Our Lady had told her that

the colony would suffer a chastisement and be destroyed because of the lack of reverence it had for her priests and the holy Religion.

On August 12, 1680, the feast of St. Lawrence, the first Spanish martyr, the Indians joined together to make a well-planned attack. They killed 21 Padres on that day, burned the city and drove out the Spanish colonists. Because of the prayers and sincere effort to heed the warning of Our Lady, most of the colonists escaped with their lives. Miraculously, Our Lady of the Rosary was rescued from the blazing remains of the Church, and she joined the refugees in their flight to safety to what is today Juarez, Mexico, awaiting a champion who would risk a return.

***La Conquistadora* reoccupies her city: A bloodless reconquest**

La Conquistadora waited twelve years for that champion. In 1691, Don Diego de Vargas was sent from Spain by the King to organize a campaign for the resettlement of Santa Fe. Like his noble conquistador forebears, Don Diego de Vargas was fearlessly intrepid and sincerely pious. The Catholic history of the New World is filled with the feats of such heroes, men forceful of character and mind who aspired to greatness of soul and deed. (2) Deeply devoted to the Virgin Mary, Don Diego de Vargas took on the difficult mission and vowed to return *La Conquistadora* to her rightful throne as Patroness and Protectress of the Kingdom and Villa of Santa Fe.

In his remarkable re-entry without bloodshed into Santa Fe that made him famous throughout Old and New Spain, Don Diego led an army of the Reconquest under the banner of Our Lady. All along the trail, he undertook to meet with the Indian chieftains and won them over by the force of his personality and presence. Displaying Our Lady on the royal standard he carried, he told them that both Indians and Spaniards could now live in peace together under so tender a Mother who loved them all alike.

Within four months, 23 pueblos of 10 Indian nations had been conquered and 2,000 Indians converted without the loss of a single life. In his long report to the viceroy one month after his triumphant entry into Santa Fe in 1692, Don Diego de Vargas gave the credit for the bloodless conquest to “the Sovereign Queen, Most Blessed Mary.”

“Now it is my wish,” he continued, “that the church should be built, first and foremost, and that in it before all else the patroness of the said kingdom and villa should be set up her title being *La Conquistadora*, Our Lady of the Conquest.” (3)

The statue had taken on its final and most enduring title, devoutly bestowed by Our Lady’s champion Don Diego de Vargas.

***Our Lady of the Rosary* intercedes again**

The group of close to 800 colonists encamped in a sheltered area outside the city, while Vargas led his troops into Santa Fe for the peaceful takeover. The tribe of Pueblo Indians, however, began to prevaricate. Supporting tribes joined them to assist them in their resistance. There was no recourse but battle for Don Diego and his vastly outnumbered Spaniards, who were short on both food and water and poorly sheltered in the bitter midwinter cold. The odds favored the Pueblos.

In the civilian campsite outside the city, a makeshift shrine was erected for *La Conquistadora*, and fervent prayers for victory were made. Before the battle, Don Vargas knelt at the head of his companies of soldiers lined up in front of the improvised shrine and altar while all recited the Act of Contrition in a loud voice. The order for assault was given, the battle began, and the people continued praying the Rosary before the statue of their Queen.

Throughout the morning and afternoon, the repeated Spanish attacks proved futile. Night fell and Santa Fe remained in Indian hands. Then, in an unexpected surprise attack before daybreak, the tide turned and the Spanish cavalry prevailed. The colonists reclaimed their “Villa of the Holy Faith,” with Don Vargas and the people crediting the outcome to the intercession of *La Conquistadora*. To acknowledge her benevolent generalship Don Vargas placed a small military officer’s baton in her right hand.

Promises fulfilled

Although Don Vargas had vowed to create a suitable “throne” for his Lady after her return, it was not until 13 years after his death in 1704 that the promise was realized. In 1717, the original adobe foundation of the first Church of the Assumption became the site for a larger church dedicated to St. Francis, which would later become the present day Cathedral of St. Francis. *La Conquistadora* left her makeshift chapel and was enthroned in the special Lady Chapel, where she can be venerated to this day.

Another desire of Don Vargas was carried out eight years after his death by one of his Captains, Lt. Gov. Paez Hurtado, who influenced city officials to draft a proclamation for an annual celebration commemorating the peaceful 1692 resettlement. The 1712 proclamation established the first Fiesta de Santa Fe, to be celebrated by the whole city with a Mass, vespers, and a sermon. It was not long before the people began to take the statue out in procession from its Chapel in the Church of St. Francis to the site outside the city where the colonists had encamped before moving into Santa Fe. There under a ramada, or shrine of boughs, *La Conquistadora* was enthroned for nine days in June, with a Mass said every day during the novena. Another procession brought the image back home to the St. Francis Church until the following year.



The first mission church of the Assumption was the site where St. Francis Cathedral stands today. Its Lady Chapel enshrines *La Conquistadora*

Today, enshrined in the Lady’s Chapel of the Cathedral of St. Francis, she is still cherished and feted at an annual festival by the people of the city and region. A procession still carries her to the old campsite, where today stands a chapel known as the Rosario, built in 1806 to replace the temporary shelter of cottonwood and juniper branches erected annually for her novena.

A papal coronation

With the passing of time, devotion to the Queen and Patroness of the Royal City of Santa Fe has never ceased. Small groups of pilgrims filter in and out to venerate the country's oldest Madonna. In 1954 Our Lady of the Rosary: *La Conquistadora* was crowned by Cardinal Francis Spellman and in 1960 she received a Papal Coronation during ceremonies honoring the 350th anniversary of the founding of Santa Fe. Her golden crown is studded with precious stones, and her wardrobe has become rich and extensive, with new items constantly being presented by faithful devotees.

These honors, so admirable and so appropriate, were nonetheless little known and celebrated by Catholics in America. One can only wonder what were the first designs of Our Lady for this country? She came first to U.S. soil as *La Conquistadora*, and through her intercession an important battle was won for Catholic New Spain. How would it have been had the country been truly conquered for Our Lord Jesus Christ and governed under the banners of the Queen of Heaven? Perhaps God will raise up champions devoted to Mary and faithful to the Holy Church still yet in the future who will seek to reinstall the Kingship of Christ through Mary.

1. It was the groundbreaking work on the "Spanish Borderlands" by Herbert Eugene Bolton in the 1920s and '30s that opened the door to a broader approach to American history, one which was not simply Anglo-oriented or limited to the study of the 13 colonies to which 37 states were added in time. Bolton's textbook *The Colonization of North America 1492-1783* almost never saw light because it so upset the status quo history-telling of the United States: one-third of the whole is devoted to the Spanish period of settlements, missions, and colonization that took place before 1606, that is, before there were any permanent English settlements in America. *Bolton and the Spanish Borderlands*, ed. by John Francis Bannon (Norman: Un. of Oklahoma Press, 1968), p. 11.

2. The new history wants to discredit those individuals who have traditionally been identified as the heroes or "great men" of history, and to replace them by the "common man" or "ordinary people: It is not only elitist individuals who are disparaged and displaced, but also the great themes and events of history in which individuals necessarily figure preeminently. Included in this, naturally, are the epic theme of Discovery and the heroic Missionary movement. Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Of Heroes, Villains and Valets" in *On Looking in the Abyss* (New York: Alfred A Knoff, 1994).

3. Fray Angelico Chavez, *La Conquistadora, The Autobiography of an Ancient Statue* (Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, n.d.), p. 54.

A 'Lady in Blue' Instructs Indians in the Southwest

Margaret C. Galitzin

The Spanish soldiers and missionaries had been exploring our vast Southwest for almost one century when the Pilgrims, members of a radical Protestant sect, established their first stable colony at Plymouth Rock in 1620. Unlike those Puritans, who aimed only to find a safe place for their sect to prosper, the Spaniards had a dual mission. They definitely aimed to explore and settle the West, but another mission of equal import to the Crown was to convert the native Indians to the Catholic Faith.

By 1598 the Franciscan friars who accompanied the Spanish explorers and settlers had established a chain of missions to work with the Pueblo Indians and other tribes in the unsettled Colony of New Mexico. In 1623, Fray Alonso de Benavides arrived from Mexico to the Santa Fe Mission as the first Superior of the Franciscan Missions of New Mexico and the first commissioner of the Inquisition for the Colony. He was known not only for his capacity and energy, but also for his great missionary zeal.

He arrived with a small reinforcement of other Franciscan friars who would embark on the dangerous missionary labor in the expansive, unsettled territory of New Mexico. As in so many epic works in History, a few men, moved by supernatural zeal for the cause of God, undertook a work much larger than their human forces.

One of the most fascinating episodes of this time involves the missionary efforts of a Spanish Abbess who worked in New Mexico, Arizona and Texas from 1620 to 1631. She instructed various Indian tribes in the Catholic Faith and told them how to find the Franciscan Mission to ask for priests to come to baptize their people. Her name was Mother Mary of Jesus of Agreda, a Conceptionist nun who, nonetheless, never left her Convent in Spain.

An Abbess living in Spain bilocates to America

Her extraordinary bilocations to the New World were a source of wonder to the Spanish Church and Crown. The authenticity of the miracle of her more than 500 visits to America was carefully examined and documented by the proper authorities to ensure that there was no fraud or error. She was also carefully examined twice by the Inquisition in the years 1635 and 1650.

In his *Memorial of 1630*, a report on the state of the missions and colony, Fr. Benavides made a precise account of the Indians who had been instructed by the "Lady in Blue." His *Memorial of 1634*, written after he had met and visited



Without leaving her convent in Spain Mother Mary of Agreda instructed Indians in the U.S.

with Mother Mary of Agreda in 1631, also describes that meeting and his favorable impressions of the Conceptionist Abbess (see Part Two). When he left Agreda, Fr. Benavides asked Mary of Agreda to write [a letter](#) addressed to the missionaries of the New World. Her words inspired religious to labor in the American missionary fields for many years to come.

That Mary of Agreda played an influential role in our country is undeniable. Some years later Fr. Eusebio Kino found old Indians in New Mexico and Arizona who told stories about how a beautiful white woman dressed in blue had spoken to them about the Catholic Faith. Fr. Junipero Serra wrote that it was the “Seraphic Mother Mary of Jesus” who had inspired him to work in the vineyard of the Lord in California. (1)

Today Mother Mary of Agreda is better known for her momentous work on the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary, *The Mystical City of God*. Perhaps one reason that American Catholics know so little about her well-documented bilocations to America is because for centuries Friar Benavides' *Memorials* were concealed in the Archives of the *Propaganda Fide* in Rome and unknown to the English speaking world. His expanded *1634 Memorial* was only translated into English and made available to the public in 1945. (2) Many of the details from this article were taken from that document, as well as from several scholarly articles on the topic. (3)

A command for an inquiry

In 1627, Fr. Sebastian Marcilla, the confessor of Mother Mary of Agreda in Spain, sent a report about her work among the American Indians to the Archbishop of Mexico, Francisco de Manso. He told the Prelate that the young Abbess – age 25 - said that she was visiting Indian villages in New Mexico in some supernatural manner and was teaching the natives the Catholic Faith. Even though she spoke Spanish, the Indians understood her, and she understood them when they replied in their native dialect. The confessor had a favorable impression of the Conceptionist nun and was inclined to believe her words.

The Archbishop ordered Fr. Benavides, who was being transferred from New Spain to New Mexico, to make a careful inquiry to be carried out “with the exactness, faithfulness and devotion that such a grave matter requires.” It is noteworthy that Fr. Benavides had been invested with two offices in New Mexico – that of Superior and that of Inquisitor – and had all the resources available to make a serious inquiry.

The Archbishop asked that he should find out whether new tribes - the Tejas [Texans], Chillescas, Jumanos and Caburcos - already had “some knowledge of the Faith” and “in what manner and by what means Our Lord has manifested it.”

Indians requesting Baptism

In the summer of 1629, a delegation of 50 Jumanos arrived at Isleta, a Pueblo mission near present day Albuquerque, requesting priests to return with them and baptize their people. The Jumanos were an as yet uncatechized tribe who hunted and traded over a wide area in the Plains east of New Mexico – today the Panhandle or South Plains region of Texas.



Mary of Agreda teaching the Indians

For the past six years, smaller delegations of Jumanos had come at about the same time to Isleta to speak to Fr. Juan de Salas, a much respected missionary who had established the church in Isleta in 1613. Each year, the Indians made the same plea and spoke about a woman who had sent them. They were the first to report the visits of the “Lady in Blue.” But the story was disregarded as impossible.

To travel from Isleta to the eastern Plains was a long and dangerous trek – over 300 miles through the hostile lands of the Apache. At that time, the missionaries lacked both the priests and the necessary soldiers to make the trip and establish a new outpost, so the mission to the Jumanos was delayed.

This year, when the Jumanos party arrived, Fr. De Salas was at the chapter meeting at the Franciscan headquarters in Santo Domingo. A messenger was sent to him with the news about the delegation, and he informed the new Superior about the strange story of a lady who was supposedly teaching the Catholic faith to the Indians.

Fr. Benavides, who had received specific instructions from the Franciscan general regarding this very topic, was very interested to know more. He decided to return with Fr. De Salas to Isleta in order to question the Indian party and ask how they had come to have knowledge of the Faith.

In his *Memorial* to Pope Urban VIII, he reported the results of his inquiry:

“We called the Jumanos to the monastery and asked them their reason for coming every year to ask for baptism with such insistence. Seeing a portrait of Mother Luisa [another Spanish Franciscan sister in Spain with a reputation for holiness] in the monastery, they said, ‘A woman in similar garb wanders among us there, always preaching, but her face is not old like this, but young and beautiful.’

“Asked why they had not told us this before, they answered, ‘Because you did not ask, and we thought she was here also.’”

The Indians called the woman the “Lady in Blue” because of the blue mantle she wore. She would appear among them, the Jumanos representatives said, and instruct them about the true God and His holy law. The party, which included 12 chiefs, included representatives of other tribes, allies of the Jumanos. In Fr. Benavides’s 1630 *Memorial*, he notes that they told him “a woman used to preach *to each one of them in his own tongue*” [emphasis added].

It was this woman who had insisted they should ask the missionaries to be baptized and told them how to find them. At times, they said, the 'Lady in Blue' was hidden from them, and they did not know where she went or how to find her.

Missionaries find a field ready for harvest

Fr. Benavides sent two missionaries, Fr. Juan de Salas and Fr. Diego López, accompanied by three soldiers, on the apostolic mission to the Jumanos. After traveling several hundred miles east through the dangerous Apache territory, the weary expedition was met by a dozen Indians from the Jumanos tribe. They had been sent to greet them and accompany them on the last few days journey, they affirmed, by the 'Lady in Blue' who had alerted them of their proximity.

As the friars drew near the tribe, they saw in amazement a procession of men, women and children coming to meet them. At its head were Indians carrying two crosses decorated with garlands of flowers. With great respect the Indians kissed the crucifixes the Franciscans wore around their necks.

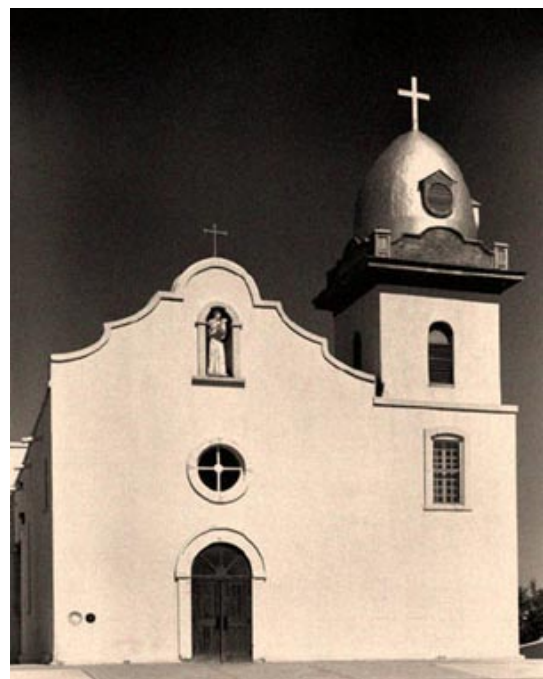
“They learned from the Indians that the same nun had instructed them as to how they should come out in procession to receive them, and she had helped them to decorate the crosses,” Fr. Benavides wrote in his *Memorial*. Many of the Indians immediately began to clamor to be baptized.

The missionaries found that the Indians were already instructed in the Faith and eager to learn more. Their astonishment increased as messengers arrived from neighboring Indian tribes who pleaded for the priests to come to them also. They said that the same lady in blue had catechized them and told them to seek out the missionaries for baptism.

After a while the missionaries had to return to the San Antonio Mission to report to Fr. Benavides the astounding things they had found before he traveled to New Spain, where he would report to the Archbishop and Viceroy on the missionary work and potential in New Mexico.

A great miracle

Before they left, Fr. Juan de Salas told them that, until new missionaries arrived, “they should flock every day, as they were wont, to pray before a Cross which they had set up on a pedestal.”



The Church of Corpus Christi at the Isleta Mission, the oldest operating church in the U.S.

But this did not satisfy the Jumanos Chief, who entreated the priests to cure the sick, “for you are priests of God and can do much with that holy cross.”

The infirm, numbering about 200, were brought together in one place. The priests made the Sign of the Cross over them, read the Gospel according to St. Luke and invoked Our Lady and St. Francis. To reward their faith and prepare the way for great conversions, God worked a miracle. All the sick arose healed. Amid great rejoicing, the missionaries left the village to begin the long and risky return journey to New Mexico.

Along the way, they were met by “ambassadors” from other tribes, the Quiviras and Aixaos. These Indians also asked for the priests to come to baptize their people and told them the 'Lady in Blue' had told them where to find the missionaries. These ambassadors accompanied the priests to New Mexico.

Report to the Viceroy and Archbishop

The missionaries returned shortly before Fr. Benavides departure for Mexico. When he heard the extraordinary account of what the missionaries had found, he included the story of the “Lady in Blue” and her miraculous work to convert the Jumanos in his report.



His *Memorial of 1630* gives a careful description of the missionary work that had been accomplished in the New Mexico Colony. The 111-page document described over 60,000 Christianized natives residing in 90 pueblos, divided into 25 districts.

The Viceroy and Archbishop Francisco de Manso were very impressed with his account and dispatched him to Madrid "to inform his Majesty, as the head of all, of the notable and unusual things that were happening.”

Mary of Agreda is better known for her work *The Mystical City of God*

There were many pressing matters pertaining to the Mission Colonies that Fr. Benavides needed to address with the authorities in Spain. He also hoped

to meet Mother Mary of Agreda in order to question her and learn for certain if she were the 'Lady in Blue' who had brought the Gospel of Christ over the oceans to the Indians of New Mexico.

1. Francisco Palou, *Evangelista de la Mar Pacifico*, ed. by M. Aguilar, Madrid, 1944, p. 25.

2. *The Benavides Memorial of 1634*, trans with notes by F. W. Hodge, G. P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, Albuquerque, 1945.

3. Donahue, William H., “Mary of Agreda and the Southwest United States,” *The Americas*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Jan., 1953), pp. 291-314; Nancy P Hickerson, “The Visits of the “Lady in Blue”: An Episode in the History of the South Plains, 1629,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 46.1 (Spring 1990), pp. 67-90

Mary of Agreda Describes Her Travels

Margaret C. Galitzin

One of the most remarkable episodes in the early history of the Southwest is the bilocation of Mother Mary of Agreda to New Mexico and Texas. Her visits are confirmed by Fr. Benavides, the Franciscan Superior of the New Mexico Colony, in a [report](#) that describes the miraculous conversion of the Jumanos and their neighbors, who were catechized by the Lady in Blue. On the orders of the Archbishop of New Spain, he traveled to Spain in 1630 to deliver his report to the King and the Franciscan General.

On the first of August in 1630, Fr. Benevides arrived in Spain and reported to the Franciscan Father General, Fray Bernardino de Sena, Bishop of Viseo. The Father General had already been informed about the bilocations of Mother Mary of Agreda by her confessor. He had made a personal visit to her Convent eight years earlier, and she had spoken candidly to him about these marvels. He was favorably impressed with the Abbess, whose Convent was known for its piety, devotion and fidelity to the rule.

The presence of Fr. Benevides in Spain was opportune to ascertain the veracity of her bilocations. He would be able to speak with Mother Mary of Jesus and ask her questions about the missions, the Indians, and the country that only someone who had been there could know. As an inquisitor and administrator of exceptional capacity, his opinion would have great weight in determining if Mary of Agreda was indeed the “Lady in Blue.”

In April of 1631, the Father General sent him to Agreda with the authority to oblige the Abbess under her vow of obedience to reveal to him everything relating to her miraculous visits to the Indians in the New World.

When Fr. Benevides reached Agreda, he first contacted the Provincial, Fr. Sebastian Marcilla, and the nun’s confessor, Fr. Andrés de la Torre. The three went to the Immaculate Conception Convent to question Mother Mary of Jesus. The account of their visit is documented by Fr. Benevides, who describes his first impression of the Abbess:

“Before saying anything else, I state that the said Mother Mary of Jesus, at present Abbess of the Convent of La Concepción, is almost 29 years of age, with a handsome face, a very clear and rosy complexion and large black eyes.



A statue of Ven. Mary of Agreda in the Conceptionist habit with its blue cloak

"The fashion of her habit is simple like ours, that is, of coarse brown sackcloth worn next to the body without any other tunic. Over this brown habit is one of heavy white sackcloth, with a scapulary of the same and the cord of our Father St. Francis. Over the scapulary is the rosary. They wear no shoes or other footwear except boards bound to their feet or some straw sandals. The mantle is of heavy blue sackcloth and the veil is black." (*Memorial*, p. 479 - [See footnote 1](#), Part 1)

It was this blue cloak of the Conceptionist Order that had inspired the Indians to call her the "Lady in Blue."

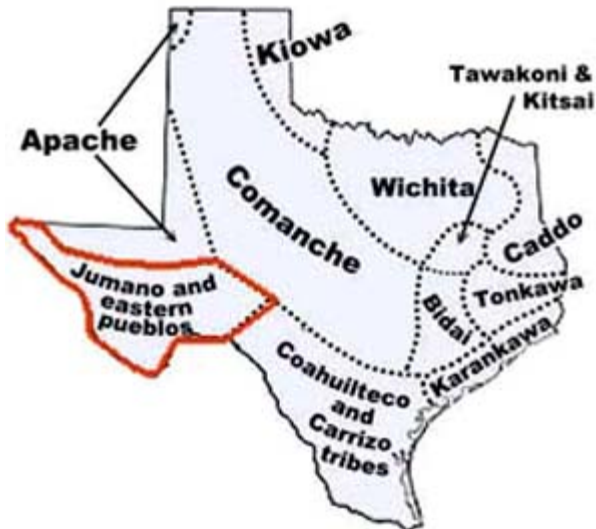
The account of Mary of Agreda

Mary of Agreda obediently told the three priests all that concerned her visits to the Indians of America. Since she was a child, she said, she had been inspired to pray for the Indians in New Spain, whose souls would be lost unless they converted to the one true Faith.

Then Our Lord began to show her more distinctly in visions those provinces He desired to be converted. She observed the appearance of the people, their barbaric condition of life and customs, and their need for priests to instruct them in the Faith. In one of these visions, Our Lord singled out the Indians of New Mexico and told her he desired to convert them and other remote "kingdoms" of that area. This inspired her to pray and sacrifice even more fervently for these souls across the Ocean.



The Jumanos Indians (*above*) in southwest Texas were the first to tell about the lady in blue who visited them



On one occasion, while praying for them, Our Lord unexpectedly transported her in a kind of ecstasy. Without perceiving the means, it seemed to her that she was in a different region and climate, amid those very Indians she had seen before only in visions. It seemed to her that she saw them with her eyes and felt the warmer temperature of the land. All her senses were affected by the change of place.

Then Our Lord commanded her to fulfill her charitable desires, and she began to preach the Catholic Faith to those people. She would preach to them in her own Spanish language, and the Indians understood her as if it were their own language. She could also understand what they said to her.

Returning from her trance, she found herself in the same place where it overtook her. This happened to her in 1620.

Subsequently, in the next 11 years that miracle was repeated more than 500 times, sometimes

with three or four visits in one day. On these occasions, she said, it seemed to her “that through her words and the miracles God wrought in confirmation of them, an extensive kingdom and its leader were being brought to the Holy Faith.”

She was not always received well. Several times, she suffered torture and was left for dead at the hands of Indians who had been provoked to violence by the shamans, the Indian witch doctors. To the astonishment of the Indians, she would return, and this and other wonders she worked through the mercy of Our Lord helped to persuade them she was preaching the truth.

As she passed in that supernatural flight through New Mexico, she would also see the Franciscans who were working for their conversion. That is how she was able to advise the Jumanos, who lived 300 miles from the mission, where they should go to find the Franciscans. They went at the command of Mother Mary of Jesus and following her specific directions.

A careful inquiry

Hearing the words of Mother Mary of Jesus, the missionary priest was much moved. To verify the truth of her account, he asked her specific questions about the area, if she could identify certain landmarks and describe the other missionaries, as well as specific Indians. “She told me many particularities of that land that even I had forgotten and she brought them to my memory,” he noted. She also described the features and individual traits of the missionaries and various Indians, with details that only a person who had been in New Spain could know.

In a letter of May 1631 he wrote to the Father General:

“She told me all we know that has happened to our brothers and fathers, Fray Juan de Salas and Fray Diego Lopez, in their journey to the Jumanos. ... She gave me their full descriptions, adding that she assisted them. She knows Captain Tuerto [a Jumano chief] very well, giving a detailed description of him and of the others.” He concluded, “She has preached in person our Holy Catholic Faith in every nation, particularly in our New Mexico. “



Immaculate Conception Convent in Agreda

Fr. Benavides had other talks with Mother Mary of Jesus before he left. He became convinced that she was the “Lady in Blue” who had traveled to America to teach the Indians. It was not just her words, but her way of being that impressed him. He had formed a high opinion of the sanctity and piety of that Conceptionist nun who was favored with many mystical gifts and would write *The Mystical City of God: The Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary*.

Bilocation to America

How did these mysterious transports to America take place? When Mother Mary of Jesus was questioned as to whether she was carried away bodily or in spirit, she said she did not know. What she knew was that she saw these lands and different tribes; she felt the change in climate and temperature; she experienced pain when the Indians turned on her and persecuted her. On one occasion it seemed to her that she distributed rosaries among the Indians. In fact, she had a number of rosaries with her in her cell, but later, coming out of her mystical state, she did not find them.

She was certain that her work in New Mexico among the Indians was not a delusion. In her humility, she affirmed repeatedly that she was inclined to believe an Angel passed in her form to catechize the Indians, as a sign from Our Lord of the effects of prayer.

This was not the opinion of the Prelates who examined her. They were convinced that she was transported bodily because of what was clearly manifested to all her senses on those occasions. Satisfied with the spirituality of the Abbess, Fr. Benevides confirmed the opinion of her confessor, stating that he believed she was carried bodily to New Mexico and Texas, where she catechized the Indians.

Her letter to the American missionaries

Before he left Agreda, Fr. Benevides asked Mother Mary of Jesus to write a letter to the missionaries to encourage them in their work.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sor Maria de Jesus." The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

Mary of Agreda's signature on the [letter](#) addressed to the missionaries in America

In it, she described other kingdoms of Indians that had not yet been discovered, and encouraged the friars to continue their blessed labors of conversion. She told the missionaries how pleasing and acceptable their work and sacrifices were to God. Even though she was privileged to bring the Religion of Christ to the Indians, she said, she did not have the great merit of the missionaries, who underwent such tremendous hardships and sufferings.

Our Lord was “highly pleased by the conversion of souls,” she wrote. “I can assure you that the Blessed Ones envy you, if envy could exist among them, which is impossible, but I am stating it thus according to our mode of expression. If they could forsake their eternal bliss to accompany you in those conversions, they would do it.” Such was the great value of saving souls won by the Precious Blood of Christ, she concluded.

This letter, which you can read in full [here](#), was destined to inspire many Franciscan missionaries in their work among the Indians in the Southwest and California.

Testimonies of Her Presence in the U.S.

Margaret C. Galitzin

When Fathers Salas and Lopez left the Jumano camp in 1630, they evidently intended to return. The Indians realized that the fathers were making a preliminary inspection trip and did all they could to convince them to establish a permanent mission in Jumano territory. The decision, in fact, was in their favor, although the events turned out different from the plans.



A 17th century woodgraving

Spanish missionaries would minister to the Jumanos for the rest of the century, but not in the High Plains area. Soon after the first visit of the missionaries, the Jumanos, a nomadic hunter tribe, had to leave their customary hunting grounds.

It seems that, with the help of the Franciscans, they resettled in the Mission of the Immaculate Conception at Quarai in New Mexico, established in 1629-1630 (today known as Gran Quivira). In 1670 – some 40 years after the last documented visit of the Lady in Blue - at least part of the High Plains Jumanos were resettled in the Manso Mission founded by the Franciscans near El Paso in 1659.(1)

For the incredulous Europeans, Fr. Benavides' *Memorials of 1630 and 1633*, valid historical records, would offer proof that the bilocations of Mother Mary of Agreda were not just fantastic legends of the superstitious 'backward' peoples.

For the Indians, the documentation was unnecessary. From one generation to another, the stories of the Conceptionist nun in her blue cape were recounted, evidence of her miraculous visits preserved by word of mouth, an enduring oral history.

"I want no other color but blue"

Fr. Benavides' *Memorials* are not, however, the only documented evidence of Mother Mary of Agreda's presence in the New World. As other Spaniards came to the territory where Mary of Agreda had made her visits, they found Indians who remembered a Lady in Blue and her teachings of the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

In 1689, 24 years after the death of Mary of Jesus, Spanish explorer [Alonso de Leon](#) made his fourth expedition into Texas territory. In his letter to the Viceroy, a report giving a detailed record of the expedition, (2) he wrote that some of the Tejas Indians whom he met were already

partly instructed in the Catholic Faith because of the visits of the Lady in Blue to their forefathers. These are his words:

“They perform many Christian rites, and the Indian chief asked for missionaries to instruct them, saying that many years ago a woman went inland to instruct them, but that she had not been there for a long time.” (3)

Franciscan Fr. Damian Massanet accompanied de Leon on this expedition. Two years earlier, he had established Mission San Francisco de los Tejas, the first mission in East Texas. In a report to the Viceroy, he tells of an incident that took place on this expedition among the Tejas Indians.



Indians recount stories of a lady in blue visiting their forefathers

The expedition leaders were distributing clothing to the Indians. Their chief, or “governor” as Fr. Massanet calls him, asked for a piece of blue

baize for a shroud to bury his mother in when she died. Fr. Massanet writes:

“I told him that cloth would be better, and he said that he did not want any other color than blue. I asked then what mystery was attached to the color blue, and the governor said that they were very fond of blue, particularly for burial clothes, because in times past a very beautiful woman visited them there, who descended from the heights, and that this woman was dressed in blue and that they wished to be like her.

“Being asked whether that was long ago, the chief said that it had not been in his time, but that his mother, who was aged, had seen her, as had the other old people. From this it is seen clearly that it was Mother Maria de Jesus de Agreda, who was very frequently in those regions, as she herself acknowledged to the Father Superior in New Mexico.” (4)

Arizona Indians recall stories of a beautiful woman

Another written testimony to the presence of Mary of Agreda among the Indians of Arizona comes from the record book of Captain Mateo Mange, who traveled with Jesuit priests Eusebio Francisco Kino and Adamo Gil on the expedition to discover the Colorado and Zila Rivers in 1699.

Once, when speaking with some very old Indians, the explorers asked them if they had ever heard their elders speak about a Spanish captain passing through their region with horses and soldiers. They were seeking information about the expedition of [Don Juan de Oñate](#) in 1606.

The Indians told them that they could remember hearing of such a group from the old people

who were already dead. Then they added - without any question to prompt them - that when they were children a beautiful white woman, dressed in white, brown and blue, with a cloth covering her head, had come to their land.

Mange recounts more of what the Indians told him:

“She had spoken, shouted and harangued them ... and showed them a cross. The nations of the Colorado River shot her with arrows, leaving her for dead on two occasions. Reviving, she disappeared into the air. They did not know where her house and dwelling was. After a few days, she returned again and then many times after to preach to them.” (5)

This would concur with the report of Fr. Benevides, who had interviewed Mother Mary of Agreda in her convent [see Part II](#). She told him that on several occasions the Indians had turned on her and shot arrows at her, leaving her for dead. She felt the pain of the attacks, but when she would come to herself later in the convent in Agreda, there was no sign of the wounds.



A lady with a cross who "descended from above" to teach the Indians

Mange further notes that the Indians of San Marcelo had told them this same story five days earlier, although at that time they had not believed it. But the fact that they heard the same thing repeated in a place some distance away made them begin to suspect that the woman was Mother Mary of Jesus of Agreda. The missionaries were acquainted with her life and work, and knew from Fr. Benavides' *Memorials* that during the years 1620-1631 she had preached to the Indians of North America. (6)

Almost 70 years had passed since that time, and these old men – who appeared to be about 80 – would have been young boys at the time that the Lady in Blue visited them.

The legend of the bluebonnet

Historical documents clearly indicate Mary of Agreda visited the Southwest United States many times in the 1620s to instruct the Indians. It is not a legend.

Fr. Benavides, a trusted Inquisitor, left Agreda convinced that Mary of Agreda had been physically present in the New World, and that her visits had continued until the same year, 1631. In 1635 he became the Bishop of Goa, and he always recommended himself to the prayers of the Conceptionist Abbess and maintained the highest esteem for her.

There was, however, one charming legend that sprung up among the Tejas Indians, inspired by their love and respect for the Lady in Blue.

According to it, after the Franciscans came to baptize and catechize the people, the Lady in Blue told the Jumanos that her visits were at an end. When she mysteriously left them in her accustomed way, the hillside where she had appeared was blanketed with beautiful blue flowers, a memory of her presence among them. That flower came to be known as the Bluebonnet, today the state flower of Texas.



The blue flowers commemorated the visits of
Mary of Agreda

1. Nancy P. Hickerson, "The Visits of the 'Lady in Blue': An Episode in the History of the South Plains, 1629" *Journal of Anthropological Research*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Spring, 1990), pp. 67-90; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3630394>
2. Damian Massanet, Letter of Fray Damian Massanet to Don Carlos de Siguënza, in Bolton, Herbert Eugene Bolton (ed.), *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest, 1542-1706* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916). Pp. 347-38; www.americanjourneys.org/aj-018/
3. W. Donahue, "Mary of Agreda and the Southwest United States," p. 310; see [Article 1](#), Note 1).
4. *Idem*, in *Ibid.*, p. 310
5. *Ibid.*, p. 311
6. *Ibid.*

Who Was Mother Mary of Agreda?

Margaret C. Galitzin

To end this series on the miraculous bilocations of Ven. Mary of Agreda, I thought the reader would like to know more about her. Who was the cloistered Spanish nun who bilocated to the American Southwest in the 17th century to instruct the Indians in the Catholic Faith and prepare them for baptism? This short biography will answer that question.

She was born Maria Coronel y Arana on April 2, 1602 in the town of Agreda in the Province of Soria in north Spain to Francisco Coronel and Catalina de Arana, a family of noble lineage but reduced means. The pious couple had 11 children, but only four lived to adulthood: Francis, Joseph, Mary and Jeronima. The children – and also their parents – would all become religious in the family of St. Francis.

From childhood, she was favored by God with ecstasies and visions. She took a vow of chastity at age eight, and four years later requested her parents' permission to enter a nearby Carmelite convent. That course changed, however, after her mother had a vision in which Our Lord revealed to her His desire that she should form a convent in her own home.

After overcoming many difficulties, in January of 1618, the mother and her two daughters took the habit in their family home, which became the Franciscan Convent of the Immaculate Conception. On the same day, her father became a monk in the Order of St. Francis, where his two sons were already religious.

Eight years later, at the age of 25 and with a papal approval, Mary of Jesus was made Abbess, a burden she reluctantly took on her young shoulders. She would continue to govern the Agreda Convent – except for one brief period – until her death in 1665.



Mother Mary of Jesus (1602-1665)

At the beginning of *The Mystical City of God*, she wrote: “The Almighty in His sheer goodness favored our family so much that all of us were consecrated to Him in the religious state. In the eighth year of the foundation of this convent, in the 25th year of my life, in the year of Our Lord 1627, holy obedience imposed upon me the office of Abbess, which to this day I unworthily hold.” (1)

Two investigations and words of praise

As news spread about the visions and writings of the holy Abbess, the attention of the Spanish Inquisition turned in her direction. In 1635 – shortly after the first visit of Fr. Alonso de

Benavides to her Convent (see [Part II](#)) – a first inquiry was held. The majority of the questions were about her bilocations to America. Her inquisitors found her blameless and praised her virtue, charity and intelligence.



The family house became the first convent

In January of 1650, a second investigation opened. Inquisitors came to the Agreda Convent and questioned Mother Mary of Jesus for 11 days with 80 questions, which covered her bilocations, her writings and also the erroneous information that she was involved in a plot against the Spanish King. The case closed with Mary of Agreda exonerated of all suspicion. Again, the Inquisitors eulogized her life of prayer and her fidelity to Holy Mother Church.

Throughout her life, Mary of Jesus would affirm that obedience was her “compass” in life. She always opened her soul to her spiritual directors, manifesting the grace and favors received from Our Lord and asking for their approbation and counsel.

We know the names of her various directors because of the Inquisition records: They were Fr. Juan de Torrecilla, Fr. Juan Bautista de Santa María y Fr. Tomás Gonzalo. By the order of the Provincial, Fr. Francisco Andrés de la Torre would direct her from 1623 to 1647, when he died. Some

difficult years passed for Mother Mary of Jesus under temporary spiritual directors until finally, in 1655 Fr. Andrés de Fuenmayor assumed her direction and continued until her death in 1665.

We have a vivid example of her spirit of ready obedience in the redaction of her most famous and controversial work, *The Mystical City of God*, a life of the Blessed Virgin dictated to the Conceptionist nun by the Heavenly Queen herself. In 1643, under the order of Fr. de la Torre, she wrote the massive work in her own hand. During his absence, however, a temporary director instructed her to burn that manuscript and the rest of her writings. She readily complied.

When Fr. de la Torre returned, he reprimanded her sharply and commanded her to begin again. When he died in 1647, another order from another temporary director came to destroy the manuscript. A second time it was burned.

Finally, her last and most trusted director Fr. de Fuenmayor ordered Mary of Agreda to take up her pen for the third time. In 1655 she completed the magnificent work we have today on the life of the Virgin Mary. The same Fr. Fuenmayor wrote her first biography and testified under oath to her life of virtue and holiness at the process of beatification that opened seven years after her death.

A long correspondence with the King

In 1642 Maria of Jesus sent King Philip IV an account of one of her visions, in which she saw a council of devils plotting to destroy Catholicism and Spain. The King, who had already read Fr.

Benavides' *Memorial* of her mystical bilocations to New Spain, arranged to meet the Abbess on his way to suppress the rebellion of Catalonia in 1643.



Thus began a long correspondence with the King that lasted for more than 20 years until her death on March 29, 1665. The more than 600 letters that survive to this day reveal the great trust the Spanish Monarch placed in the cloistered Abbess. He consulted her on both spiritual and temporal matters. (2) It was common for the King to write his questions on one side of the page, and for the Abbess to write her responses on the other side.

Philip IV had frequent correspondence with Mary of Agreda

The letters reveal the pressing topics the King faced: Spain's wars and quarrels with

France, Flanders, Italy and Portugal, Catalonian rebellions and the lack of resources for his many initiatives. They also clearly show that Mother Mary of Jesus did not hesitate to remind him of his Catholic duties before God regarding his disordered personal life.

She wrote letters to Popes, Kings, Generals of Religious Orders, Bishops, nobles and every class of person in the Church and society. Although some have been lost, many survive, and we cannot help but admire the volume, extension, quality and variety of her epistolary activity. From her narrow cell, she truly touched the world of her time.

A controversial work on Our Lady

After her death in 1665, miracles and favors were reported, granted through her intercession. So well known was her extraordinary virtue that almost immediately the Spanish Bishops and other eminent churchmen took up the cause for her beatification. Eight years after her death Maria de Jesus de Agreda was declared Venerable by Pope Clement X for her heroic practice of virtues.

Obstacles to her beatification, however, soon appeared in the form of objections to the Marial doctrine in *The Mystical City of God*, which had been published five years after her death and was received with great enthusiasm in Spain. The Spanish Inquisition scrutinized it for 14 years and found nothing contrary to Faith or Morals.

This was the golden marial age in Spain, and her Immaculate Conception was being fiercely debated. On one side as staunch defenders were the theologians who followed Duns Scotus, the Franciscans and the Spanish Universities of Salamanca, Madrid, Granada, among others. On the other side were the French Thomist theologians and, in particular, the University of the Sorbonne. In that climate of debate the work of Mother Mary of Agreda, which defends her Immaculate Conception, came under suspicion.

In 1681, the Holy Office censured the book, and on August 4 of the same year included it on the *Index of Forbidden Books*. By the order of Blessed Innocence XI, however, the decree of condemnation was removed three months later after it was shown that a faulty French translation was at the basis for the censure.

But the incident had a negative influence on her cause of beatification, and since then repeated campaigns have been made against *The City of God*. The Jansenists and Gallicans in the 18th century renewed the attack that the work was “excessive” in its devotion to Mary. Time and time again, the cause of Venerable Maria of Agreda was promoted, and then silenced.



The cell of Mary of Agreda

In recent years, after the 400th anniversary of her birth in 2002, there have been renewed efforts by various Marian groups to move the beatification process forward. But another barrier stands in the way: the strong emphasis on Our Lady as Co-redemptrix and Co-mediatrix found in *The City of God* is in variance with the ecumenical doctrines of Vatican II. Mary of Agreda, once again, is being set aside for promoting devotion to Our Lady.

Incorrupt body

The holiness and admirable life of Mother Mary of Jesus has never been disputed. Within the walls of the Conceptionist Convent of Agreda we find a lively memory of the venerable Abbess. There we can see the eight books of *The Mystical City of God*, her cell with its two windows and the Franciscan habit she wore. But the most extraordinary sight for the admiring pilgrim is the incorrupt body of Venerable Mother Mary of Jesus.



Her incorrupt body is displayed at the Convent Chapel

In 1909 her casket was opened for the first time after her death in 1665. Her body was found to be completely incorrupt. A full report on the condition of the body was prepared by physicians and authorities. In 1989, another careful scientific investigation was made. Spanish physician Andreas Medina reported that the body was in the same state as it was described in the medical report from 1909. “We realized it had absolutely not deteriorated at all in the last 80 years.”

It remains on display in the Convent Chapel of Agreda over which she had ruled for so many years. On the 400th anniversary of her death, over 12,000 pilgrims visited Agreda to venerate her and seek the intercession of the venerable Lady in Blue.

1. Translated by Fiscar Marison, 4 vols, (Chicago, 1916), Book I, pp. 19-20.

2. *María de Jesús de Agreda: Correspondencia con Felipe IV, Religión y Razón de Estado*, Introduction and notes by Consolación Baranda (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1991)

Heroes of the Church and the North American Indians

Natasha Quijano

If ever a story inspired me, it was that of the North American Martyrs. In an age of apostasy and religious indifferentism, it is ever more imperative that we learn about these zealous missionaries and ask their intercession.



A statue of Father Isaac Jogues at Auriesville, where he was slain by the Mohawks in 1646

Who were the North American martyrs? Sts. Isaac Jogues, Rene Goupil, Jean DeLalande, Jean DeBrebouf, Gabriel Lalemant, Antoine Daniel, Charles Garnier, and Noel Chabanel - men of a caliber of the first twelve Apostles who took seriously Christ's command: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

These French missionaries, who were inspired by the spirit of the Counter-Reformation, looked upon the New World as an opportunity to recover among savage souls the losses inflicted by the recent crisis of Protestantism that had fractured the unity of Catholic Europe. With the aim of saving the souls of the Indians by converting them to Catholicism, they lived among them, learned their languages, devoted themselves completely to teaching them the truths of the Faith, and even eagerly offered the sacrifice of their very lives.

Among the first wave of Jesuit priests to come to what was then called New France, now Canada and parts of New York State, was Fr. Isaac Jogues, a learned and zealous young French priest. He arrived in New France on July 2, 1636 at age 29. Fr. Isaac Jogues was quite anti-ecumenical, he took seriously the teaching mission of the Catholic Church to bring all souls to her bosom.

He was not of the mind of a modern "missionary" who places no importance on working for the conversion of infidels. He followed the goal of the true Jesuits, who like their founder St. Ignatius of Loyola, wanted to convert all ends of the earth to the Catholic Faith. For them, to refrain from transmitting to all men the complete deposit of the Catholic Faith would be nothing less than to betray the mission of the Church. It would be to deny men a fundamental right to truth.



St. Ignatius: Go and conquer all nations for Our Lord Jesus Christ

Today, since Vatican II, a different spirit dominates the missionary field. The missionary is supposed to admire the false religions, even pagans and infidels, since no one would be in error. The progressivist notion supported by the post-conciliar Church that all religions lead to God has annihilated the Catholic missionary spirit. I imagine that St. Isaac Jogues is lamenting the state of the missions today, so very different from the spirit of those holy men and women of the past who offered their very lives to defend and spread the one truth of the Catholic Faith.



A 17th-century sketch of Samuel Champlain

Leaving the country of his birth to go to the Hurons and Algonquins in the New World was a decision Fr. Issac Jogues willingly made. Unfortunately, the Iroquois for the most part were obstinate, but there were a significant number of conversions among the Hurons and Algonquins. Thanks to the help of the French fur-trader and early settler of New France, Samuel Champlain, the Huron and Algonquin Indians who were his friends were more disposed to receive the missionaries.

To open the way, Champlain told the Indians this about the Jesuit priests from France: "These are our fathers. We love them more than we love ourselves. The whole French nation honors them. They do not go among you for furs. They have left their friends and their country to show you the way to Heaven. If you love the French, as you say you love them, then love and honor these, our fathers" (Fr. John O'Brien, *Saints of the American Wilderness*, p. 119).

One can see from Champlain's statement to the Hurons that even as an adventurer and trader, he understood the important mission and role of the Jesuits. For him, it was very simple: If the pagans could be saved without the Catholic Faith, then why would these priests sacrifice everything and suffer constant

discomfort, rejection, persecution and even atrocious torments? There would be no reason for such a great sacrifice.

Captured in 1642 by the Iroquois, St. Isaac Jogues was tortured for 13 months. During that time, he taught the Faith to any who would listen, and finally escaped. In 1644, he returned to France to recuperate, and there he saw his dear mother for the last time. She wept to see the scars on his hands, as the brutal Indians had cut off some of his fingers with shells and knives and eaten them, as was their custom. She fondled his mutilated hands and knew there was no way of convincing him to remain in France.

What compelled him to want to return to so cruel a land? It was his love for his spiritual children, his beloved Huron converts whom he stood by to the end. On his return to New France, he assisted William Couture, an envoy of France, in communicating with the Indians. No white men were as well versed in the Indian languages as Jogues and Couture.

It was on the Mohawk mission in Ossernenon that he and his lay missionary companion John de LaLande met their death as martyrs of Our Lord Jesus Christ, thus sanctifying the land immersed in what Fr. Jogues called "demonic worship." Instigated by the medicine men, the shamans, who spread rumors that the blackrobes were responsible for the epidemic and failing crops, a group of Mohawks on the warpath made him a captive. One Indian tore strips of his flesh from his arms and neck, saying, "Let us see if this white flesh is the flesh of an oki (devil)."

The Saint simply replied, "I am a man like yourselves, but I do not fear death or torture. I do not know why you would kill me. I come here to confirm the peace and show you the way to Heaven, and you treat me like a dog" (*Ibid.*, p. 87).

The Indians admired his courage, but the fury of the shamans could only be satisfied by his death. On October 18, 1647 Fr. Isaac Jogues was brutally tomahawked and scalped by an Indian chief. The American historian Francis Parkman, who was by no means a devout Catholic, wrote this about St. Jogues:

"Thus died Isaac Jogues, one of the purest examples of Roman Catholic virtue that this Western Continent has seen. The priests, his associates, praise his humility, and tell us that it reached the point of self contempt, a crowning virtue in their eyes..... With all his gentleness he had a certain warmth or vivacity of temperament; and we have seen how, during his first captivity, while humbly submitting to every caprice of tyrants and appearing to rejoice in debasement, a derisive word against his Faith would change the lamb into a lion, and the lips that seemed so tame would speak in sharp, bold tones of menace and reproof" (*Ibid.*, p. 89).

Recently I found myself speaking of St. Isaac Jogues and the North American martyrs to an acquaintance. It seems I happened to use a very taboo word when I said the Indians were "savages." The person was quick to rebuke me: "How dare you! Don't you know they are Native Americans and we should respect their culture?"

Well, the devout Jesuits who loved them so dearly as to give their lives for their salvation also called them savages. They knew the Indians very well - they lived with them and traveled with them. They also suffered tremendously from the ferocious, inhuman torments inflicted by these Indians.

In addition to the practice of cannibalism and rampant promiscuity, the savages were immersed in a superstitious ignorance. They were guided not by reason or doctrines, but by an almost blind faith in medicine men who performed secret ceremonies and made incantations to what the Jesuits knew were devils. Sacred Scripture tells us very clearly, "All the gods of the heathens are devils." Psalm 95:5.



Iriquois masks worn in ceremonials to the demon spirits

Because of the courage and zeal of Jesuit missionaries like St. Issac Jogues, some of these savages escaped the perversity of Satan. The names of the North American martyrs should be inscribed on our minds, and we should ask their intercession that this country might still become a Catholic land.

In conclusion, I would like to mention several of the most impressive converts made by these early Jesuit missionaries. One was baptized Joseph Chihouatenhoua, a married Huron who abandoned the superstitions of his ancestors and became a loyal disciple of the Black-robos, a friendship that lasted into eternity. He became a devout and knowledgeable Catholic, even studying and learning Latin. He also died at the hands of the Indians who refused to accept the sweet yoke of Christ.

Another remarkable Indian convert to the Catholic Faith, was a famous Huron war chief by the name of Ahatsistari. "Thither came one of the greatest war chiefs of all the Hurons into the Church. On Holy Saturday 1642, he and a number of other Hurons were received by Jogues and other missionaries into the Church. Ahatsistari was baptized Eustace" (Ibid., p. 35).

These conversions would have never occurred without the sacrifice, and pure, untainted faith of the Jesuit missionaries. May their zeal inspire new apostles with that same burning fire for the salvation of souls in our own days, and bring down upon our country the blessings of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ven. Antonio Margil of Jesus: Apostle of New Spain

Marian T. Horvat, Ph.D.

The life of Fr. Antonio Margil of Jesus is an epic story of a man who seems larger than life. Barefoot, carrying only a staff, breviary, and the materials he needed to say Mass, he established hundreds of missions in a territory extending from the jungles of Costa Rica to east Texas and the borders of Louisiana. Countless Indians of Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Mexico and Texas received the divine gift of faith from him and revered him a saint. For this, he is called the Apostle of New Spain and Texas.¹



The barefoot friar - famous for his missionary work and miracles

He was also an extraordinarily capable administrator and founded two colleges in Guatemala and Mexico. His name is associated with the epoch of mission colleges, which made possible a rebirth of the Franciscan apostolate, first in Mexico, and later in Guatemala, Panama, and most of South America. In effect, a second golden age for the Franciscans in Spanish America began with the foundation of the colleges, centers established by the Holy Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to train new missionaries and establish mission churches and settlements.

This “barefoot friar,” famous in his time for his miracles and sanctity, converted hundreds of thousands of Indians. In Guatemala alone, it is recorded that he converted over 80,000 Indians. He became known as the “Flying Father” because he would cover so many miles in such short periods of time it was nothing short of miraculous: it was normal for him to cover 40-50 miles a day over rough terrain, and often more. There are

written testimonies of companion brethren and soldiers who saw him, quite literally, walk on water, as he crossed swollen streams and rivers on his apostolic journeys. This capacity to pass from place to place with great speed is known as the gift of agility.

¹ The main works used in this article are, Ubaldus da Rieti, O.F.M., *Life of Venerable Fr. Anthony Margil, Taken from the process for his Beatification and Canonization* (Quebec/NY: Franciscan Missionary Printing Press, 1910); Eduardo Enrique Rios, *Life of Fray Antonio Margil, O.F.M.*, trans. by Benedict Leutenegger, O.F.M. (Washington D.D.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1959); *Nothingness Itself: Select Writings of Ven Fr. Antonio Margil, O.F.M.*, (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1976).

Along his travels, he cured the sick, read souls, prophesied the future. God also granted Fr. Margil the gifts of bilocation, to be present in two places at the same time, and subtility, which enabled him to enter dwellings through closed doors. Like St. Anthony of Padua, he even received marks of veneration from animals. Once when he was directing the building of a missionary College in Guatemala, some Indians arrived with twelve cartloads of stone. Fr. Margil addressed them and blessed them. The Indians knelt and, at the same time, the animals drawing the carts fell to their knees. It is small wonder the fame of this illustrious missionary spread far and wide.

What is more difficult to understand is why Fr. Antonio Margil is not better known today. It is my hope this article will make him better known to the North American Catholics, and that they may begin to invoke the great Apostle of Texas in their needs.

Epoch One: 1657-1684

On August 18, 1657, Antonio Margil was born in Valencia to poor but pious parents, Juan Margil and Speranza Ros. Margil was blessed from childhood with an affable and good nature. Small of stature, the boy had a natural charm, and was attracted to practices of piety and study. Despite their humble means, his parents took care that he should receive the best education possible.

At age 15, Antonio entered the Franciscan novitiate at Corna Monastery in Valencia, and two years later made his first vows. It was there he chose for himself the pseudonym *La Misma Nada* – Nothingness Itself. He made it his practice from that time on to conclude his letters by writing the words “*La Misma Nada*” above his name and signature.

After pronouncing final vows, he devoted himself to the study of Philosophy and Theology in the Monastery of Denia and the Royal Monastery of Valencia. During this time, he began the rigid regime he never abandoned his whole life. Every night in the convent garden he performed the pious exercise of the Way of the Cross, carrying a heavy Cross. Afterward, he scourged his body with an iron chain, saying that a religious of St. Francis ought to be fervently devoted to the sufferings of Christ. He practiced a poverty so exact that he often deprived himself of even the necessary things. Amiable with all, he allowed himself no particular friendships, and no shadow of singularity or affectation. It is no surprise that after his death those who had studied with him testified that they had looked upon him as a saint even at this time.

Having completed his studies, he was ordained a priest at age 25. He had asked to remain a friar, like his holy Father Francis, considering himself unworthy of the great privilege of receiving full orders, but his superiors counseled otherwise. The fruits of his preaching and hearing confessions began to appear very soon afterward. Great crowds gathered in the public square of Valencia to listen to him, his words arousing them to tears and repentance. Sometime he spent whole nights in the confessional. Had he remained in Spain, it is no doubt he would have been a renowned preacher and theologian. But Fray Margil was destined for a greater and nobler mission.

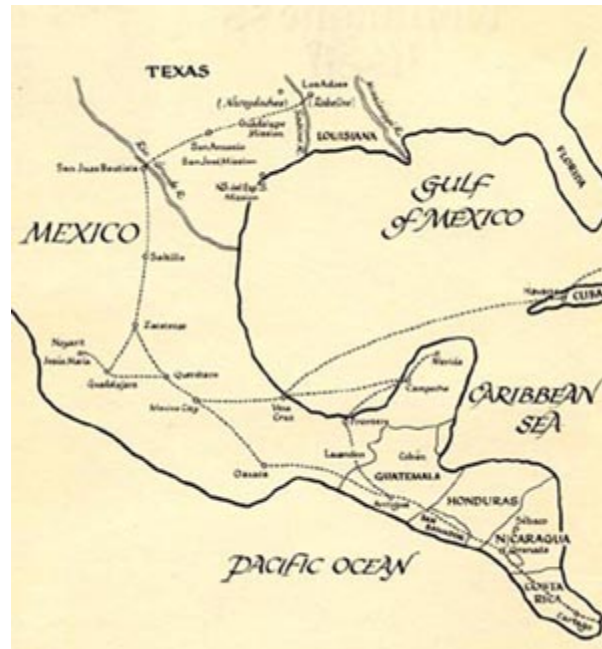
To the New World

In 1682, Ven. Fr. Antonio Llinas, Franciscan superior of the American Mission, invited Fr. Margil to be his companion to open the first missionary college in New Spain at Querétaro, Mexico (200 miles north of Mexico City). He immediately consented. Later Fr. Llinas would say that he had brought to America a second St. Anthony of Padua.

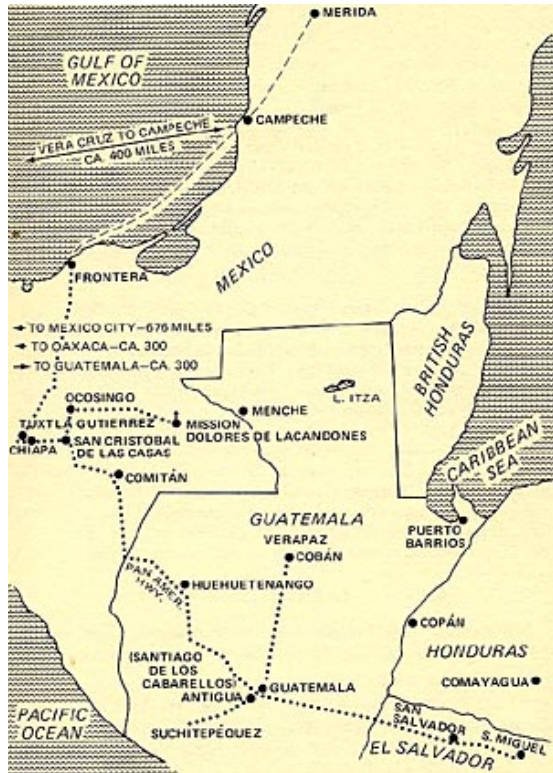
With the permission of his superiors, he made a farewell visit to his mother, worthy of mention. She wept bitterly at thought her son was to leave her, and entreated him to consider her advanced age and wait a few years so she might have the consolation of expiring in his arms.

The son did not waver in face of these entreaties. Kindly he reminded her that from the moment she consented he should enter religion, he belonged entirely to God, Who had called him to promote His honor and glory among the pagans. He gave her a Franciscan habit and told her to clothe herself with it and call upon him when death approached.

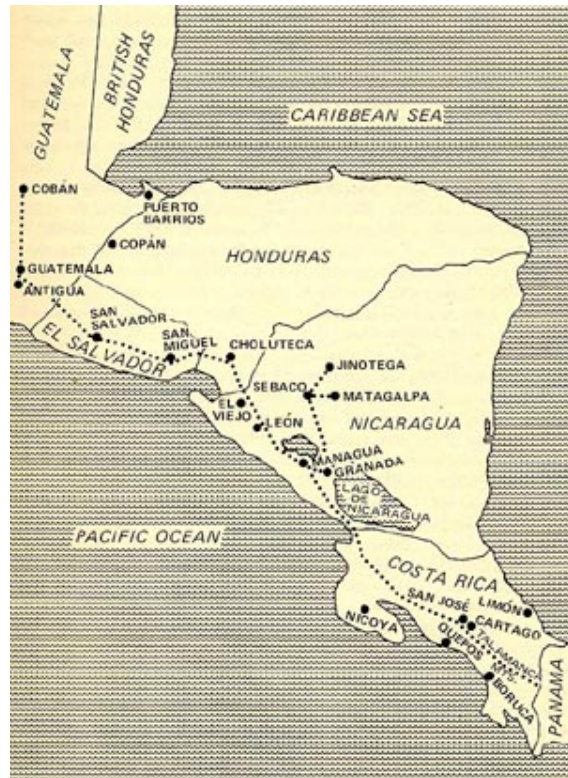
In fact, shortly after his departure, his mother was stricken with an illness bringing her to the point of death. She did not forget his promise and called on her son. By God's permission, her son appeared to her, assuring her of recovery, which immediately followed. A few years later when her end in truth approached, Fr. Antonio Margil, by a prodigy of Divine Providence, assisted at her bedside and consoled her in the hour of death in the presence of many persons, even though they were separated by an immense distance.



The missionary travels of the barefoot friar extended throughout Central America, Mexico and up to Texas and Louisiana.



His travels in Mexico, Guatemala and El Salvador



His travels to work the Indians of Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama

Maps from *Nothingness Itself: Select Writings of Ven Fr. Antonio Margil, O.F.M.*, (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1976)

Epoch Two: 1683-1714 - Apostle of New Spain

The great odyssey of evangelization began in 1684 when Fr. Margil set out from Santa Cruz College in Querétaro with another Franciscan missionary giant, Fr. Melchor Lopez, who would be his traveling companion for the next ten years. From town to town they traveled, giving missions for a year along the shores of Guatemala. From there, they set out for provinces of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, converting many pagans along the way, and re-catechizing and increasing the fervor of those already Catholic.

Preaching to whomever they met, they walked along, praying in silence or singing. Fr. Margil always walked barefoot, but carried his sandals so he could wear them for Holy Mass out of respect for the Blessed Sacrament. Everywhere he went, he taught his famous [Alabado](#), a song in verse written to catechize the Indians and Spanish children. It is still remembered and sung today in parts of Mexico, Central and South America. Its last verse reads:

“Whoever seeks to follow God and strives to enter in His glory, One thing he must do and say with all his heart: Die rather than sin. Rather than sin, die!”

When they reached a village where they found welcome, they would establish a mission church. The Indians would be taught the catechism, the Rosary, and the Way of the Cross. Other friars

would come to replace the first ones and to care for the new Catholics. Before they left, Fr. Margil would plant a wooden cross, as high as he could make it. Then the missionaries would continue onward. Fr. Margil and Fr. Melchor came to be venerated so much that when the priests would leave a village, often the Indians would follow them in crowds of hundreds, carrying branches of trees in their hands, appearing like moving forests from a distance.

Mission among the Talamancas: Miracle worker

From Guatemala, Fr. Margil and Fr. Melchor set out to preach among the Talamanca Indians of Costa Rica. The Talamancas were a mountain dwelling Indian people, actually three nations of Indians famed for their ferocity, human sacrifices, and obstinacy to missionaries.

In particular, the shamans, or witch doctors, put every obstacle in the way to prevent the missionaries from preaching the Gospel of Christ. On one occasion in this region, Fr. Margil was taken prisoner and the shamans instigated the warriors to cast him into a pile of burning wood. The fire was maintained for several hours but the flames did not injure him, even though they blackened the image of the crucifix he held in his hand. On another occasion, Indians of a mountain town poisoned their food, which the missionaries blessed and ate, and came to no harm. Another time they were on the point of being burned at the stake, but the wood refused to burn. Such prodigies increased the fury of the medicine men, but opened the hearts of many of the Indians.

The missionaries suffered these things and more joyfully, their undaunted spirit and great courage earning them the admiration and awe of the Indians. "We suffered what the Lord was pleased to send us," Fr. Margil later wrote. His only complaint was a sigh of regret not to have gained the crown of martyrdom.

When the Indians realized the utter indifference of the friars toward earthly goods and their great charity toward even those who ill-treated them, they came to trust and love the friars. One of first things Fr. Margil did was successfully petition the government that none of his Talamanca Indians should be taken for work on nearby haciendas, so that the fruit of their missionary labor might not be nullified. In a letter to the president of the Audiencia of Guatemala, Fr. Margil wrote: "Through all this region, called Talamanca, all the tribes say that they will persevere as long as the Spaniards do not come to rule over them; they shall welcome only the priests."

In the course of two years, he and a single companion, working together and alone, had erected 15 mission churches (some say 30), and baptized hundreds of Indians.

With this success, the pair next decided to go among another unconquered and feared tribe, the Terrabi. Already, the fame of Fr. Antonio Margil was such that when he sent ambassadors to the eight Terrabi chiefs to request permission to enter their territory and preach the Gospel of Christ, seven readily consented.

One, however, refused, declaring before his idols he would slay any missionary who should venture into his territory. The bold response of Fr. Margil unnerved him. Instead of retreating or opening negotiations, Fr. Margil forthright entered his camp, where a war party was being

prepared, and went straight to the abode of the chief. Overcome by the sight of this small but intrepid man, shining with a kind of a supernatural light, the chief laid his weapons at Fr. Margil's feet and received the missionary with demonstrations of affection and honor. This was the effect of the person of Fr. Antonio Margil.

His reputation for discovering false idols was such that in many Indian villages, when word would arrive that Fr. Antonio Margil was coming, they would gather beforehand their false gods for him to burn. They had much experience with the futility of trying to fool the holy friar, who would unearth their idols straight away by a special grace from God. All these idols and charms were then burned in an open place and in the presence of Fr. Margil and Mr. Melchor, who did public penance in reparation to Our Lord for these sins of superstition.

Missions to the Chols and Lacandons

As the name of Fr. Margil and the wonders he performed were on all lips, the Bishop of Guatemala asked that he be sent north to the lands of the Chols, a violent tribe who had rebelled against the efforts of the Dominican missionaries. Their religious instruction proved so fruitful that the greater number of them was converted. Eight towns with churches were established among the Chols.

Their next mission was along the border of Mexico among the Lacandons. When the missionaries arrived there, even their guides abandoned them, fearful of these naked savages with reputations of being cannibals. Entering their territory, the missionaries were seized, stripped of their habits, bound to trees and commanded under pain of death to worship their idols. They refused, and preached instead the Gospel.

For the three days the men were bound to the posts and tortured, they waited to receive the palm of martyrdom. When the Indians discovered the missionaries were always cheerful and without fear, they believed they concealed something extraordinary in their hearts. At length they released them, on the condition that they leave the place immediately.

Seeing their efforts were of no avail, the missionaries left the place. Before they departed the main village, however, Fr. Margil warned the people that God would punish them shortly with a catastrophe. The prediction was soon verified, for their houses were destroyed by a fire that came from heaven.



Fr. Marhil, shining with supernatural unction, would enter an Indian village with his arm upraised and holding his crucifix.

Some months later, accompanying a military expedition a road between the Yucatan and Guatemala, Fr. Margil again had opportunity to enter this area. This time, awed by his reputation and won by his kindness, great numbers of the fierce Lacandons came to him, asking to be baptized. Many of the sick here, as in other villages, were healed by the imposition of his hands or the reading of the Gospel of St. John. Of the many miracles performed among the Lacandons, one in particular is worthy of mention.

Among the newly converted, Fr. Margil introduced the pious custom of greeting a person saying “Hail Mary,” which was answered by “Conceived without original sin.” One day Fr. Margil met an Indian woman carrying an infant, still too young to speak. Approaching her in the presence of many persons, he said to the baby: “Hail Mary.” Immediately the infant answered: “Conceived without original sin.” In a marvelous way, the babe attested the singular privilege of the Mother of God, as well as the sanctity of Fr. Antonio Margil.

The soldiers on this expedition witnessed many such marvels. Despite the fact that Fr. Margil always remained far behind the expedition in order to hear confessions and teach catechism to the Lacandons, at the end of the day he arrived at the arranged meeting place ahead of the troops. When the Father Commissary questioned him about how he had passed the men who were traveling on horses, he answered smiling, “I take short cuts and God helps.”

The rumor was also spreading that his feet did not get wet when he crossed the swollen streams and riverbeds. One day a soldier in the expedition pretended he was tired and sleeping on the bank so he could discover how Fr. Margil would cross the turbulent river. Margil noticed the man and understood his intent. He walked over the water and came alongside the soldier. Smiling paternally, he said, “Now that you have seen it, move along.”

The Indians had a simple explanation for such wonders: they called Fr. Margil “santo” and would not desist, even when he reprimanded them. Before he left the Lacandons, Fr. Margil had erected two churches and installed all the pious customs he loved, the Rosary, morning and evening prayers, the Stations, and public processions on feast days.

1697-1714: Founder and administrator

In 1697, Fr. Margil was recalled to Querétaro as superior, or *presidente*, of the Franciscan College of the Holy Cross, and a new phase of his life began as an administrator. When he reached the College, Fr. Margil took off the ragged habit he had worn and mended for 14 years, patching it at times with bark from a certain tree called the mastastes, and exchanged it for a new one, thus avoiding the least shadow of singularity.

As superior, he never dispensed himself from any public act or expected anything but what he

himself practiced. To maintain accuracy and the decorum of ritual, he imposed upon his religious the obligation of holding a conference once a week on the ceremonies of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The friar who loved “Lady Poverty” exhorted his brethren and the faithful to ornament the altars and churches as much as they could so they might be worthy of the divine majesty of God.

His mortifications and gifts

For Our Lord, there was nothing too rich or decorous. For himself, it was a different story. With the exception of Sunday, he fasted every day, taking a few herbs, a piece of bread, and some water or watered down chocolate once a day. He permitted himself sleep only from 8 to 11 every evening. He was wakened then by the brother porter, and together they read a chapter from *The Mystical City of God* by María de Agreda. After praying the Divine Office at midnight, he made the Stations and scourged himself, and would remain in prayer until the hour of Prime, absorbed in God.

It was clear to all that Heaven smiled on the humble Franciscan. Ecstasies were habitual to Fr. Margil, who was seen raised into the air in his prayer. Fr. Simon de Kierro, a faithful companion for many years, solemnly testified that more than once he had seen him elevated several feet in the air while celebrating Mass.

His confessional was always crowded as persons learned of his rare ability to read souls and discover secret sins. For example, a soldier living in a fort in Texas could not free himself of habits of lust and impurity, and had abandoned himself to a life of vice. One day, hearing Fr. Antonio Margil preach, he desired to have recourse to him, but feared to expose his immoral conduct to a man so pure and holy.

Fr. Margil, inspired by God, called the soldier by name, and encouraged him to make a confession. The soldier made a good confession, lived 40 more years, and attested he had never committed a sin against purity since his confession to Fr. Margil.

His countenance portrayed his virginal purity, shining with the radiance of a burning light. He admitted that in the confessional when penitents entered, he could distinguish those who had been impure, and he was endowed with the rare gift of banishing all impure thoughts and desires from the hearts of those who approached him.

He had the gift of prophecy, especially in reading vocations. At the end of his first visit to the Secretary of War in Guadalajara, Don Juan Martinez de Soria, Fr. Margil asked, “Where is the Little Sister of St. Clare?” Don Juan replied there was none there. Fr. Margil smiled and entering a room where the children were playing, he fixed his gaze on a child, saying, “Behold the little

sister of St. Clare.” In fact, the girl became a St. Clare sister, lived a holy and edifying life, and died in the odor of sanctity at age 75.

It was not uncommon for Fr. Margil, upon seeing a boy for the first time, for him to tell the mother or father, “This one belongs to me.” Such prophecies were verified in every case.

Like another Jerimiah, he also often prophesied doom for those who would not heed his words. Once he was preaching in Mexico City, speaking with great zeal against the immoral productions presented in a theater near the church. He warned that God Almighty would soon send down fire to destroy that place where so many sins were committed. That same night, the building was reduced to ashes.

More appointments Seeing the graces and favors bestowed by God upon Fr. Margil and those around him, he was asked to found the College of Christ Crucified at Guatemala, and was elected its first Guardian in 1701. He personally oversaw the construction of the edifice, again working many miracles. Once he ordered a group of children to leave a mortar ditch where they were playing. A few seconds later a pile of dirt fell on it and submerged it. Another time, he bilocated to the work site and stopped a heavy rock from crushing one of the workmen. Astonished by what they saw, the laborers united prayer with their work, substituting the recitation of the Rosary for the normal idle conversation.

As soon as his term as superior ended in 1705, Fr. Margil was appointed commissary of the missions of Costa Rica. Shortly afterward, he was appointed to found another new mission college in Zacatecas, Mexico. In need of financing for this new college, which was in a poor and barren area, he encouraged a benefactor to open a long abandoned silver mine, promising it would yield an abundance of silver. His prophecy proved correct, and the benefactor could defray all the expenses of the building of the College of Our Lady of Guadalupe of Zacatecas, as well as the church and monastery annexed to it.

In November 1713, a new superior of the college was elected, leaving Fr. Margil again free to dedicate himself fully to his missionary labors among the Indians. At an age when many men are dreaming of retirement and relaxation, the almost 60-year-old friar, stooped and worn from a life of hardship and mortification, was ready to embark on the third and last epoch of his life, the founding of missions in Texas.

Ven. Antonio Margil of Jesus: The Apostle of Texas

Marian T. Horvat, Ph.D.

A quarter century before Fr. Junípero Serra began his California adventure, there was an extraordinary Franciscan carrying out a great work of evangelization across Central America, Mexico, and finally, Texas. In his zeal to spread the Catholic faith, he faced inclement weather, hostile animals, forest insects and reptiles, lack of food and water, and cruel treatment from hostile Indian tribes.

More than once he was tortured, beaten, or left for dead. His name, which deserves to be known and his fame spread is Venerable Antonio Margil de Jesus, who titled himself and signed every letter as *El Nada Mismo* – Nothingness Itself.

In the United States, we do not have the luxury of a great plenitude of saints. In some Catholic Latin American countries, there are saints for almost every city, accounts of miracles and marvels on every corner, the heavens seem a bit closer to earth. Therefore, when we find a spot where a saint touched the earth here in the United States, we should treasure it and reap the benefits of such gifts from Heaven. This is our Catholic history, these are our real heroes, these are the saints who shared our soil, who Our Lady wants us to develop a relation with, to call on in our needs because she put them in our pathway. One of these marvels is Fr. Antonio Margil.

The postulator for the Cause of Ven Antonio Margil divided his life into three epochs.

The *first* was from 1657, his birth, until his journey to the New World, 1684.

The *second* began with the establishment of the Mission College of Querétaro (Mexico) and his first missions in Guatemala in 1685 until 1716, after he had founded two new colleges in Nicaragua and Mexico. The *third* and last epoch begins with his Texas missions in the year 1716, and ends with his death in Mexico City in 1726.



The barefoot friar who walked on water in his extraordinary missionary work

Mission to Texas: 1716-1726

What is most interesting about the Texas missions is that one could say that this was the only assignment Fr. Margil chose himself. All his life, he lived under holy obedience. He wrote that he had “never undertaken any enterprise, not even a step, without permission.” Often poorly considered orders compelled him to leave his missions when the missionaries were on the very brink of reaping the harvest of their preaching and labors. But Fr. Margil never hesitated to abandon enterprises and every hope of success, and travel hundreds of miles through the roughest and most dangerous country, to obey the order of his superiors.

In 1714, however, he had been appointed vice-commissary of the missions of New Spain and had been granted an apostolic faculty to give missions wherever he deemed proper and with those companions who seemed to him best qualified for the accomplishment of this work. He had heard of the plight of the Indians of Texas, ignorant of the true Faith, and living in deplorable and brutish conditions. Now, at almost the age of 60, he was intent upon making the difficult journey there to found missions and convert them.

His five years of work in Texas, only a little over a year in San Antonio, where his name is best remembered, could be itself a lifetime’s work, but it was just a fraction of all he did in his 43 years of work as a missionary in Central and North America. In a certain way, the years in Texas constituted the crown of the glories and sufferings of his lifetime.

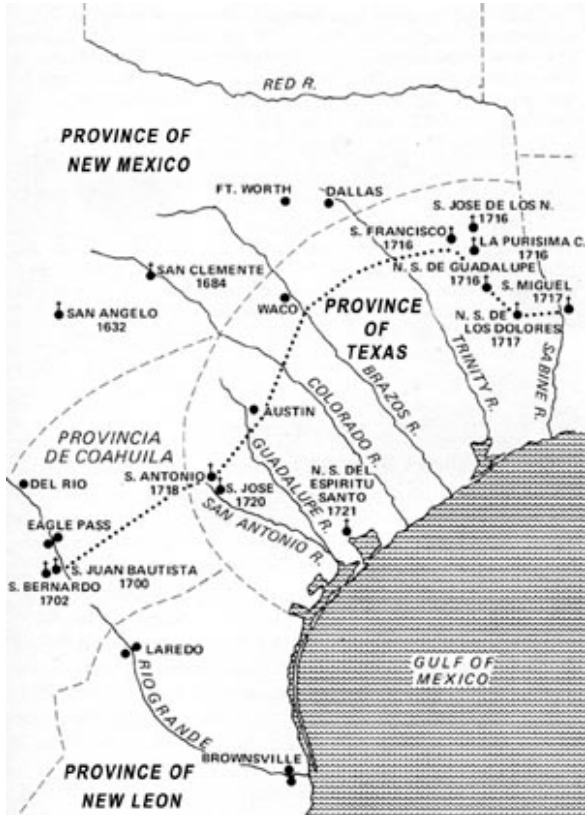
Difficult beginnings

Threatened by French encroachments from Louisiana onto Spanish territories, Spain had stepped up its colonization and the Franciscans had established a mission in Texas in 1690. But it had lasted only three years. Because the conditions for colonizers were bleak and difficult, the government was not concerned about its colonization and progress. The friars had to contend with so many difficulties, exorbitant costs, and losses that Fr. Isidro Félix de Espinosa reported in his chronicle, *Nuevas Empresas*, “The very name of Texas had become odious to the religious.”²

Fr. Margil faced a first major obstacle standing in the way of an expedition. A presidio, or military post, had to be established at the entrance to the provinces to afford escorts to the missionaries and render assistance in case of uprisings or attacks. Funds were needed for this purpose, and the royal treasury was exhausted from wars. As usual, Fr. Margil relied on Providence, which supplied in a remarkable way.

² Eduardo Enrique Rios, *Life of Fray Antonio Margil, O.F.M.*, trans. By Benedict Leutenegger, O.F.M. (Washington D.D.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1959), p. 57.

Other works used in this article include: Ubaldus da Rieti, O.F.M., *Life of Venerable Fr. Anthony Margil, Taken from the process for his Beatification and Canonization* (Quebec/NY: Franciscan Missionary Printing Press, 1910); Eduardo Enrique Rios, *Life of Fray Antonio Margil, O.F.M.*, trans. by Benedict Leutenegger, O.F.M. (Washington D.D.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1959); *Nothingness Itself: Select Writings of Ven Fr. Antonio Margil, O.F.M.*, (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1976).



The heavy dotted lines indicate the primary route of Fr. Margil.

Because of his reputation and popularity among the soldiers, each member of the garrison voluntarily offered him out of his pay \$25 a year for life, and with this money he financed the presidio of St. John the Baptist on the Rio Grande. The way to Texas was opened.

At the beginning of 1716, an expedition party of 25 soldiers with their families set out for the 2,000 mile trek from Nicaragua to Texas. They were accompanied by friars from the Colleges of Querétaro and Zacatecas. Fr. Margil led the party from the Zacatecas College, and Fr. Espinosa was appointed head of the Querétaro College missionaries. Each of the colleges was to establish three missions.

As with many ventures God desires to bless, the beginnings were difficult, and for a while it seemed Fr. Margil would not even make it to Texas. Weary from the labor of the preparations, he took a fever at the very onset of the expedition and could hardly walk. When they reached the Rio Grande, he barely managed to cross, and received the Last Sacraments. The rest of the missionary party, mourning, left him

to die with only a lay brother to attend him so that they could continue on with the soldiers, who could wait no longer.

But Fr. Margil did not die. He slowly recovered, and in June set out to regain the party. By the time he rejoined them in July, the first of the Zacatecas missions, the Mission of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Nacogdoches, Texas, had been founded.

In 1717, Fr. Margil established the second, Mission San Miguel, near present-day Robeline. Thus he had the honor to erect the first church building in what is now the State of Louisiana. Shortly afterward, he also established *Mission Nuestra Señora de los Dolores* near San Augustine, Texas, halfway between the two, and resided there.

A memorial to one of the miracles he performed during this time still exists at a crossing of Lanana Creek. During a journey from Nacogdoches to an outlying village, his group was exhausted and faint with thirst, with no hope of finding water.



The stream at the crossing of Lanana Creek, Louisiana

Fr. Margil addressed his companions:

“Fear not, do not be dismayed. Trust in God, for in a short time you shall have water.”
Then striking a rock in the dry creek bed twice with his staff, fresh and clear water gushed forth and continues to flow to this day. The place was named the Little Eyes of Fr. Antonio Margil.

More troubles and false promises

The most testing problems the missionaries faced in Texas were not the difficult terrain or savage character of the inhabitants. First and most trying, they had to contend with the false promises and treachery of the Spanish captains, who enriched themselves in Texas while the missions suffered from lack of the most basic food and supplies. Second, they faced the French soldiers, who were vying with the Spanish for control of the territory.

In fact, with the Texas Indians, the simple weapon Fr. Margil employed was kindness. On every occasion and for every need, he was at hand. He ploughed and sowed their gardens, procured fruits, nuts and other products for their enjoyment, relieved their fatigue by doing their work. He liberally gave his services to obtain his end, to harvest a great wealth of souls.

Nonetheless, having won the Indians of that area to hear the preaching of the true Faith, he felt all the more keenly how crucial the provisions were to sustain the missions. But the promised help did not come. In a report of the missions to the Mexican Viceroy in February 1718, he wrote: “All this will perish if help does not come immediately.”

Two years passed without receiving help from any source. Failed crops worsened the situation. There were always promises of help from the Texas governor, but nothing ever came. Finally, the six missionaries met and decided to send two of their members to make a report of the actual situation. In fact, Fr. Mattias spent three months in Mexico City, but could not succeed in making the authorities understand the urgent need for soldiers and supplies to sustain the Spanish Texas settlements, especially in the northeastern missions of Fr. Margil where the French were already building forts and trading guns for horses to gain the good will of the Indians.

To make matters worse, in 1719, France declared war on Spain. As soon as the French garrisons in Louisiana learned of this, they attacked Mission San Miguel in Robeline. Fr. Margil was forced to abandon his missions and withdraw to the Mission of the Immaculate Conception, one of the three missions of the Querétaro College that had been established around San Antonio. Finally, it was also abandoned for the more secure *Mission of San Antonio de Valero*, better known today as **the Alamo**, founded in 1718 by Fr. Isidro Félix de Espinosa.

Fr. Margil and his small band were at the Alamo mission from December 1719 to March of 1721. He took advantage of the time to write a dictionary of the various dialects spoken by the Indians of this vast territory. And he founded on the banks of the San Antonio River the Mission of San Jose, which prospered and came to be the most beautiful mission of Texas, the “Queen of the Texas Missions,” as it is called today.



Above, The Mission of San Antonio de Valero, better known as El Alamo

He never gave up hope of recovery of his lost missions, first, as he wrote, “for God and for love of souls,” and second, “so that they may not say it was lost because of us or that it was not recovered by us.” The opportunity came in April 1721, when large expeditionary forces of a new governor arrived. Fr. Margil had the pleasure of seeing those missions restored one by one. He had already founded another mission dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe of the Bay and was intending to go further when news arrived in 1722 from the College of Zacatecas that he had been elected again as Superior for a three year term.

Below, Mission of San Jose founded by Fr. Margil in 1720



He had found delight in the silence and broad expanse of the land, and had written in his letters to his brethren missionaries that he hoped to die here, a simple friar, small and forgotten among his Indians of Texas. Instead, he set out on the long return trek to again take up the burden of superior in Zacatecas.

His death and miracles

Five months after Fr. Margil left Texas, he conducted a great mission in Zacatecas that was an enormous success. The Bishop took advantage of the marvelous good effected by his words and example, and sent him to Guadalajara to ease a dissension that was disturbing its citizens, and then on to several other places of his Diocese. Fatigued and infirm, Fr. Margil obeyed.

Truly it was a remarkable sight to see this saint still traveling barefoot, not so fleet of foot anymore, humble, worn and old, but shining every day more with a supernatural sheen, burning with zeal for souls. The people would go in procession to meet him as he entered a city, some

traveling great distances, scattering branches of palms and flowers along the way.

When he reached Querétaro, he was so weak and emaciated it was obvious that death was near. As he traversed the streets of that city where he had done so much good, the people saw he would not be with them much longer and they cut pieces from his mantle to preserve them as holy relics. The Commissary General, fearing proper treatment was not available for him there, ordered him to go to Mexico City where he would have the advantages of an infirmary and the best medical attention.

Fr. Margil obeyed and set out on his last journey, a hundred miles he knew would shorten, not lengthen, his earthly days. On August 2nd, 1726, he arrived at Santa Cruz College and went to ask the blessing of the superior. “Rev. Father Superior,” he said, “the donkey has come here to deposit its burden.”

His illness lasted five days, but he never complained of sufferings or asked the least relief, although he suffered greatly. When sickness brought delirium, he was heard preaching, singing hymns, invoking the holy names of Jesus and Mary, reprimanding sinners with kindness and charity, and reciting the Rosary.

On August 5, when a picture of Our Lady of Remedies was brought to him, Fr. Margil greeted her with tender affection, and ended, “Hasta mañana, my dearly beloved Lady, until tomorrow.” To keep his promise, the next day, the feast of the Transfiguration, his soul peacefully went to God between 1 and 2 o’clock in the afternoon. He died just 12 days short of his 69th year, having spent 53 years in the Franciscan Order and 43 years as a missionary in North and Central America.



**Our Lady of the Remedies,
Patroness of Valencia (Spain)**

When notice of his death was given, all the bells of the Mexico City began to ring announcing it. Citizens of all ages and conditions lined up to see the mortal remains of the Servant of God, exposed for three days in the Franciscan church and surrounded by guards to protect it from the multitudes. His face, pallid in life, had now assumed a rosy hue, his limbs remained flexible, his flesh warm. His feet, worn to leather and covered with rough calluses from the thousands of miles he had trod, became soft and supple like those of a child.

Even in death Fr. Antonio Margil continued to do good for souls. An artist of Mexico City who was contracted to make his portrait could not reproduce the countenance despite his efforts. Finally, the artist examined his conscience and found a serious sin he had never confessed. He made his confession to one of the fathers, received absolution, and was able to finish the portrait with the greatest ease.

Shortly after his death the process for beatification was begun. But because of grave political situation in Europe, the process was interrupted and only in 1836 was he declared Venerable by

Pope Gregory XVI. The Franciscan martyrology commemorates Fr. Margil on August 6, the day of his death.

Why he is not a saint yet? In 1992 the archivist of the Vatican Congregation for Causes of Saints Fr. Jaroslav Nemeč and the Franciscan promoter of the cause, Fr. Juan Foquera, stated as soon as there is an approved miracle attributed to the intercession of Fr. Margil, he will be beatified, and then after a second miracle, he will be canonized. Miracles can be reported to [The Margil House of Studies](#), in Houston, Tx

The grandeur of God is revealed in His saints

Before he died in Mexico City, he insisted on making a general confession, which was very short, since the faults of his lifetime were so slight that the confessor had difficulty finding sufficient matter to give him absolution. Seeing the surprise of the priest and fearing he would attribute the merit to him for such rare, spotless purity, Fr. Margil said: “If Your Reverence should see a ball of gold suspended by a hair, though gold is very heavy, would you think that it was supported by itself? Now, I have been a poor creature, liable to fall at any moment, and if God had not kept his omnipotent hand over me, I do not know what I might have done.”

This conviction that all the good that came from him was due to God, and not himself, formed the foundation for the heroic humility he practiced.

The confessor also reported that he had questioned Fr. Margil about his experiences while saying Mass. With the greatest possible humility, he wrote, Fr. Margil told him a singular favor that he was wont to receive during Mass. After he spoke the words of the Consecration, Christ would seem to respond from the consecrated Host, using the same words of Consecration and alluding to the body of Fr. Margil, ‘*Hoc est Corpus meum.*’ This favor Fr. Margil attributed to the fact that he always had or tried to have Christ living within him.

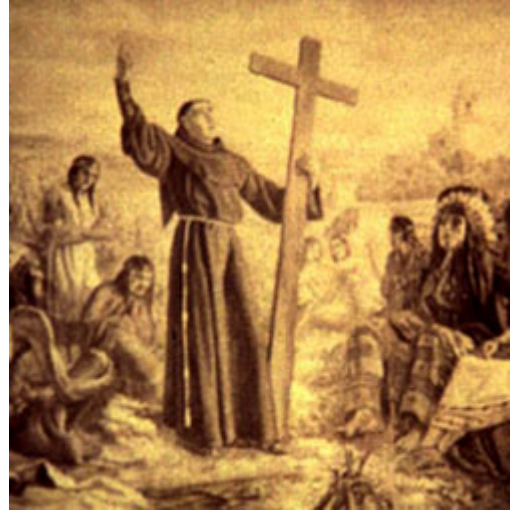
Conclusion

The missionary efforts of Fr. Margil could be called diametrically opposed to the ecumenism introduced by Vatican II. With his burning zeal to bring all people to the Catholic faith, Fr. Margil would have been confounded by the meeting at Assisi, where Catholics met on an equal level with American Indian medicine men and African animists. For him, the Catholic Religion was the supreme value of life, the one truth all should profess. The false gods must be combated, the idols and superstitious charms burned.

He understood that all the values of life are good to the measure that they serve the Catholic Church. So among the people he set out to evangelize, his first objective was to order everything to the Catholic faith. The customs, habits, ways of being that already existed among those people were good only in so much as they were ordered to the Catholic truth and morals. Those that were not ordered in this sense had to be put aside. This is the complete subjection of all things to the Catholic Religion, which is demanded by a truly saintly soul.

It is an honor to describe a little of the life of this extraordinary and saintly man, Fr. Antonio Margil. It is not by chance that part of the land he evangelized today is the United States, and especially Texas. Nothing happens by chance with Divine Providence.

What, then, is its significance? I leave the answer for each of my readers to discover. One thing is certain, from his place in Heaven, he is watching us, and he wants to help us to continue on or return to the true Catholic Faith, as he did with hundreds of thousands Indians in the New World. With this conviction I invite you to begin to pray to the glorious Ven. Antonio Margil de Jesus.



The Missionaries converted the Indians and ordered all things to Catholic truth and morals.

Itinerary in New Spain and Texas

- **1683** – Landed at Vera Cruz and walked to Querétaro, Mexico to help open the first College of the Propagation of the Faith in the New World. Preached missions around Mexico City.
- **1684-1689** – With his traveling companion Fr. Melchor López, Fr. Margil preached and established missions throughout Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and into Costa Rica
- **1689-1691** – Established numerous new missions among the hostile Talamanca Indians in the mountains of Panama; restored two missions among their neighbors on the Pacific coast, the Borucas Indians. Recalled to the College in Querétaro in 1691.
- **1692-1694** – Working in cooperation with the Dominicans, Fr. Melchor and Fr. Margil restored missions destroyed in an uprising among the Chol Indians in northern Guatemala.
- **1694** – An unsuccessful attempt to convert the Lacandon Indians on the border between present day Chiapas (Mexico) and Guatemala. Established a hospice (college branch house) in Santiago, of which Fr. Melchor was chosen superior.
- **1695-1697** – With a new companion missionary, Fr. Pedro de la Concepción, Fr. Margil returned to work among the Chol Indians and prepare them for the opening of a road through their territory that would join Yucatan with Guatemala. Accompanied the road building expedition in eastern Chicapas and successfully established two missions among the Lacandons.
- **1697-1700** – Elected Fr. Guardian of the College of Querétaro, and then Fr. President of the same College.
- **1701** – Chosen Vicar of the Querétaro College; established peace in a political struggle going on in Guatemala; founded and built a new College of Christ Crucified there and was elected its first Fr. Guardian.
- **1702-1704** – As Guardian, he continued missionary journeys in coastal regions of Guatemala to wipe out witchcraft and devil-worship that had become rampant there; founded a hospice in Granada.
- **1705-1707** – returned to mission among Talamancas in Costa Rica; received order to return to Mexico and establish and build the third College of the Propagation of the Faith in Guadalupe near Zacatecas (Mexico).

- **1707-1713** – Appointed President (superior) of the Zacatecas College for two terms; preached parish missions in surrounding cities; made an unsuccessful attempt to establish a mission with the Cora and Huichole Indians north of Guadalajara.
- **1714** – Founded two short-lived missions among the hostile Toboso Indians in the northern Province of Coahuila (Mexico); established a hospice of the College of Zacatecas at Boca de Leones (present day Villaldama, Mexico); received the appointment as Vice-Commissary of the Missions in New Spain.
- **1716** – Appointed superior of the missions to Texas for the Zacatecas College; Set out on the expedition but because of illness he was left behind at the Rio Grande, receiving the Last Sacraments on April 25. Recovered and rejoined the mission party in July.

The first mission in present Nacagdoches, *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* (Our Lady of Guadalupe, July 9, 1716), had been founded, and Fr. Margil went on to establish the two other Zacatecas College missions, *Mission San Miguel* (St. Michael Mission) in present day Robeline, Louisiana (1717), and *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores* (Our Lady of Sorrows) near San Augustine, Texas (1717).

The three missions of the College of Querétaro were also established in the San Antonio, Texas area at this time. They were the **Missions of San Francisco** (St. Francis, July 3, 1716); *Purísima Concepción* (Immaculate Conception, July 7, 1716) and *San José* (St. Joseph, July 10, 1716).

- **1719-1721** – Because of a war that broke out between Spain and France, Fr. Margil and his missionaries had to abandon their three missions in east Texas and retreat to the presidio and mission of San Antonio (the Alamo); there he founded a second *Mission San José* (1720) about four miles south of the Alamo, and *Mission Nuestra Señora del Espíritu Santo* (Our Lady of the Holy Spirit, 1721, officially established in April 1722). Accompanied a new military expedition and re-established the three missions in East Texas.
- **1722-1725** - Received notice he had been elected Fr. Guardian of the Zacatecas College, and had to leave the Texas missions to carry out the three-year term of office. At the end of his term of office, he made a month retreat and entered his last missionary journey to preach parish missions in various places.
- **1726** – Preached his last mission in Valladolid, and in August reached Mexico City near death. Died on August 6, 1726, Feast of the Transfiguration, at age 69 minus twelve days.



“All America was the witness and the scene of his virtues and miracles. To trace his journeys among the pagans, turn your eyes to east and west, to north and south, and you will find him in all these places, leading a very austere life, crossing mountains, combating the evil spirits until he had triumphantly planted his foundations. The widely scattered provinces of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, of Honduras and Chol and Panama, of Coahuila and Tejas – all of them heard his apostolic voice.”

- Eulogy of Fr. Bringas De Manzaneda, 1794

This outline of Fr. Margil's apostolic work in the New World and map showing his travels are taken from the book *Nothingness Itself, Selected Writings of Antonio Margil 1690-1724* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1976), pp. xix-xx

Miracles of Fr. Margil: The Tree of the Crosses

Margaret Galitzin

As a native Texan, I was very pleased to see that devotion to Fr. Antonio Margil (1657-1726), one of the first missionaries to plant the seed of faith in Jesus Christ on Texan soil, is being spread. How is it possible that so few Americans have heard of this tireless Franciscan who was rightly called “a second St. Anthony of Padua” by his own Superior?

To your fine bibliographical page let me add this charming story about Fr. Margil and the miraculous Tree of the Crosses.

On March 11, 1697, Fr. Antonio Margil received the news that he had been elected Father Guardian of Holy Cross Monastery of Querétaro, Mexico. Father Guardian, for those who don't know, is the title for a Superior in a Franciscan house. He received this honor along with the order to leave immediately to take up the new charge. At the time he was laboring among the Indians in Guatemala. Without delay, he took to the road, and in only 14 days traveled the distance of 700 miles barefoot, and without a mule.

Thirteen years earlier when he had set out for mission work from Querétaro, he was already famous for his zealous preaching, love of penance and prayer, and gift of reading souls. Now, he had become a legend. The story had traveled back to Querétaro about the time when the fierce Talamanca Indians had cast Fr. Margil into a pile of burning wood, but the flames did not injure him although it blackened the image of the crucifix he held in his hands. Many persons gave accounts of how Fr. Margil would enter a village and go straight to the places in the mission churches where the witch doctors had hidden their idols, and then burn them in the public squares.

Eyewitness reports exist of soldiers who had accompanied the missionaries and returned to Querétaro telling how Mr. Margil's feet did not get wet when he crossed streams or swollen rivers. One priest gave a sworn report of how Fr. Margil ate from a small bag of corn and shared it with other Indians of a village for three months without the corn ever running out.

Crowds of people were waiting in Querétaro to catch a glimpse of the humble Padre, toasted by the sun, with the poor mended habit, ragged sombrero, and the cord with a scull hanging from his neck that he used when he preached.

Fr. Margil entered the Monastery, changed his ragged habit for a new one, and showed that he knew how to govern with the same zeal and prudence that he showed in his missionary work. He insisted on the exact observance of the Rule and customs of the Order. Every night, after praying the Divine Office, he used to make the Stations of the Cross in the Convent courtyard, and then took a harsh scourging.

On his return one day from preaching a mission in a nearby village, Fr. Margil stuck his walking cane on the ground in the garden of the courtyard adjoining the Monastery. Some days passed, and it was noticed that the cane had begun to sprout and grown into a tree. The miraculous tree produces no flower or fruit, but has a series of small thorns, each in the form of a cross. Each cross, in its turn, presents three smaller thorns that simulate the spikes of the crucifixion.

Persons have tried to plant cuttings from this tree in other places, but they will not grow anywhere else. The tree can still be seen in the monastery courtyard today.

The miraculous tree is a kind of metaphor of the lives of Fr. Margil and so many other early Franciscan missionaries who labored and offered everything for the conversion of the souls of the Indians. Their labors only took root because the missionaries were willing to take up and embrace the difficult crosses in their apostolate. The life of Fr. Antonio Margil was the cross, and only the cross.

The tree of the crosses also reminds us of Fr. Margil's favorite devotion, the Stations of the Cross. On Fridays he would pray it in the streets, carrying a large cross, barefoot, with a rope around his neck and a rough crown of thorns on his head. Everywhere he went, he promoted the practice of the Way of the Cross. In Guatemala alone, he established more than 2,500 Ways of the Cross.

One can imagine the consternation and indignation of this grand missionary today when he witnesses from Heaven the Conciliar Church stimulating Indians to return to their idolatry under the pretext of preserving their "cultural values." Also the Cross has been forgotten by the modern preachers, who only think about social actions and class struggle.

Fr. Margil gave his life and blood to abolish the idolatry of the infidel tribes. He sought to plant the seed of Faith and Christian Civilization, through the Cross. Today, almost everything is done in the opposite way.



Thorns on the tree of the crosses. *Below, a close-up of a thorn*



Words of Ven. Antonio Margil de Jesus

Some excerpts from the letters of Fr. Antonio Margil

“Let us respond to Jesus with pure love, proving it by our works, as Jesus showed His love for us by His deeds not with fine words.”

“We must serve our neighbor more than ourselves, for by so doing we make Almighty God our debtor, and He will aid us in our necessities.”

“The pearls of Christ Crucified are precious. The missionaries are divers of the Lord for them, and he died for them. Let us seek for them and be crowned with them. O, what good fortune!”

“The greatest sign of love is to suffer and keep silent.”

“As gold in the furnace, so God tries his servants.”

“If he is with us in tribulations, it is not longer tribulation, but glory!”

“To enjoy God there is an eternity given to us; but to perform some service for God and to do some good to our brethren, the time for that is very short.”

“Do not forget your nothingness, no matter what others may do to you. Do not fear so long as you live, Antonio, any demon greater than that called ‘I.’”

“What would the angels be without God? Nothing. What would Most Holy Mary be without God? Nothing. What would the humanity of Christ be without God? Nothing. Without God, in fact, all of us are nothing, nothing, nothing!”

The Alabado

Song of Praise composed by Fr. Antonio Margil

Everywhere he went, Fr. Margil taught his famous *Alabado*, a song he wrote in verse to catechize the Indians and Spanish children. It became one of the best known and loved songs that the Spanish Franciscan missionaries used to teach the Indians neophytes. It is still remembered and sung today in parts of Mexico, Central and South America. There are several forms or versions, and the number of stanzas varies, although the first three are universal. The form in which it is presented here, with seven stanzas, is said to be the one Fr. Margil introduced in all the missions that he founded.

Song of Praise

Lift up your hearts in joy and praise Him
In the Blessed Sacrament Most Holy,
Where the Lord, His glory veiled,
Assists souls faithful and lowly.

All praise to the glorious Conception
Of the Queen of Heaven,
For She, remaining Virgin and stainless
Is the Mother of the Word Eternal.

Blessed be St. Joseph, spouse of Mary,
The one chosen by God on high.
To his paternal care so tender
The Word Incarnate was given.

And so for endless ages
Shall it be for evermore.
Amen! Jesus and Mary!
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

O dearest Jesus,
To Thee I give my heart.
Imprint on it, dear Lord,
Thy most holy Passion.

O Our Lady of Sorrows,
Grant that at the moment of death,
We may surrender our souls to God
Through thy most holy hands.

Whoever seeks to follow God
And strives to enter into His glory.
One thing he must do and say with all his heart:
Die rather than sin.
Rather than sin, die!

Our Lady of Bethlehem - Part I

Her Roots & Her Adventure in America

Marian T. Horvat, Ph.D.

Recently, this interesting letter came from a reader in California to the TIA correspondence desk:



Is the statue of Our Lady of Bethlehem in the Carmel Mission connected to the devotion of Our Lady of Good Success? I read on your site that the original statue of Our Lady of Good Success was in Spain and that the devotion to that image spread quickly throughout Europe. I ask because the two statues look so similar.

As you probably know, the statue of Our Lady of Bethlehem was brought to Carmel by Fr. Serra to stop the Russian invasion that was threatening the Pacific Coast. Do you have any more information on that historic statue? It is difficult to find anything on this topic.

All the best to you and thank you for your wonderful site!

Sincerely,
D.L.

**Nuestra Señora de Belén
San Carlos Borromeo Mission**

Missions themselves that were abandoned and left to decay and then fortunately restored in the 19th century, historic facts like those related to this devotion should be resurrected and given a place of prominence in Catholic textbooks. It is to encourage this initiative that I write this article.

First let us look at the Portuguese roots of this devotion, and then follow Our Lady of Bethlehem's journey to the Mission of Carmel in Upper California.

Portuguese roots

The title Our Lady of Bethlehem honors Our Lady at the birth of Christ. The Marian calendar celebrates the feast the Virgin of Bethlehem at Christmas, the Nativity of Our Lord. This

devotion became popular in the 15th century in Portugal and Spain during the Age of Discovery because of the Portuguese Chapel to the Virgin of Belén, or Virgin of Restelo, in the Belem Tower close to Lisbon, the point of departure for ships seeking the route to India.

In the Tower a small chapel was built by the Infante Don Henry the Navigator and dedicated to Our Lady of Bethlehem. The sailors would go to pray before the stone statue of Our Lady seated on a throne and holding the Christ Child on her lap before every voyage, asking her protection. On their return home, they would come back to thank her for saving them from harm. She was also invoked as Virgin of the Star, (*Virgem da Estrela*) as the Star of the East who guided the Magi to Christ, Our Lady of Help (*Nossa Senhora da Ajuda*), who gave her constant succor to the sailors at sea, and Our Lady of Good Success, because the sailors invoked her for successful voyages.

It also became a custom for captains of the ship to spend the night in prayer in her chapel before the day their ship departed. Vasco de Gama and all his men made their vigil at the shrine of Our Lady of Bethlehem before his successful voyage to the Indies in 1497. On his return a year later, his first visit was to Our Lady of Bethlehem to thank her for the good success. On March 8, 1500, the Portuguese explorer Pedro Alvares Cabral knelt before the statue of Our Lady of Bethlehem. She rewarded his journey with the discovery of Brazil.



A copy of the Chapel's statue was placed outside Belen Tower

In 1495 the chapel was given to the Order of St. Jerome and, in thanksgiving for the discovery of the Indies, King Don Manuel built a monumental church, the Monastery of Santa Maria de Belém. The statue was transferred to it, and the navigators and sailors continued to visit Our Lady of Bethlehem there before and after every voyage.

It was only natural that the devotion should spread throughout the New World. The Franciscans, always dedicated to the Nativity, accompanied the discoverers and were eager to honor Our Lady under this beautiful title. Churches, seminaries, schools and cities in Brazil and New Spain were named after her. Even in our country, we find the city of Belén, New Mexico, originally called Nuestra Señora de Belén when it was founded by a royal grant in 1741.

The oldest statue on the West Coast is the life-sized Our Lady of Bethlehem at Mission San Carlos Borromeo. How she came to reign at the Carmel Mission is part of the adventure of establishing the first missions in Upper California. Here is her story.

Why Spain found the California Missions

For a century and a half, Franciscan friars had been pleading with the Spanish Crown to send missionaries to the realm of California. Charles III wanted to do this, but funds were always short and there were more pressing affairs. In 1768, Spain's furthest post north on the Pacific Coast was Santa Maria Mission, 300 miles south of the present Mexican-U.S. border.

Then the Schismatic Russian Empire began to growl and threaten. Rumors were spreading that Catherine the Great had decided to occupy Monterey, discovered by 1603 by Sebastian Vizcaíno and claimed for the Spain but never colonized. Faced with this threat, the King commissioned a remarkable man, Don José de Galvez, General Visitor of New Spain, to send an expedition to Upper California and secure Spain's hold on that large 500-mile coastal stretch extending from the port of San Diego (33rd parallel) to the port of Monterey (37th parallel).



José de Galvez, Visitor General of New Spain. *Below*, an authentic portrait of Junipero Serra, drawn in 1773



From his headquarters in Santa Ana in Mexico, Galvez, a brilliant organizer, stern disciplinarian and pious Catholic, had the insight to summon another remarkable man who ultimately secured the success of the plan. That man was the Franciscan Friar Junipero Serra, a small man, 5'2", 56 years of age, and plagued by a chronic leg infection. This unlikely pair – the tall, rigorous military man and miniscule limping friar – have been called the last great *conquistadores* in the annals of Spain.

In the person of the General Visitor, Fr. Serra found a worthy collaborator; both had rigid determination and a genius for planning and adjustment. From their headquarters in Santa Ana in Baja California, they spent two months preparing for the journey, which they named the Sacred Expedition. The plan of Galvez was to establish garrisons at San Diego and Monterey. Fr. Serra would plant 10 missions under military protection, one every 50 miles, to convert and civilize the natives, starting with the ones at San Diego and Monterey.

Galvez was well aware that to conquer that hinterland, he needed the missionaries to convert the natives so that a new Catholic kingdom – a region half as large as Spain – would take root in the soil. For such an adventure, he also counted on the help of Heaven. At this point in our story, the statue of *Nuestra Señora de Belén* enters the picture.

In 1769, the Archbishop of Mexico City, Antonio de Lorenzana y Butrón, gave the 5'2" statue of Our Lady of Bethlehem to General Galvez to accompany that first expedition to Alta California.(1) Galvez entrusted this treasure to Fr. Serra, exacting from the friar the promise that she would be returned to him in Mexico City after the cross was planted in Monterey. From the start, she bore a double title, Our Lady of Bethlehem and also *La Conquistadora*, as the conqueror of the souls of the Indians of Upper California.

Two expeditions were planned, one by sea commanded by Don Gaspar de Portolá, governor of the Peninsula of California, and another by land, to which Fr. Serra attached himself, despite one of his legs being badly ulcerated. Galvez placed the expedition under the patronage of St. Joseph, promising to have a Mass sung in his honor on the 19th of every month in all the future missions. Into the helm of the *San Antonio*, one of three ships to depart for San Diego Bay, the bells, altars, and liturgical equipment for the future church missions were packed. Here also is where *Nuestra Señora de Belén* began her voyage.

On January 6, Fr. Serra blessed the ship and flags, sang Mass and all the crew and passengers received Communion. Galvez had already ordered that every seaman and soldier should make his confession. On January 9, 1769 the first ship departed. Galvez wrote that his heart had gone with the expedition even though he could not. (2)

Galvez was being called mad for embarking on such great undertaking with such slight means. At the bottom of one of his numerous decrees, he audaciously signed, "José de Galvez, mad in this world. Pray God he may be happy in the world to come."(3) Fr. Serra was considered his fit companion, also "mad" to be setting out with running sores on his leg on a long trek by land into uncharted territory with only 25 soldiers on horseback, three muleteers and 42 unpredictable Indians armed with bows and arrows.

What the naysayers did not take into account was the determination of the General, the zeal of the Friar and constant assistance of the indomitable *Conquistadora*.

Our Lady of Bethlehem - Part II

She Begins to Conquer California

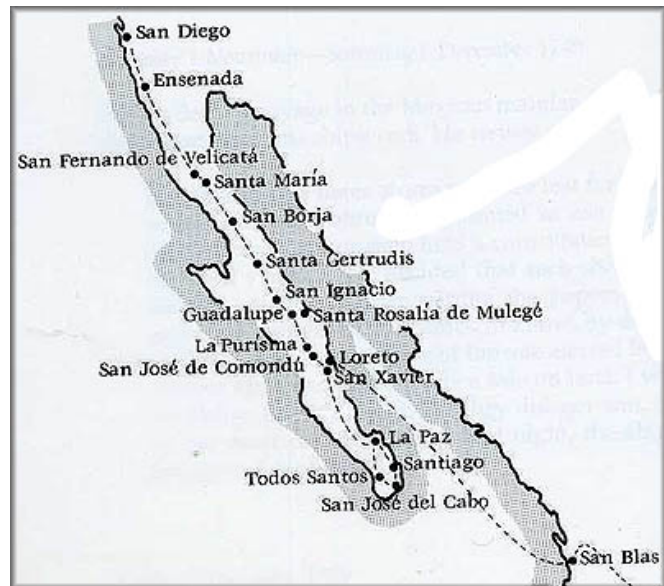
Marian T. Horvat, Ph.D.

Packed in the cargo of the *San Antonio*, the life-size statue of Our Lady of Bethlehem left the port of La Paz in Mexico to begin her journey north to San Diego, where the Presidio-Mission would be established in Alta California. Fr. Junipero Serra left by land to meet them there; then the Holy Expedition would continue up to Monterey to establish Mission San Carlos.

On March 28, 1769, accompanied only by two guards and a Spanish attendant, Fr. Serra set out from La Paz to begin the 95-day, 750 mile journey north to San Diego. They moved “at a pack train pace,” averaging only four hours travel per day due to the friar’s inflamed leg, which was swollen to the middle of the calf and covered with abscesses. (1)

On May 7, they met the main body of the expedition led by Governor Portolá at Mission Santa Maria, still in Baja California (see map). He writes, “We were as happy as possible to see each other, all eager to start on our new venture across the desert.”

Fifty miles north of Santa Maria Mission, the contingency stopped at the frontier outpost of San Fernando at Velicatá. That Pentecost Sunday, May 14, was a day of great joy for Fr. Serra, for here he blessed and erected the cross to establish the first Indian mission of the expedition.



The land route followed by Fr. Serra to San Diego

As the group prepared to travel north for San Diego, Fr. Serra found he could hardly stand, so inflamed was his leg. As a last alternative to being carried on a stretcher, Serra asked the muleteer to prepare the same poultice he used for his animals and apply it to his leg. The next morning, his leg was so improved he could say Mass and continue the journey walking. Although Fr. Serra considered it “a matter of little moment,” the group considered it nothing short of a miracle.(2)

The first Mission of California is founded

As they traveled, the terrain changed. The naked hills and stony deserts were replaced with grassy valleys and verdant vegetable life. Fr. Serra describes the Indians they met along the way as talented in the craft of pottery and gentle. He considered it a good sign that the savages loved dress goods, and “would jump in the fire to get a piece.” (3)



Spain established its first mission-presidio in Alta California atop this hill

On Saturday, July 1, 1769, the land expedition reached San Diego and faced a gloomy situation. The *San José*, the last ship of the expedition to sail from La Paz, was shipwrecked; the *San Carlos* had been struck by pestilence and all of two of its sailors were dead.

The third, the *San Antonio* – which carried the statue of Our Lady of Bethlehem – had been the first to arrive and was sound, but now its men were falling ill from the scurvy as well.

Undaunted, Portolá continued with the plan. On July 9 the *San Carlos* with its diminished force of crew and soldiers set out on a scouting mission to find Monterey Bay. A few days later, the *San Antonio*, having unloaded its precious treasure of the statue of Our Lady of Bethlehem to preside over the new Mission on Presidio Hill, hoisted sail for San Blas to obtain more seamen and supplies, leaving only eight soldiers behind with Fr. Serra.

On July 16, 1769, Fr. Junipero Serra planted the traditional great cross on a hillock overlooking the harbor and said Mass under a canopy of twigs. Spain thus established its presence in present-day California atop Presidio Hill with the official founding of Mission San Diego de Alcalá. Our history books tell us that this Mission, called the Mother of the Missions, is the first of the State’s 21 missions. What they fail to report, however, is that Our Lady of Bethlehem was there from the outset. Into that first humble chapel of Mission San Diego her statue was placed, and here she would reign for one year.

From the start, this Mission was the most difficult. The Kumeyaay Indians of the San Diego region were aggressive, thievish and arrogant, different from the other mild-mannered tribes of Alta California. Aware of the weakened condition of the camp, a group of about 30 Indians attacked the Mission on August 15, the Feast of the Assumption.

The savages thought it would be an easy matter to dispose of few soldiers and friars, but did not reckon with either the determination of that small group or the protection of Our Lady. In the fight, only one Spaniard was killed and three wounded; the Indians lost five with many wounded.



The life size statues of Our Lady and the Infant captured the hearts of the Indians

A few days later, the Indians came to sue for peace and asked care for their wounded. The expedition doctor, himself still recovering from scurvy, cured them all. Thenceforth, they presented themselves at the Mission unarmed. The Indian women in particular were eager to visit the Mission.

Fr. Serra reports that they were taken with the life-size Our Lady of Bethlehem and the Infant Child. Thinking the mother very pale and emaciated, they would bring food for her and the Infant; in their simplicity, some of the women even clamored to suckle the Christ Child. (4) The work of Our Lady in California had begun.

A threat to end the Holy Expedition

Although there were no more Indian attacks, the fledgling Mission was in a dire situation. After six months, supplies were low and there was no sign of either the packet ship *San Antonio* or of Governor Portolá. The Indians showed no interest in conversion.

On January 24, 1770, Portolá finally returned, bearing his own bad news. Monterey Bay, described so precisely in the annals of Sebastian Vizcaíno in 1603, had eluded the quest. The only good news was that further north another very beautiful bay had been discovered and christened San Francisco.

Fr. Serra, certain that the Monterey harbor existed, wanted the Holy Expedition to continue as planned. Governor Portolá was not so sure. With food to last only until the end of April, he decided that if a supply ship arrived at San Diego before March 14, he would immediately set out for Monterey. If not, they would all leave for Baja California on the 15th. Serra asked that the date of withdrawal be postponed until March 19, the feast of St. Joseph - patron of the Expedition. Portolá granted the extra days, postponing departure until the 20th.

Fearing that decades would pass before more friars were sent to convert the Indians, Fr. Serra had already decided to remain there even if the settlement was abandoned. A novena to St. Joseph was begun, and many hours were spent before Our Lady of Bethlehem, beseeching her help to save the Holy Expedition.

That help came, but only at the last hour. Just before sunset on the 19th, Fr. Serra, who continued to watch the ocean, caught sight of a ship and the *San Antonio* entered the harbor. When the ship landed and the circumstances of its landing were learned, all recognized the hand of Providence. The ship had not planned to put into port at San Diego. It was bound for Monterey, since it was believed that Portolá was already there awaiting supplies. It had already passed the San Diego harbor when it lost one of its anchors and was forced to turn around and make port there for repairs.

The Expedition was saved. For the rest of his life, Fr. Serra celebrated a High Mass of Thanksgiving on the 19th of each month. The two ships were outfitted and in Easter week of April 1770, they set out for Monterey. This time the *San Antonio* carried Fr. Junipero Serra and Our Lady of Bethlehem.



Fr. Serra rejoices at the sight of the *San Antonio* entering San Diego Bay on March 19, 1770



The Presidio-Mission San Diego in 1848, before the United States cavalry took over California and used the church for barracks and a stable

1. Martin Morgado, *Junipero Serra's Legacy*, Pacific Grove, CA: Mount Carmel, 1987, p. 23.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 31-32.
4. Omer Englebert, *The Last of the Conquistadors, Junipero Serra 1713-1784*, New York: Harcourt, Brace. Place of Publication, 1956, p. 82.

Carmel Mission, Her Final Home & Junipero Serra

Marian T. Horvat, Ph.D.

The ship *San Antonio*, whose passengers included Our Lady of Bethlehem and Fr. Junipero Serra, [left San Diego](#) on April 16, 1770 and reached the harbor of Monterey on May 31. Why the Bay had eluded the first scouting expedition of Captain Portolá was a mystery. “The great thing is that we are here,” wrote Fr. Junipero in a letter dated June 13, 1770. (1)

Three days after their arrival, on June 3, the Feast of the Pentecost, the second of the 21 missions founded on the Alta California coastline was founded. In honor of the King’s name saint, it was called the Presidio-Mission San Carlos Borromeo.

A small chapel and altar was erected in the valley and under the landmark oak tree close to the beach, where Vizcaíno’s Carmelites had said Mass 167 years earlier, Fr. Serra officially established the mission. He described the scene:

"Everyone arrived singing, while the bells hung from the old oak tree were ringing at full peal. ... With all the men kneeling before the altar, we sang the *Veni Creator*. A large cross had been laid out on the ground; we lifted it together and planted it upright in the earth. I said the prayers for its blessing, and everyone knelt to venerate it. Then I sprinkled holy water over the ground around the cross. At each new act, the bells would ring, the soldiers would fire their guns, and the *San Antonio* would discharge a volley from its cannon.



Monterey is founded on Pentecost Sunday June 3, 1770

“After raising aloft the standard of the King of Heaven, we unfurled the flag of our Catholic Monarch. As we raised each of them we shouted, ‘Long live the Faith! Long live the King!’ ...

“After that ceremony, I began the High Mass, with a sermon after the Gospel, and as long as the Mass lasted, it was accompanied with many salvos of cannon. The Mass ended, I took off my chasuble, and all together we sang in Spanish the *Salve Regina* in front of the wonderful statue of Our Lady of Bethlehem, which was on the altar. The Most Illustrious Inspector General [Galvez] had given us the statue for this celebration, but with the obligation of returning it to him afterwards, as I will do when the boat sails [to return to Mexico with news of the success].

“At the conclusion of the ceremony, standing up I intoned the *Te Deum laudamus*. We sang it slowly and solemnly right to the end, with the responses and prayers to the Most Holy Trinity, to Our Lady, to the Holy Saint Joseph, patron of the expedition, to San Carlos, patron of this port, presidio and mission, and finally the prayer of thanksgiving. May God be thanked for all things!”
(2)

Our Lady leaves Monterey

One part of Our Lady’s story almost forgotten today is how she left the newly established Monterey Mission, only to return to re-occupy this land she claimed as hers. The statue belonged to Inspector General José de Galvez, on loan to the friars to protect the Sacred Expedition and insure the successful founding of the Monterey Presidio-Mission. She was present when the first mission of San Diego was established; afterward for almost a year she was there on its altar for all the Masses and daily prayers. Now she had entered Monterey triumphantly as *La Conquistadora* – the one who conquers.



The Serra Monument overlooking the Pacific commemorates the landing in 1770

She presided at one more ceremony before her departure. In their first rough church, the Monterey group – consisting of approximately 40 persons – celebrated the Feast of Corpus Christi on June 14. The silver candelabras donated by Galvez were carried in a procession with Captain Portolá marching at its head and the soldiers following in two ranks. Hymns were sung and the cannons thundered anew. The beautiful statue of Our Lady of Bethlehem occupied the space directly above the monstrance of her Most Holy Son, standing guard over the church.

“Everything was carried out with such splendor that it might have been gazed upon with delight even in Mexico,” wrote Fr. Serra to Galvez. (3)

“And now that she has occupied Monterey with us,” he continued, “I am going to send you back your *Madonna*, as I promised you at La Paz. Tomorrow we shall bid her farewell by singing the Mass before her for the last time.” (4)

On July 3, 1770, the statue of Our Lady of Bethlehem sailed on the departing *San Antonio* to be returned to Inspector General Gálvez in Mexico City.

The Virgin returns to stay at Carmel Mission

Shortly Galv ez was announcing to the world that the Franciscans were holding religious processions north of the 36th parallel and that these new provinces were annexed to the Spanish Empire. Enthusiasm ran high – New Spain was larger by a 750-mile coast, a feat accomplished by a small troupe of soldiers and a handful of friars. The cannons of Mexico City thundered and the Cathedral bells rang out, answered by bells of monasteries and churches over the city. The hero of the day was Galvez.



Mission San Carlos Borromeo in Carmel-by-the-Sea, restored in the last century

Report of the Monterey expedition circulated throughout Europe, reaching the courts of Catherine the Great and the King of England, who were notified as quickly as possible that Spain was now solidly established in Alta California.

Two years later, G alvez returned in triumph to Spain, where King Charles III made him Marqu es de Sonora and appointed him Minister of the Indies. But before he left the New World, he determined to send the statue of Our Lady of Bethlehem back to Mission San Carlos, which had been moved to Carmel, about five miles south of Monterey.

To remove the Indians from the bad influence of the soldiers and to avoid a hostile new Commander, Fr. Serra judged it opportune to separate the Mission from the Presidio. In December 1771 the whole Mission establishment was set up on the banks of the Carmel River and in view of the sea. After the move to Carmel, the Indians began to frequent the Mission, and by the end of 1773 Fr. Serra reported more converts there than any mission.

To this “truly delightful spot,” as Fr. Serra described it, Our Lady returned to Alta California to continue her work of conversion and protection. Henceforth, the Carmel Mission became the home and headquarters of both the Virgin of Bethlehem and Fr. Serra.

As Father General of Alta California, Fr. Serra often traveled the *Camino Real* that led from San Diego to the San Francisco area, a distance of 700 miles. He personally founded nine of the 21 missions that were eventually established. But he always returned to Carmel and his beloved Virgin. This was the place dearest to his heart, with its twisted cypress and rocks jutting up from the sea, recalling memories of the Island of Mallorca in Spain where he was born.

Having recourse to *Nuestra Señora de Belén* became a custom of the captains and sailors who sailed the waters of California. In letters dated May 1774, June 1774, October 1775, and July 1779, Fr. Serra makes mention of special Masses he said to fulfill the promises of sailors who had asked the protection of *Nuestra Señora de Belén* in times of peril. (5) In December 1802, the Commander of the frigate *Most Pure Conception* would give Our Lady a silver crown in thanksgiving for saving his ship on a dangerous voyage, showing this tradition continued into the 19th century.



The silver crown, an *ex voto* offering of a Captain saved at sea by Our Lady

Fr. Serra's death

On August 27, 1784, Fr. Serra asked to be taken to chapel where his beloved statue of the Virgin of Bethlehem presided. He was very weak and knew he was dying, but he insisted on reciting prayers with the neophyte Indians, concluding with the hymn that Ven. [Fray Margil](#) had composed in honor of the Assumption of Our Lady. Then he received Holy Communion and took his leave of the Virgin who had conquered the land.

The next day, he died in his cell holding the crucifix that he had received in his novitiate and had carried on all his travels. He was 70 years old.

Shortly after Fr. Serra's death, Fr. Francisco Palóu, the new Father General of the Missions, wrote to the Franciscan College in Mexico City asking that Fr. Serra be memorialized in a painting commemorating his last Viaticum. He should be "kneeling and before the altar of Our Lady of Bethlehem with the Child in her arms," Fr. Palou specified. It is the memorial Fr. Serra would have desired, he added.

The Guardian approved the idea, and the painting titled *Fr. Serra's Viaticum* was made. As you can see *above right*, the priest giving him the viaticum – Fr. Palou – is vested in a cope, stole and surplice over his habit, holding the Host and ciborium. Fr. Serra kneels to the right wearing a stole over his Franciscan habit, holding the Communion veil to catch any particles that might fall from the Host. Around him are soldiers, sailors and Indians holding lighted candles.

Over the open tabernacle with the crucifix on top is the statue of Our Lady of Bethlehem, who was with him when he established his first Mission in Alta California and remained with him to the end.



Fr. Serra' Viaticum - He is kneeling at right, wearing a stole

- 1, Omer Englebert, *The Last of the Conquistadors, Junipero Serra 1713-1784*, NY: Harcourt Brace, 1956, p.88
2. Martin Morgado, *Junipero Serra's Legacy*, Pacific Grove, CA: Mount Carmel, 1987, pp. 41-42
3. *Ibid.*, p. 44
4. Englebert, *The Last of the Conquistadors*, pp. 89-90
5. Morgado, *Junipero Serra's Legacy*, pp. 45-46
6. "Blessed Serra's Devotion to Our Holy Mother," *Siempre Adelante*, Spring Summer 2003.
- 7 Morgado, *Junipero Serra's Legacy*, p. 47 8. *Ibid.*, pp. 93-95

Our Lady of Bethlehem - Part IV

Secularization, Abandonment & Restoration of Her Statue

Marian T. Horvat, Ph.D.

After [Fr. Serra's death](#), Mission San Carlos Borromeo in Carmel grew and prospered, and Our Lady of Bethlehem continued to be held in esteem and veneration. But the old adobe chapel that housed her was deteriorating. In 1793, the first sandstone block was laid in position for Mission Carmel's new church. A gilded wood retablo altarpiece was installed over the altar, and Our Lady of Bethlehem, also known as La Conquistadora, held the center niche of honor.

The Mission provided religious instruction and the Sacraments for the neighboring Indian people as a part of its function. With extensive acres for pasture, crops and orchards, it was a large self-sufficient community that provided sustenance and work for many Indians. There they learned a wide variety of trades and skills. From bakers, tanners and weaver to musicians, farmers, vaqueros (cowboys) - all emerged as the healthy fruit of that early California Mission.

By 1794, the Indian population at the Mission had reached 927. That year, Carmel Mission could show 1,000 Baptism recorded in their church annals. More than 4,000 Indians officially became Catholics before the Carmel mission was secularized and abandoned.

Secularization

The mission period began to decline after Mexico declared its independence from Spain and the Mexican flag replaced the royal standard in the California Missions. The new Mexican government, Masonic in its roots, soon decided to close the Missions and sell their buildings and lands. In 1834 the Mexican government passed a decree of secularization authorizing civil confiscation of all the California Missions properties. On paper the Indians who lived in the Missions were supposed to be given first priority in purchasing the land. In fact, however, most was sold to new settlers and Mexicans who had fostered the Revolution.



The abandoned Mission Carmel in 1876; *below*, the stripped interior and collapsed roof



Today the Revolution spreads the myth that the Indians suffered under the rule of the Church and Padres. The opposite is true. Before secularization, the Missions were extremely productive and the prosperous self-sufficient communities were flourishing. Daily life was active and ordered, divided between regular prayer time, work hours, rest and recreation. While discipline was strict, the Indians trusted the Friars who lived and labored among them, and knew they always worked for their best interests - both material and spiritual.

Under secularization, the Indians suffered a harsh fate. Both the Indians and Padres were forced off the land. The Indians often suffered brutal treatment at the hands of the land-hungry ranchers and miners, who had no concern for their well-being. Largely because of this bad treatment, between 1845 and 1880, the California Indian population plummeted from 150,000 to 20,400.

Abandonment & neglect

Under secularization, the lands of Mission San Carlos Borromeo were also partitioned and sold by the Mexican government. By 1836 the destruction of the Mission life was complete. The Mission lay abandoned and neglected; the church and the quadrangle of the presidio fell into ruin. The once fruitful land lay barren; the corrals that had herded thousands of cattle were broken down and tenantless.

In this period of neglect, the buildings were vandalized and many works of art stolen. What happened to the Virgin of Bethlehem during this time of pillage and havoc? The Statue was not listed in Mission Carmel's final post-secularization "auction" inventory in 1842. To save her from that humiliation, one of the last Mission resident Indian families, the Cantuas, had brought the Statue to their home for safekeeping. The Christ Child and crown along with other movable goods were taken to the Royal Presidio Chapel in Monterey.

Dona Maria Ignacia Dutra, a member of the Cantua family, became custodian of Our Lady of Bethlehem. When she moved to Monterey in 1876, she took the Statue with her. There were still many persons who wanted to pay homage to the Virgin, and they would visit her there, where she was enshrined wearing the wedding dress of Dona Maria.

Restoration

In 1846, California won its independence from Mexico and for two years called itself the Republic of California. In 1848 it became a territory of the United States, and two years later it became the 31st State of the Union. Only then, in 1859, were the Missions returned to the Catholic Church by the US government. For many of the churches, abandoned and in ruins, it was too late to save them.



Our Lady behind glass in the poorly lit Mortuary Chapel; *below*, another statue set in front of her



A happier outcome, however, awaited Mission San Carlos Borromeo. In 1882 the grave of Fr. Serra was found, which raised public interest in restoring the Mission, and a partial rebuilding project began. In 1933, Carmel Mission became a parish church, and the grand restoration began, due largely to the work of two men. One was parish priest Fr. Michael D. O'Connell; the other was a San Francisco cabinetmaker Harry W. Downie, who led the restoration project. Through exhaustive research, Downie made every effort to duplicate the original mission buildings with as much detail as possible. His work at Carmel Mission made San Carlos Borromeo Mission one of the most authentically restored missions of California.

During this period of reconstruction, a call was made to return items that had been in safekeeping by individuals and families for so many years. Before the Statue's first custodian, Maria Dutra, died in 1925, she had requested the Virgin of Bethlehem be given to Gertrude Ambrosia, a descendant of the one of the soldiers who had accompanied Fr. Serra on the Sacred Expedition. Now, Mrs. Ambrosia returned the Statue to Mission Carmel so that La Conquistadora would be restored to her proper place in its Chapel.

The Statue had survived the years of abandonment well. Only the wooden lower torso had to be replaced. She was dressed in a silver embroidered

gown, a silk and gold brocade cope, and reunited with the original Christ Child and the original silver crown, still in storage at the Presidio Chapel - now known as the San Carlos Borromeo Cathedral of Monterey.

Newly vested and adorned, Our Lady of Bethlehem returned to her place of honor on the altar, in a niche on the new retablo. But when the restoration of the side Mortuary Chapel was completed, from some inexplicable decline in devotion, she was moved to that side chapel, a secondary place of relative obscurity. That Burial Chapel has no external light and is instead lit by a single set of votive and the hanging lamps. At times museum artifacts or other sacred art objects are placed in front of the historic Virgen de Belen. For curious tourists attracted by her beauty and charm, there is no data about her historic role and importance.

Although the mission today is restored and admired, one could say Our Lady of Bethlehem is still abandoned, waiting for a grand return of the love and devotion she properly merits.

"The ideal of consecrated motherhood"

On Mother's Day in the Marian year 1954, a solemn Pontifical was offered at Mission Carmel to honor the Statue of Our Lady of Bethlehem, "the first statue of Mary to be brought into the State." For one day, Our Lady returned to the limelight, placed under a canopy in the church square. During an evening candlelight ceremony, the Blessed Virgin Mary was declared "the ideal of consecrated motherhood... symbolized by the Statue of the Virgin of Belen." Then she was crowned "Madonna of the Expedition of 1769" with the silver crown and a garland of flowers.

The Catholic papers of the time proudly record that more than 4,000 persons came to venerate her, pretending that this was a grand number of Catholics. In fact, it is a relatively small number when one considers the millions of Catholics in South America who honor their patron Virgins on feast days. In 2011 600,000 Brazilians traveled to the city of Aparecida to pay homage to [*Nossa Senhora Aparecida*](#). Half a million Polish pilgrims travel to honor the Black Madonna, Queen of Poland, on each of the great Marian feast days.

In 1954, Catholics in California numbered close to 4 million. For only 4,000 to come out to greet the State's oldest Madonna is not significant. Today, there are more than 11 million Catholics in California, but the handful of pilgrimages to Our Lady of Bethlehem - hidden away in her obscure niche in the Mortuary Chapel - rarely number even 50 devotees. It is my hope that this series of articles will encourage more Catholics to come in greater numbers to visit her and pay her homage, raising a clamor to the careless religious authorities that she should be given a place of greater prominence.



Our Lady of Bethlehem, richly adorned but set aside

Our Lady chose California to reign under a double invocation: Our Lady of Bethlehem and La Conquistadora. Both titles are rich in meaning. Clearly she wanted to appear as the Mother of Christ Child so that the Indians of California would realize her maternal warmth and goodness and have recourse to her in all their needs. She also wanted to be known as The Conqueror, the

one who conquers all for Her Son. It seems that in the first plan of Providence for California, the people and the land were to be conquered for Christ through His Holy Mother. We can imagine the prosperity and graces this would have brought the State if this first appeal had been heard.

That original plan, however, was set off course by two avowed enemies of Our Lady, Mexican Freemasonry and American Protestantism. Because of the combined action of these two enemies, the Missions - and Our Lady of Bethlehem - faded into ruin and oblivion in the rush for gold.

Today, at this crossroads in History, it is time to return to the original plan of God for this State. One step along this path would be to make the Carmel Mission a site of pilgrimage to pay Our Lady of Bethlehem the homage she deserves. There we can plead with her to return California to a good path and to establish here the Reign of Mary that she promised. Under her maternal gaze, we can ask her to make each one of us, like those first heroic Franciscan missionaries, the apostles and builders of her Reign.



Today Carmel Mission is one of the most authentically restored Missions of California.
The fountain was returned when the call was made for the original dispersed artifacts

1. Martin Morgado, *Junípero Serra's Legacy*, Pacific Grove, CA: Mount Carmel, 1987, p. 47
2. Edna E. Kimbro, Julia G. Costello, Tevy Ball, *The California Missions: History, Art, and Preservation*, Getty Conservation Institute, 2009, p. 121
3. Morgado, *Juípero Serra's Legacy*, p. 49

A Visit to Our Lady of Belén

Marian Horvat & Judith Mead



As you enter Carmel Mission Basilica, the main altar beckons;
in a side chapel is the life-size image of Our Lady of Belén or Our Lady of Bethlehem

Recently we had an opportunity to visit the Carmel Mission, the second founded by Padre Junipero Serra in beautiful Carmel-by-the-Sea. The Mission-Basilica San Carlos Borromeo was restored in the mid 1900s and today is considered the most authentic and best preserved of the nine missions Padre Serra founded.

During his 15 years in Alta California, Carmel was the headquarters of the successful network of missions that eventually numbered 21. It was his preferred mission, set in a small bay town framed by the Pacific on the west and the Santa Lucia Mountains on the east, with a delightful weather and a complete absence of insects. In Carmel, you sleep and eat year-round with the windows open, no screens, just a sparkling crisp ocean breeze to greet and refresh you.

We found Padre Serra's room there in the mission square, carefully restored with a facsimile of his small bed, chest, writing desk and chair: Everything bare and ascetic, Franciscan style, and very moving to see.



The cell of Padre Serra at Carmel Mission

This is where he spent his final hours. After walking from that room to the chapel, accompanied by the commandant of the *presidio*, the soldiers and all the Indians of the mission, Padre Serra assisted at a final Mass and received the Viaticum. He died the next day in his cell on August 28, 1784, at the age of 71. At age 56, already infirm, he had joined the expedition of Gaspar de Portolà to begin the settlement of Alta California. In the last 15 years of his life, the full fruit of his vocation had blossomed and been harvested as he fulfilled the plan God had for him.

The Chapel of Our Lady of Bethlehem

We entered the Basilica – the church was elevated to this status in 1961 because of its beauty and historical significance – and were stirred by the air of calm and peace. A lingering aura of the Spanish Catholic spirit that aimed to conquer as many souls as possible in the New World for Heaven impregnates the atmosphere. Beckoning us to examine its many niches filled with colonial statues – St. Michael, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Bonaventure, St. Charles Borromeo among others – was the splendid *reredos*, or main altarpiece, that dominates the sanctuary, a replica of the original that had come from Mexico in 1807.



It was in the left side chapel that we found the reason for our pilgrimage. We had come to see Our Lady of Belén, or Our Lady of Bethlehem, the oldest Madonna in California and the second oldest in the United States. Our readers can find her interesting history [here](#).

We had a very pleasant surprise. This chapel used to be called the Mortuary Chapel because bodies were laid out here before burial. In it the statue of Our Lady of Bethlehem was lost in a dark glass case and other religious artifacts and pieces displayed on the mantelpiece. The life-size statue of Our Lady of Bethlehem – she stands 5'2", the same height as Padre Serra – looked like a disregarded relic of the past, lost, dusty and forgotten in the museum atmosphere of a drab side aisle.

But this scenario - seen from a prior visit - has changed. The Mortuary Chapel is reformed, its very name changed to the Chapel of Our Lady of Bethlehem. And there, in its center, she stands, enshrined and shining under soft lights in a large glass case, presiding over the oratory with a queenly air.

She is dressed in a rich but subtle silver embroidered dress and cape with an exquisite lace veil; she wears delicate gold acorn earrings, some of the first jewelry made in California; on one arm she tenderly holds the Infant Christ, and in her other hand are a silver rose and a rosary. On her head is a foot-high silver crown made for her by a lieutenant in 1798 in thanksgiving for her protection during a difficult sea voyage.

Above and surrounding her is a golden halo and rays, a piece that the Spanish most appropriately call an *esplendor*, a word that could be translated in English as halo or aureole. In the background is a large silk cloth embroidered with flowers in soft delicate colors that Fr. Serra himself ordered from China.

In her new place, Our Lady, the statue Padre Serra brought with him to win the hearts of the Indians of Alta California, seems most pleased to reign again. We encourage all who live in or come to visit California to not forget Our Lady of Bethlehem. To see her and pray before her is worth the trip to Carmel.

She is here waiting and shows herself most expressive and willing to receive the pilgrims who come to her with their troubles, their requests, their needs and their love. To each of us she seemed to speak words of consolation, encouragement, and understanding in view of the difficult times in which the Church and her children find themselves in these chaotic post Vatican II days of destruction.

The following were our impressions praying before the marvelous image of Our Lady of Bethlehem:

Impressions of Judith Mead

When I looked on the magnificent statue of Our Lady of Belen for the first time, my immediate impression was that Our Lady had temporarily stepped away from her celestial throne to visit me and reassure me that, indeed, in the end her Immaculate Heart will triumph.

She had obviously sensed my lack of confidence and wanted to reignite my trust by her presence. Her goal was accomplished without delay. How could I possibly resist that maternal gaze that beckoned me to leave aside all pettiness and to focus on my eternal salvation? I found myself pouring out my heart and its desires to my heavenly Mother. Was it my imagination or did her cheeks grow rosier and her expression softer as I begged her to grant my seemingly endless list of petitions?



Candles we left burning in the iron stand at her side

I detected no impatience in her countenance, only profound understanding of my needs. What an incomprehensible mystery that the august Queen of Heaven and Earth would be interested in my paltry requests, that the Seat of Wisdom would take the time to listen to the insignificant details of my life! Our Lady seemed so regal in her gown of rich brocade, her veil of intricate lace, her crown and *esplendor* of brilliant gold.

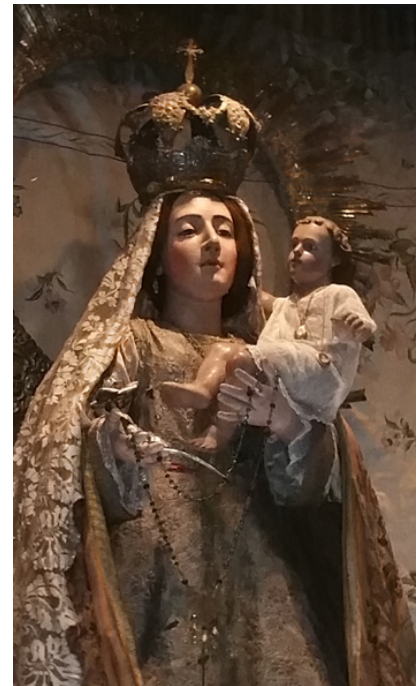
At the same time, her humility and innocence were very apparent. I found myself wanting to do whatever necessary to be like her, to emulate her serenity, her joy in the midst of suffering, her submission to the Will of her Divine Son. It became very clear to me that the surest way to grow closer to Our Lord was through His Mother. Mary, Cause of our Joy, pray for us.

Impressions of Marian Horvat

This life-size statue of Our Lady of Belen is maternal and yet queenly, reminding me strongly of the image of Our Lady of Good Success. I sense the same maternal goodness in this marvelous sculpture, a goodness that draws me to her, instilling a great confidence that she is hearing my prayers and petitions and something more. She seems to say, “I know what you do not know, my daughter. I will give you what you need and do not know how to ask for. Wait and confide, for I know what I am doing.”

In that goodness, I am also aware of an incredible firmness. “This is the way things are, my child,” her expression seems to say. “I am here, your mother, but I accept no compromises.” It is the firmness of a good mother who loves her children but knows how to discipline them, to guide them with an simple look to keep them from going astray from the good path.

In that supremely serene countenance I feel an invitation: “Be more like me, my daughter. Less agitation, more calm. Less turmoil, more confidence in my Son and my promises. There will be a triumph after much travail; face that travail, keep up the good fight, and maintain a calm spirit, like mine.” It is not an invitation to indifference or, worse, to apathy in the face of the destruction being wreaked inside the Church today. It is a solicitation to the militant position, assumed with fortitude and tranquility, confident of the final victory.



Prayer to Our Lady of Bethlehem

Dear Lady of Bethlehem, Virgin most pure, Mother of our Savior, may the memory of the cold on the night Thy Divine Child was born bring Thy powerful intercession to bear upon the world's coldness towards the Babe of Bethlehem. Send down into the hearts of all people some warmth of the flames of love that burn in Thy Immaculate Heart.

Thou, who suffered such great loneliness when Thy Son was taken from Thee, look with pity upon the void in the hearts of those who know and love Him not. Bring Him to them and with Him, His Angels and Saints that they too may be our intimate friends.

Thou, who journeyed wearily to Bethlehem, look down with mercy upon humankind trudging along the way of evil, lost and confused. Guide us to the path of Thy Son and the habitation He prepared for us.

Look down with compassion upon us, as we commend to Thy maternal care the needs of Holy Mother Church, our beloved Country, our families. We place all at Thy blessed feet. Through Thy powerful intercession, may God grant to us and to the whole confused world the grace of the sacred Peace of Bethlehem.

Our Lady of Bethlehem, pray for us now, pray for us in every need, and be with us at the hour of our death. Amen.



Basilica San Carlos Borromeo, home of Our Lady of Bethlehem

The Appeal of the Stones at San Juan Capistrano

Hugh O'Reilly

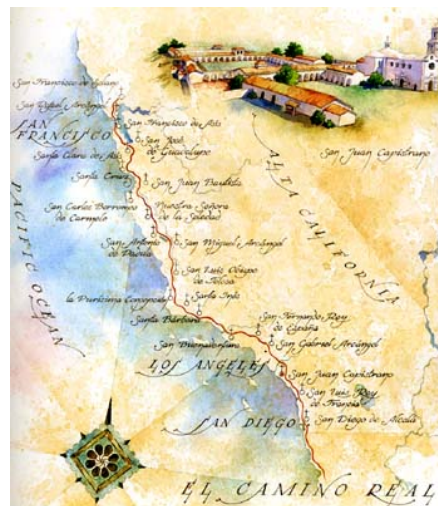


Mission San Juan Capistrano, "The Jewel of the California Missions"

In 1769, when the American Revolution was in gestation, setting a first experiment for what would be the Modern World, a humble Spanish Friar was crossing the borders between Baja and Alta California, and founding the first Franciscan mission in what would be the most prosperous State of the future United States of America.

After the first California mission - San Diego of Alcalá - had been established, Fr. Junipero Serra continued traveling north setting up many others. The Mission of St. Juan Capistrano was founded on November 1, 1776, All Saint's Day, just three months after our Country declared its independence from England.

The efforts of Fr. Serra did not end there. He continued to walk north and many other missions issued from his saintly, tireless work. The present day city of Los Angeles would rise from the Mission of St. Gabriel. Also the missions of Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, San Francisco and San Jose, to mention only those that gave origin to important cities, were founded in the same period. Among the 26 California Franciscan missions, which constituted a splendid chain along the South Pacific coast, San Juan Capistrano is considered the best conserved, which is why it is called the Jewel of the Missions.



The story of the California missions was thus added to the early Catholic History of our Country. Even before that time, numerous missions had been established from the early 1600s on in New Mexico by the Jesuits, with Blessed Eusebio Kino one of their most famous leaders. A half century before Fr. Serra began his epic work in California, Ven. Antonio Margil was making an analogous initiative in Texas.

Appeals of Divine Providence that were not heard

Knowing these first Catholic missionaries in our land can help us to understand what Divine Providence was planning to give to our newly born Country in order to protect it from the bad influences that had already been established in it. For various reasons, these Catholic seeds did not germinate in California.

At first, the missions thrived and prospered, spiritually and materially. Many Indians converted and lived in the missions, receiving religious and cultural formation as well as an efficient professional instruction. To speak only of the latter, the missionary effort allowed the Indians to learn systematic methods of farming and livestock production. When you visit San Juan Capistrano, for example, you can still admire the well-organized site where the Indians crushed grapes under the supervision of the missionaries. That was, in fact, the first wine made in California. The Indians also learned to write, read, carve, paint, and sing following the good schools of the time, brought from Spain by the missionaries.



The wine-press of St. Juan Capistrano where the first California wine was made

Resentment of this progress and wealth grew among the enemies of the Church, and in 1821, when Mexico declared its independence from Spain, its anti-clerical government claimed Alta California and began the secularization of the missions, expelling from them the Franciscans.

In 1848, Mexico lost a war against the United States and had to cede Alta California. Shortly before that, gold was discovered in Sacramento Valley.

Soon thousands of gold-diggers would descend from all over the Union to California in quest of a quick fortune. Often, those men viewed the Indians as enemies and contenders for rights and land, and mutual fighting began. The missions fell into ruins. Mission San Juan Capistrano was sold in 1833; the others suffered a similar fate.

When the State of California came into the Union in 1867, there was great interest in the newfound wealth of the territory, but unfortunately no concern to know the plan of Divine Providence for this land. This is one reason why our State and Country continue to be primordially money and pleasure-oriented.

If Catholics would have nurtured those first seeds and been faithful to that call to establish a Catholic civilization, organically integrating the neophyte Catholic Indians into the population, what might have taken place? The early heroic Franciscan examples of dedication for the cause of Christ were there to be followed. Alas, this did not happen ...

But God does not change His promises. The echo of that appeal - even though it no longer finds resonance in the hearts of most modern men - can still be heard in the stones of the Mission calling us to a return.

The vestiges ask for a Catholic restoration

A material restoration of San Juan Capistrano Mission began in the early 1900s. Fr. John O'Sullivan, who arrived in 1910, restored Serra Chapel, installed the Golden Altar, built a mission school, planted gardens, and installed the fountains that still splash today. Further, the stories he wrote - e.g., about how the swallows would return to San Juan Capistrano each year on St. Joseph's feast day - showed how the spirit of the old grace of the Mission remained alive with its historic charm.

In his book *Capistrano Nights*, Fr. O'Sullivan reported how the Faith planted by the Franciscans endured in the people of the Mission, as seen, for example, in the story of Polania Montañez. She taught religion to the town's children before Fr. O'Sullivan arrived. When the town was suffering from a severe drought in the 1890s, she organized the children into a procession carrying a Crucifix and statue of St. Vincent. They set out for the ocean front, praying to God all the while to send rain. When they reached their destination, the heavens opened with such force that wagons from town were sent to bring back the faithful and jubilant group.

With the goal of spreading this echo of the Catholic past of California and showing the marvel of these missions, I begin to explore this grand chain of California missions by making some modest comments on pictures taken during a visit to Mission San Juan Capistrano.

The Mission stands in the valley opening to the sea and backed by a half circle of gently swelling hills, flecked with bright colors of wild flowers. The people used to say that the Virgin Mary had been walking in the hills, and the wild flowers sprung up where her feet touched the ground.

In this spirit, I invite you to view this mission of times past.

A walk in the gardens of Mission San Juan Capistrano



When you enter the gates of the San Juan Capistrano Mission you leave behind you the world with its agitation, self-interest, and concern for pleasures. You enter a past of peace, recollection, and seriousness. The rustic and beautiful colonial Spanish arches of the buildings provide shade and a light breeze for your body, and a spirit of well-being for your soul.



At the entrance patio, you come upon an old cannon, *above left*, reminding you that in its first years the Mission and its inhabitants were protected by a 10-soldier garrison from enemies coming from the sea as well as other hostile Indian tribes. The presence of the Spanish soldiers provided a relative security for the missionaries, who catechized the Indians and taught them new skills, directed the building projects, and oversaw the workshops, gardens, and livestock.

The cannon sits in front of the soldier quarters, *above right*. A building that does not lack charm and beauty in its simple, rugged lines.



Through the open doors, *above left*, you see the courtyard and central garden, the very heart of the Mission's life. The courtyard was also a place of prayer and meditation for the friars, where, turning their spirits to Heaven, they rested from the hard work of the day.

In the center of the cloister garden is a large stone fountain, *above right*. Along with the shade of the large trees, it refreshes the air. The continuous trickling of water falling from the fountain to the grand brick basin creates a sweet, joyful melody that calms your spirit and fills it with peace.

The atmosphere of the cloister is grandiose and serene. *Above*, the austere and elegant *campanario* [bell tower] supports the small bell that regulated the internal life of the Mission, calling the friars to the Divine Office, meals, or practical works.



The building *right* that houses the Chapel, gives the impression of strength, like a small fortified castle. In it the only original mission church still standing in which Fr. Serra is known to have celebrated Mass.



At a corner of the courtyard, a series of arcades provides access to the Chapel. The richness and subtlety of the play of lights and shadows is remarkable. Although these buildings were designed to achieve various practical purposes, because they were constructed in an era of robust Faith, they make a delightful impression on your eyes, emanating a serenity that permeates your very being.



You cannot miss visiting the side altar dedicated to St. Peregrine, *above right*, patron saint for those with cancer. The heat from hundreds of candles placed there by the faithful fills the small room and makes it 10 to 20 degrees warmer than the Chapel. When you enter the Chapel you are in a haven of silence and piety, with some faithful praying quietly on the wooden kneelers.



The Chapel delights you with its Spanish colonial simplicity and, at the same time, grandeur. Your eyes are directed toward the monarchical point of the building, the Tabernacle and in it the Holy Eucharist. There you are invited to think about and admire the other mysteries of our Holy Faith, which spark in your soul a desire for Heaven. An artist could spend hours gazing at the details of the beautiful old Golden Altar that dominates the Chapel.



The entrance to the cemetery, next to the Chapel, is marked by a stone cross, *above left*, that pays homage to those who built the Mission and were buried there. Many persons, including friars, Indians, and families of parishioners are buried in unmarked graves in its silent confines. In that gravel pasture of peace, you feel the blessing of lives offered to serve God and expand His Reign on earth.

Leaving the cemetery, you see the four bells, *above right*, that once rang from the bell tower of the Grand Church, which today stands in ruins. The two larger bells are called San Vicente

and San Juan. The two smaller, San Antonio and San Rafael. They are inscribed with dedications to Our Lady. These bells would ring to call people to Mass and to mark the morning, noon, and evening *Angelus*.

They also announced the deaths of parishioners. Fr. O'Sullivan tells the story of Matilda, a young Indian girl in the 1850s who used to help in the sacristy, washing and ironing altar linens. She was a very good girl but some jealous persons spoke evil of her. When she became ill and died unexpectedly, these Mission bells sounded of their own accord miraculously, giving witness to her goodness and rebuking those who had slandered her. And after that, nobody ever said a word against her.



As the tour winds to its end, you find the ruins of the Church, *above*. Begun in 1797, it took nine years to complete, constructed by the dedicated labor of the missionaries assisted by the Indians. This seven-domed Church was the largest man-made structure west of the Mississippi.

Six years after its completion, on December 8, 1812, a massive earthquake struck during morning Mass. The walls crumbled and the dome caved in, killing 42 worshippers. The church was never rebuilt.

What happened? There is a popular tradition that says the Mexican architect who designed the Church was of the Aztec religion and carved pagan symbols into various parts of the Church. This would have raised the wrath of God, Who destroyed the building.

If this wasn't the reason for such a disaster, could it be a chastisement for some other hidden sin? Or perhaps God was asking the sacrifice of those lives to preserve the Catholic Faith in California. Who knows? It is a mystery that adds to the attraction of the Mission.

Walking in the peaceful gardens, resting on a bench in the shaded courtyard or contemplating

the ruins and buildings of Mission San Juan Capistrano, the rich blessing of the past gives you hope and invites you to dream of a Catholic future for the United States that will fulfill the promises of God that, in many ways, one still senses in this blessed place.



As you end your visit in the Mission, you come upon the statue of Fr. Junipero Serra, *above*, teaching the way of Heaven to an Indian boy.

It reflects well the primary aim of those saintly men who came to our Country to expand the Kingdom of Our Lord Jesus Christ and lead souls to salvation. Without their dedication, the Mission buildings would never have existed. This is why, still today, within these Mission walls you feel a strong Catholic spirit and a call that emanates from those sacred stones inviting us to return to the plans of God for us and for our Country.

Winter & Summer Solstices at the Missions

Margaret C. Galitzin

Recently I came across a fascinating piece of the history on the California Missions, established by the Spanish Franciscans between 1769 and 1823.

The date December 21 marks the winter solstice, the shortest day and longest night of the year, presaging the birth of Christ who brought the light of salvation into the darkness of a fallen world. On that date, if you are in Mission San Juan Bautista as the dawn breaks, a sunbeam enters the small window over the main doors, creating a band of brilliant light that illuminates the altar.



Winter solstice at Mission San Juan Bautista

That intense stream of light shines directly on the Tabernacle, where Our Lord Jesus Christ resides in the consecrated hosts. It is beautiful and symbolic: The light is Christ who came on Christmas Day to bring His Light to the world.

It is a whole catechism class in a symbolic beam of light: A brief moment when the splendor of Light takes form and illuminates not just a building, but the spirits of men, for light is properly the symbol of the spirit.

Was this brilliant light a coincidence or planned? That was the question asked by Dr. Ruben Mendoza, a California archaeologist at CSU Monterey Bay, who witnessed the event in 1997

after hearing about it from the parish priest there. Thus began his serious study of the early California missions.

In 2004 he realized that the same phenomenon took place on the date of the winter solstice in the Spanish Royal Presidio Chapel in Santa Barbara. The same unusual positioning of the church, on a bearing of 122 degrees east of north – several degrees offset from the mission's otherwise square footprint – was causing this illumination.



A brilliant display of light at Santa Barbara mission

That slight skewering of the quadrangle had been carefully designed by those early Franciscan architects who had sufficient knowledge of astronomy and geometry to align the Mission Church to have precisely that effect: to illuminate the Tabernacle on the day of the winter solstice.

According to Dr. Mendoza, Mission Santa Barbara's orientation is virtually identical to that of San Juan Bautista. A solstice illumination would have been particularly dazzling in Santa Barbara, he said, where the original altar was inlaid with polished local abalone shells.

Summer solstice illuminations

When Dr. Mendoza made his careful investigation at Mission San Carlos Borromeo in Carmel, [he discovered](#) it was also deliberately skewed off kilter in its plan, designed to illuminate during the midsummer solstice, which occurs on June 21.

On that date in the lovely Carmel Chapel, the rising sun shines through the Star of Bethlehem window in the front of the Church and makes an intense blaze of light over the altar, shining on the Tabernacle and crucifixion scene in today's carefully restored Mission.

In the 1700s, it was not the crucifixion scene over the altar, but the life-size statue of [Our Lady of Bethlehem](#). What a moving sight that must have been, Our Lady, the Mother of Christ and mankind, engulfed in the golden glow of the light of the sun on the longest day of the year.



Ruben G. Mendoza / CSU Monterey Bay

Carmel Mission summer solstice

The summer solstice was another symbolic date in the medieval Catholic world. The summer solstice, also called St. John's Eve, occurs on June 21, the longest day of the year, presaging the birth of St. John the Baptist on June 24.

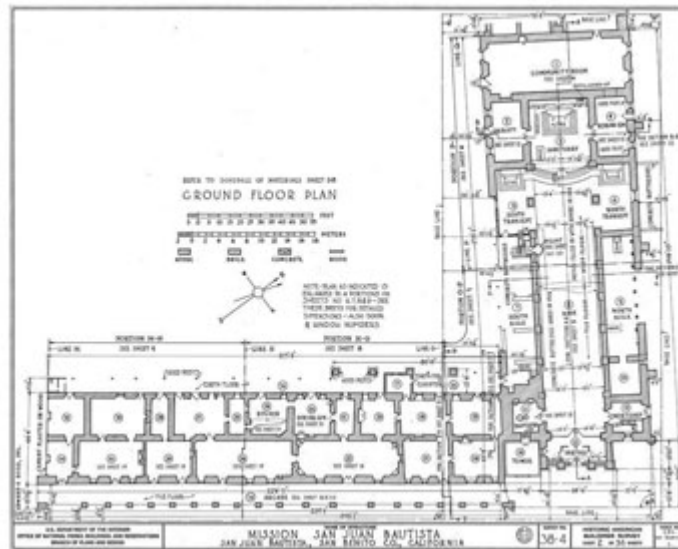
This has significance, for St. John Baptist was understood to be preparing the way for Christ, with St. John (3:30) stating: "He must increase, but I must decrease." This declaration is symbolized in the fact that the sun begins to diminish at the summer solstice. On the contrary at the winter solstice, the sun begins to increase.

Thus, John the Baptist's Mission representing the Old Testament should diminish while the light of the Redemption and the New Testament of Jesus Christ should increase and conquer the entire world.

Dr. Mendoza has documented that 12 missions in California are aligned to mark the winter or summer solstice. He also showed that the missions of San Miguel Arcángel and San José were oriented to illuminate altars on the Catholic Feast Days of Saint Francis of Assisi (October 4) and Saint Joseph (March 19), respectively.

At Mission Concepción, a solar illumination takes place in the evening of August 15, the Feast of the Assumption. At about 6:30 p.m., sunlight enters and illuminates the face of Our Lady in a

painting above the altar, while another beam of light shines into the dome of the Church onto the center of the cross-shaped building.



Plans for San Juan Bautista that mathematically explain how the solstice takes place

Light also enters one of the four small windows atop the Church's 54-foot-high dome and crosses the north altar on December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 12, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and December 21, the winter solstice.

The details of how the buildings are engineered to produce these solar illuminations of the Mission altars – like the one *at right* – offer evidence for the scientific mind of how and why these phenomena occur.

Of more interest to me is the medieval spirit that motivated those Franciscan missionaries to plan the illuminations, knowing as they did, that the Indians who believed the sun had godlike powers would interpret that light that illuminated the Tabernacle as a sign pointing to the One True God of the Catholic Church.

Indeed, it is a marvelous evidence we can still witness today: that the heavens tell the glory of God and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. (Ps 19:1)

The Catalá Crucifix

Elaine Jordan

One of the lesser known missionaries of the California Missions who deserves greater attention is Fr. Magin Catalá. Born in Montblanc in Catalonia, Spain, in 1761, he entered the Franciscans at age 16 and was ordained in 1785. Soon after, he volunteered to enter the mission fields in America.

For 36 years he labored with Fr. Jose Viader at the Santa Clara de Assis Indian mission, one of the chain of 21 missions in California established in this period. In his time, he was renowned for his many miracles and prophecies, as well as the exorcisms he performed. The Indians aptly called him 'The Holy Man of Santa Clara.'

Today you can still see the miraculous Catalá Crucifix before which he prayed for hours, frequently remaining there the whole night in prayer to his Lord on the Cross. The life size crucifix sets above a side altar in the restored Mission Church, which has become part of the campus of the University of Santa Clara, run by the Jesuits. In a metal casket close beside the Altar of the Crucifix, Fr. Catalá's remains are preserved.



Fr. Catala's crucifix at a side altar in the Church of the Mission Santa Clara

Several Indians heard the image of Our Lord speaking to his faithful servant from that Cross over the altar. Once, Our Lord leaned forward before the whole congregation to commend him during his preaching. On other occasions, eye-witnesses testified that the image of Christ leaned down from the crucifix to embrace the brown-robed Franciscan and to lift him above the ground.

In his book titled *Holy Man of Santa Clara*, Fr. Zephyrin Englehardt relates, "One day during Holy Week while kneeling before the Great Crucifix in the Church of Santa Clara, Jose Antonio Alviso and several other persons present heard Fr. Magin sigh aloud, "When, oh my God, shall I see Thy glory? How much longer shall my banishment last in this valley of tears?" "Suddenly Alviso heard Our Lord from the Cross answer, 'Soon you shall see God in glory.'"

Levitations

It was common talk among the Indians that these prayer vigils of Padre Magin were not without marvelous occurrences. Often the children would peep through the keyhole or the cracks in the front door of the Church in order to watch the holy man at prayer before the Altar of the Great Crucifix to see if they could see him raised up in the air.

In the process for his beatification made in 1884, six witnesses testified to seeing Fr. Catalá levitate, rising in the air to pray directly before the Crucified Christ. Thus Petra Pacheco Soto related that one day, when Fr. Viader could not find him, he was told that Fr. Catalá as usual was in the Church before the Crucifix. A messenger going to the Church discovered him raised up high in the air on the level of the Cross. The Savior had unfastened His hands from the Cross and was resting them on the shoulders of the holy man. This testimony was corroborated by Rufino Saiz, Berta Guadalupe, Antonia Flores and Encarnacion Soto.



The main nave of the restored Santa Clara Mission Church; *below*, the exterior



Another Indian of good character, Ignacio Alviso, stated that once when he went to call Fr. Magin Catalá for supper, he saw the holy man raised in the air embracing the Crucified Lord. When the holy friar noticed that he had been observed, he forbade Alviso to communicate to anyone what he had seen.

The Indian Egidio, who was with Fr. Magin in his last hours, testified that he had also seen the priest levitate and the Crucified Savior place His unfastened hands upon his shoulders. Rita Garcia testified that her grandmother, one of the colonists at the mission, used to often tell this story: A boy came running to her exclaiming, “Come see, the Father is kneeling in the air, and he does not fall.” She replied, “Take care! Do not go about telling lies! How can that be?”

The boy, seeing that she did not believe him, made the Sign of the Cross with his finger and then kissed it, thus indicating that he swore that he was telling the truth.

Pasquala of Mission Santa Ines

Elaine Jordan

In 1824 a young Indian girl named Pasquala from the Tulare tribe saved Mission Santa Ines from destruction. Her story is a symbol of the love of the Mission Indians for the Franciscan padres and the Catholic Faith.

Mission Santa Ines, the 19th of the California missions, was founded in 1804. It is located between San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara. A large number of the peaceful Chumash Indians from Mission Santa Barbara came to live in the new mission. Later, others from the fierce Tulare Indians joined them.



A sketch of the old Mission Santa Ines, founded in 1804

Under the wise direction of Father Uría, almost 700 hundred Indians came to live at Santa Ines in its village of white adobe huts. The padres directed the building of an irrigation system, which brought water from the mountains to the orchards and vineyards worked by the Indians. They also learned to make saddles and silver crafting.

Pasquale's parents had come to the mission when she was just a small child because she was very ill from food poisoning. They remained as neophytes to learn the Catholic Faith and live in the village there. Several years after their arrival, the Tulare Indians went on the warpath, stirred up by the shamans who resented the growing influence of the padres. One day they attacked the mission and killed Pasquale's father while he was working in the mission vineyards. They kidnapped Pasquala and her mother, whom they took to a Tulare village some miles away. Shortly afterwards, her mother died.

When Pasquala heard that the Tulares were planning a new, larger attack on the mission, she ran away from the village and walked for days through the rocky hills and valleys to reach the mission. When she arrived there, exhausted, she called out to Father Uria, "Padre! Padre! War! War!"

The friar ordered the people to safe quarters and prepared for the oncoming attack. Soldiers from the presidio fought off the Tulare Indians and kept them from destroying the mission.

The difficult journey to the mission was too much for Pasquala. Her remaining strength ebbed away and she died. To reward Pasquala's courage and loyalty, Father Uría buried the young Indian girl in the church courtyard, a high honor.

After Mexican Independence all of the padres were told to leave the missions and give the land to the Indians. Most of the missions fell apart and the land was taken from those Indians who had been protected by the padres.

Much later, in 1904, Father Alexander Buckler came to the ruins of Mission Santa Ines. He planned to stay for two weeks, but lived at the mission for twenty years. With tireless effort, he began the restoration of the mission. Today it stands as it did at the time of Father Uría.

In the graveyard behind the church you can see many unmarked Indian graves. But one name at least has survived, a placard dedicated to Pasquala telling her story stands in the verdant, well-manicured gardens of Mission Santa Ines, a testimonial to her courage and devotion.



A plaque, *above*, commemorates Pasquala's deed in the Mission gardens, *right*



An Indian Boy Learns His Prayers

Hugh O'Reilly

This is one of the extraordinary episodes recorded by Fr. Peter DeSmet at the first mission of the Flathead Indians in St. Mary's Mission in Bitter Root Valley, Montana.

The Flatheads had sent three expeditions to the Jesuit headquarters in St. Louis asking for "black robes" to instruct their people in the true God and religion. Finally, in 1840 Fr. DeSmet set out for the Rocky Mountain country where he was warmly received by the Flatheads. In 1841 he began to establish St. Mary's Mission on Bitterroot River.

At midnight Mass on Christmas Eve of that year, the new mission village of St. Mary was deemed worthy of a special mark of Heaven's favor.

An orphan boy had gone to the hut of a friend to learn the catechism and prayers that he had tried repeatedly to memorize but always failed. Fr. Point wrote that this little Flathead had "barely passed beyond the age of early childhood" and that he had such a poor memory that "in spite of all his efforts, he had been unable to learn what was rigorously required for the reception of the Sacrament of Baptism.



Fr. DeSmet with Indian guides on his way to Montana

The boy told Fr. DeSmet these words, which the Jesuit duly recorded:

"Upon entering Jean's hut, whither I had gone to learn my prayers, which I did not know, I saw someone who was very beautiful. Her feet did not touch the earth, her garments were as white as snow. She had a star over her head, and a serpent under her feet and near the serpent was a fruit which I did not recognize.

"I could see her heart, from which rays of light burst forth and shone upon me. When I first beheld all this I was frightened, but afterwards my fear left me. My heart was warmed, my head was clear and I do not know how it happened, but all at once I knew my prayers."

Fr. DeSmet wrote that the boy ended his account by saying that several times the same person appeared to him while he was sleeping, and that once she told him that she was pleased that the first village of the Flatheads should be called St. Mary.

Several persons interrogated the boy on the subject and found him unvarying in his answers without ever once contradicting himself. When the Fathers took him to their house, they showed him pictures, one of which was the Immaculate Conception, which he acknowledged to have been his teacher.

Needless to say, on Christmas Day he was admitted to the Sacrament of Baptism without difficulty and was given the name of Paul. He was called "Little Paul" to distinguish him from the great Chief who also had received that name. A total of 150 baptisms took place that Christmas Day, including 30 Indians and their chief from a neighboring friendly tribe, the Nez Perces.

Later, Brother Claessens made a chapel shrine and a pedestal for a statue of the Immaculate Conception carved by Fr. Point, another missionary priest, and every night after prayers, they went there to say three Hail Marys.

By his conduct, this boy was called the "angel of the tribes," Fr. DeSmet records. Two years after Little Paul had learned his prayers from Our Lady, he died a peaceful and holy death.



A colonial Spanish painting of the Immaculate Conception

Let None Dare Call it Liberty: The Catholic Church in Colonial America

Marian T. Horvat, Ph.D.

Relatively little attention has been paid to the relentless hostility toward the Catholics of our 13 English colonies in the period that preceded the American Revolution. Instead, historians have tended to concentrate only on the story of the expansion of the tiny Catholic community of 1785, which possessed no Bishop and hardly 25 priests, into the mighty organization we see today that spreads its branches from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

To show this progress of Catholicism is good and legitimate. But to avoid presenting the persecution the Church suffered in the pre-Revolution colonial period is to offer an incomplete or partial history. It ignores the early story of our Catholic ancestors. It would be like describing the History of the Church only after the Edict of Milan, when the Church emerged from the Catacombs, pretending there had never been a glorious but terrible period of martyrdom.

An optimistic view that conflicts with reality

It should not be surprising that this cloud of general omission concerning Catholicism in the colonial period (1600-1775) should have settled over the Catholic milieu given the optimistic accounts written by such notable Catholic historians as John Gilmary Shea, Thomas Maynard, Theodore Roemer, and Thomas McAvoy. (1) These historians, whose works provided the foundation for Catholic school history books up until recently (when a different kind of revisionist history is replacing them), only briefly acknowledge and downplay a period of repression and persecution of Catholics.

What they have stressed is what might be called the "positive" stage of Catholic colonial history that begins in the period of the American Revolution. This period has been glossed with an unrealistic interpretation that freedom of religion was unequivocally established and the bitter, deeply-entrenched anti-Catholicism miraculously dissolved in the new atmosphere of tolerance and liberty for all. This in fact did not happen.

Roots of a bad Ecumenism

Here I propose to dispel this myth that America was from its very beginning a country that championed freedom of religion. In fact, in the colonial period, a virulent anti-Catholicism reigned and the general hounding and harrying of Catholics was supported by legislation limiting their rights and freedom.



Cardinal James Gibbons was warned by Pope Leo XIII about Americanism

I think it is important for Catholics to know this in order to understand how this persecution affected the mentality of Catholics in America in its early history and generated a liberal way of behavior characterized by two different phases of accommodation to Protestantism:

First, both before and especially after the American Revolution, a general spirit of tolerance to a Protestant culture and way of life was made by some Catholics in order to be accepted in society. Such accommodation, I would contend, has continued into our days.

Second, to enter the realm of politics and avoid suspicions of being monarchists or "papists," colonial American Catholics were prepared to accept the revolutionary idea of the separation of Church and State as a great good not only for this country, but for Catholic Europe as well. Both civil and religious authorities in America openly proclaimed the need to abandon supposedly archaic and "medieval positions" in face of new conditions and democratic politics.

For these reasons, some hundred years after the American Revolution, Pope Leo XIII addressed his famous letter *Testem benevolentiae* (January 22, 1889) to Cardinal Gibbons, accusing and condemning the general complacency with Protestantism and the adoption of naturalist premises by Catholics in the United States. He titled this censurable attitude Americanism. Americanism, therefore, is essentially a precursory religious experience of bad Ecumenism made in our country, while at the same time Modernism was growing in Europe with analogous tendencies and ideas.

The partial presentation of colonial American history by so many authors helps to sustain that erroneous ecumenical spirit. I hope that showing the historic hatred that Protestantism had for Catholicism can serve to help snuff out this Americanist - that is, liberal or modernist - behavior among Catholics of our country.

A long history of anti-Catholicism

Although Catholicism was an influential factor in the French settlements of the Ohio and Mississippi valleys and later in the Spanish regions of Florida, the Southwest and California, Catholics were a decided minority in the original 13 English colonies. As we see in the first general report on the state of Catholicism by John Carroll in 1785, Catholics were a mere handful. He conservatively estimated the Catholic population in those colonies to be 25,000. Of this figure, 15,800 resided in Maryland, about 7,000 in Pennsylvania, and another 1,500 in New York. Considering that the population in the first federal census of 1790 totaled 3,939,000, the Catholic presence was less than one percent, certainly not a significant force in the original 13 British colonies. (2)

After several pages dedicated to Lord Baltimore's Catholic colony in Maryland, Catholic history books have tended to begin Catholic history in the United States with that critical year for both the nation and Catholicism - 1789. For 1789 marked both the formation of the new government under the Constitution and the establishment of an organizational structure for the American Catholic Church. The former event came with the inauguration of George Washington in April, the latter with the papal appointment of His Excellency John Carroll as the first Bishop of Baltimore in November.



Catholics were not welcome in the original 13 colonies.

The history of the Catholic Church in America, however, has much deeper and less triumphant roots. Most American Catholics are aware that the spirit of New England's North American settlements was hostile to Catholicism. But few are aware of the vigor and persistence with which that spirit was cultivated throughout the entire colonial period. Few Catholics realize that in all but three of the 13 original colonies, Catholics were the subject of penal measures of one kind or another during the colonial period. In most cases, the Catholic Church had been proscribed at an early date, as in Virginia where the act of 1642 proscribing Catholics and their priests set the tone for the remainder of the colonial period.

Even in the supposedly tolerant Maryland, the tables had turned against Catholics by the 1700s. By this time the penal code against Catholics included test oaths administered to keep Catholics out of

office, legislation that barred Catholics from entering certain professions (such as Law), and measures had been enacted to make them incapable of inheriting or purchasing land. By 1718 the ballot had been denied to Catholics in Maryland, following the example of the other colonies, and parents could even be fined for sending children abroad to be educated as Catholics.

In the decade before the American Revolution, most inhabitants of the English colonies would have agreed with Samuel Adams when he said (in 1768): "I did verily believe, as I do still, that much more is to be dreaded from the growth of popery in America, than from the Stamp Act, or any other acts destructive of civil rights." (3)

English hatred for the Roman Church

The civilization and culture which laid the foundations of the American colonies was English and Protestant. England's continuing 16th and 17th-century religious revolution is therefore central to an understanding of religious aspects of American colonization. Early explorers were sent out toward the end of the 15th century by a Catholic king, Henry VII, but actual settlement was delayed, and only in 1607, under James I, were permanent roots put down at Jamestown, Virginia. By then, the separation of the so-called Anglican church from Rome was an accomplished fact.

Rapid anti-Catholicism in England had been flamed by works like John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* illustrating some of the nearly 300 Protestants who were burned between 1555 and 1558 under Queen Mary I. The tradition was intensified by tales of the 1605 Gunpowder Plot, when a group of Catholics would have supposedly planned to blow up King James but for the scheme's opportune discovery and failure.



The supposed Catholic conspirators plotting to blow up the English Houses of Parliaments were publicly executed. Later, Jesuits were rounded up and killed also.

International politics were involved too. France and Spain were England's enemies, and they were Catholic. In 1570 Pope St. Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth I and declared her subjects released from their allegiance, which fanned English propaganda that Catholic subjects harbored sentiments of treason. (4)

In the 16th century, the English began their long, violent and cruel attempt to subdue the Catholics of Ireland. (5) The English were able "to resolve" any problem of conscience by convincing themselves that the Gaelic Irish Catholic Papists were an unreasonable and boorish people. Maintaining their false belief they were dealing with a culturally inferior people, the English Protestants imagined themselves absolved from all normal ethical restraints. This attitude persisted with their settlers in the American colonies. (6)

To these factors should be added the role of the Puritan sect. Its relationship with Catholics in colonial America represented the apotheosis of Protestant prejudice against Catholicism. Even though the so-called Anglican church had replaced the Church of Rome, for many Puritans that Elizabethan church still remained too tainted with Romish practices and beliefs. For various reasons, those Puritans left their homeland to found new colonies in North America. A major Puritan exodus to New England began in 1630, and within a decade close to 20,000 men and women had migrated to settlements in Massachusetts and Connecticut. (7) They were principal contributors to a virulent hatred of Catholicism in the American colonies.

The penal age: 1645-1763

Evidence of this anti-Catholic attitude can be found in laws passed by colonial legislatures, sermons preached by colonial ministers, and various books and pamphlets published in the colonies or imported from England. (8)

For example, even though no Catholic was known to have lived in Massachusetts Bay in the first 20 years or more of the colony's life, this did not deter the Puritan government from enacting an anti-priest law in May of 1647, which threatened with death "all and every Jesuit, seminary priest, missionary or other spiritual or ecclesiastical person made or ordained by any authority, power or jurisdiction, derived, challenged or pretended, from the Pope or See of Rome." (9)

When Georgia, the thirteenth colony, was brought into being in 1732 by a charter granted by King George II, its guarantee of religious freedom followed the fixed pattern: full religious freedom was promised to all future settlers of the colony "except papists," that is Catholics. (10)

Even Rhode Island, famous for its supposed policy of religious toleration, inserted an anti-Catholic statute imposing civil restrictions on Catholics in the colony's first published code of laws in 1719. Not until 1783 was the act revoked. (11)

To have an idea of how this prejudice against Roman Catholics was impressed even among the young, consider these "John Rogers Verses" from the New England Primer: "Abhor that arrant whore of Rome and all her blasphemies; Drink not of her cursed cup; Obey not her decrees." This age of penal restriction against Catholics in the colonies lasted until after the American Revolution.



By his dress, manner and spirit, the Puritan was an antithesis of the Catholic gentleman of the age

Someone recalling a lesson from his Catholic history classes might pose the objection: But what about the exceptions to this rule, that is, the three colonial states of Maryland, New York, and Pennsylvania, where tolerance for Catholics existed in the colonial period? Once again, this impression comes from a very optimistic and liberal writing of History rather than the concrete reality.

Catholicism in Maryland

The "Maryland Experiment" began when Charles I issued a generous charter to a prominent Catholic convert from Anglicanism, Lord Cecil Calvert, for the American colony of Maryland. In the new colony, religious tolerance for all so-called Christians was preserved by Calvert until 1654. In that year, Puritans from Virginia succeeded in overthrowing Calvert's rule, although Calvert regained control four years later. The last major political uprising took place in 1689, when the "Glorious Revolution" of William and Mary ignited a new anti-Catholic revolt in Maryland, and the rule of the next Lord Baltimore, Charles Calvert, was overthrown.

Therefore, in 1692 Maryland's famous *Religious Toleration Act* officially ended, and the Maryland Assembly established the so-called Church of England as the official State religion supported by tax levies. Restrictions were imposed on Catholics for public worship, and priests could be prosecuted for saying Mass. Although Catholics generally maintained their social status, they were denied the right to vote or otherwise participate in the government of the colony their ancestors had founded. (12) This barebones history is the real story of the famous religious liberty of colonial Maryland.



After the government of Lord Charles Calvert was overthrown in 1689, strong anti-Catholic politics were installed

The *Religious Toleration Law of 1649* establishing toleration for all religions in early Maryland has generally been interpreted as resulting from the fact that Cecil Calvert was a Roman Catholic. Catholic American histories commonly presented the foundation of Maryland as motivated by Calvert's burning desire to establish a haven for persecuted English Catholics. On the other side are Protestant interpretations that present Calvert as a bold opportunist driven by the basest pecuniary motives. (13)

More recent works have provided a much more coherent analysis of the psychology behind the religious toleration that Calvert granted. That is, Calvert was only following a long-standing trend of English Catholics, who tended to ask only for freedom to worship privately as they pleased and to be as inoffensive to Protestants as possible.

A directive of the first Lord Proprietor in 1633 stipulated, for example, that Catholics should "suffer no scandal nor offence" to be given any of the Protestants, that they practice all acts of the Roman Catholic Religion as privately as possible, and that they remain silent during public discourses about Religion. (15) In fact, in the early years of the Maryland colony the only prosecutions for religious offenses involved Catholics who had interfered with Protestants concerning their religion.

As a pragmatic realist, Calvert understood that he had to be tolerant about religion in order for his colony, which was never Catholic in its majority, to be successful. It was this conciliatory and compromising attitude the Calverts transplanted to colonial Maryland in the New World. Further, the Calverts put into practice that separation of Church and State about which other English Catholics had only theorized.

Catholicism in New York

Neither the Dutch nor English were pleased when the Duke of York converted to Roman Catholicism in 1672. His appointment of Irish-born Catholic Colonel Thomas Dongan as governor of the colony of New York was followed by the passage of a charter of liberties and privileges for Catholics. But the two-edged sword of Dutch/ English prejudice against the "Romanists" would soon re-emerge from the scabbard in which it had briefly rested.

After the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688, the virulently anti-Catholic Jacob Leisler spread rumors of "papist" plots and false stories of an impending French and Indian attack upon the English colonies, in which the New York colonial Catholics were said to be aligned with their French co-religionists. Leisler assumed the title of commander-in-chief, and by the end of the year he had overthrown Dongan and taken over the post of lieutenant governor of the colony as

well. His government issued orders for the arrest of all reputed "papists," abolished the franchise for Catholics, and suspended all Catholic office-holders. (16) The government after 1688 was so hostile to Catholics, noted Catholic historian John Ellis, "that it is doubtful if any remained in New York." (17)



Jacob Leisler fanned anti-Rome fears to take power in New York and then issued arrests for all "papists"

That very fact made all the more incongruous the severity of measures that continued to be taken against Catholics, which included the draconian law of 1700 prescribing perpetual imprisonment of Jesuits and "popish" messengers. This strong anti-Catholic prejudice persisted even into the federal period. When New York framed its constitution in 1777, it allowed toleration for all religions, but Catholics were denied full citizenship. This law was not repealed until 1806. (18)

The myth of religious toleration of Catholics in New York relies concretely, therefore, on that brief 16-year period from 1672 to 1688 when a Catholic was governor of the colony.

Catholicism in Pennsylvania

Due to the broad tolerance that informed William Penn's Quaker settlements, the story of Catholics in Pennsylvania is the most positive of any of the original 13 colonies. William Penn's stance on religious toleration provided a measured freedom to Catholics in Pennsylvania. The 1701 framework of government, under which Pennsylvania would be governed until the Revolution, included a declaration of liberty of conscience to all who believed in God. Yet a contradiction between Penn's advocacy of liberty of conscience and his growing concern about the growth of one religion - Roman Catholicism - eventually bore sad fruit.

To replace the liberal statutes that provided almost unrestricted liberty of conscience and toleration for those who believed in Christ, officials were required to fulfill the religious qualifications stated in the 1689 Toleration Act, which allowed Dissenters their own places of worship, teachers and preachers, subject to acceptance of certain oaths of allegiance. The act did not apply to Catholics, who were considered potentially dangerous since they were loyal to the Pope, a foreign power. Catholics were thereby effectively barred from public office. (19)

Despite the more restrictive government imposed by Penn after 1700, Catholics were attracted to Pennsylvania, especially after the penal age began in neighboring Maryland. Nonetheless, the Catholic immigrants to Pennsylvania were relatively few in number compared to the Protestants emigrating from the German Palatinate and Northern Ireland. A census taken in 1757 placed the total number of Catholics in Pennsylvania at 1,365. In a colony estimated to have between 200,000 and 300,000 inhabitants, the opposition against the few Catholics living among the Pennsylvania colonists is testimony to an historic prejudice, to say the least. (20)

Even in face of incessant rumors and several crises (e.g. the so-called "popish plot" of 1756), no extreme measures were taken and no laws were enacted against Catholics. A good measure of the prosperity of the Church in 1763 could be attributed to the Jesuit farms located at St. Paul's Mission in Goshehoppin (500 acres) and Saint Francis Regis Mission at Conewago (120 acres), which contributed substantially to the support of the missionary undertakings of the Church. (21) The history of the Jesuits has been called that of the nascent Catholic Church in the colonies, since no other organized body of Catholic clergy, secular or regular, appeared on the ground till more than a decade after the Revolution. (22)



Penn imposed restrictions on the rights of Catholics

Relaxation of anti-Catholicism in the revolutionary era

This phase of strong, blatant persecution of Catholicism came to a close during the revolutionary era (1763-1820). For various reasons, the outbreak of hostilities and the winning of independence forced Protestant Americans to at least officially temper their hostility toward Catholicism. With the relaxation of penal measures against them, Catholics breathed a great sigh of relief, a normal and legitimate reaction.

However, instead of maintaining a Catholic behavior consistent with the purity of their Holy Faith, many of them adopted a practical way of life that effectively ignored or downplayed the points of Catholic doctrine which Protestantism attacked. They also closed their eyes to the evil of the Protestant heresy and its mentality. Such an attitude is explained by the natural desire to achieve social and economic success; it is, nonetheless a shameless attitude with regard to the glory of God and the doctrine that the Catholic Church is the only true religion.

As this liberal Catholic attitude continued and intensified, it generated a kind of fellowship that developed among Catholics with Protestants as such. And so, an early brand of an experimental bad Ecumenism was established, where the doctrinal opposition between the two religions was undervalued and the emotional satisfaction of being accepted as Catholics in a predominantly Protestant society was overestimated.

These psychological factors help to explain the first phase of the establishment among our Catholics ancestors of that heresy which Pope Leo XIII called Americanism.

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Did George Washington Convert to Catholicism?

Marian T. Horvat, Ph.D.

An article by Ben Emerson has been making the rounds on the Internet lately. It claims that on his deathbed George Washington called for a Jesuit priest, Fr. Leonard Neale, from St. Mary's Mission across the Piscataway River. Then Washington, who had supposedly "been an Episcopalian," was baptized into the Roman Catholic Church. Emerson's article alleges, but provides no evidence, that "after Washington's death, a picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary and one of St. John were found among the effects on an inventory of articles at his home."



Hattie Burdette's portrait of Washington in his Masonic apron

The article also asserts the General used to make the Sign of the Cross before meals, based on the undocumented testament of his servant Juba. We are also told that "he slipped into a Catholic Church several times to attend Mass" – again, no proof or even testimony.

Another amazing unproven fact ends the piece: Washington was "a student of the writings on political philosophy of St. Robert Bellarmine and St. Thomas Aquinas." Together with Thomas Jefferson, he incorporated into the Constitution in 1787 some of the Saints' ideas in setting up the U.S. Republic. An incredible statement - indeed, all the more so as it comes to us without the indispensable evidence.

Did George Washington really convert and die a Roman Catholic?

Washington became a focal point in American history, and it is no wonder that some Catholics want to say that he converted. One can legitimately respect some of Washington's characteristics, such as his upright character, his admiration for the aristocracy, and his military courage.

However, such partial admiration should not lead one to deny the known historical facts and accept the myth that Washington secretly adhered to the Holy Faith and died a Catholic. There is simply no solid evidence for such claims. If an affirmation like this were to appear in any serious scholarly article, it would be called fraudulent and the whole work would lose its credibility.

While Washington and his family belonged to the Church of England, very early in life he seems to have begun that reduction of religion to a vague morality, like so many men whose careers

prospered in the Age of the Enlightenment. Washington was not a scholar – his formal education extended only to grammar school. It is doubtful he ever read St. Thomas Aquinas or St. Robert Bellarmine – which at that time would have been available only in Latin, a language he did not read well.

Washington was, however, ambitious. His knowledge of surveying and excellence in practical mathematics won him the favor of Lord Fairfax of Virginia, and the door to the “Old Society” opened to the gangling “country boy” ready to learn the ways of polite company. Not by coincidence, it was at this period - when his star began to rise - that George Washington was initiated into the Fredericksburg Lodge (Virginia) in 1752, and one year later was raised to Master Mason. In 1788 he was made Charter Master of the Alexandria Lodge No. 22 of Virginia. These are documented facts. (Check evidence [here](#))

It is also uncontested that President George Washington, dressed in Masonic attire, led a procession of Masonic officers and brethren to the site in the District of Columbia for the laying of the U.S. Capitol's cornerstone in 1793. The apron and sash worn by George Washington together with the trowel he used are today preserved in the Alexandria Washington Masonic Lodge. He remained a member and patron of “The Craft” – as Freemasonry is also called – his entire life, and 100 years after his death, the [George Washington Masonic Memorial](#) was built to commemorate him.



A mural in George Washington Masonic Memorial shows him in full Masonic attire laying the cornerstone of the US Capitol in 1793

In his [letters and addresses to Masonic bodies](#), Washington professed his profound esteem for their principles. In 1797, two years before his death, he addressed the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts with these words: "My attachment to the Society of which we are all members will dispose me always to contribute my best endeavors to promote the honor and prosperity of the Craft." Later in the same speech, he said that the Masonic institution was one whose liberal principles are founded on the immutable laws of truth and justice and whose grand object is to promote the happiness of the human race.

Only 13 months before his death, he declared to the Grand Lodge of Maryland, "So far as I am acquainted with the doctrines and principles of Freemasonry, I conceive them to be founded in benevolence, and to be exercised only for the good of mankind. I cannot, therefore, upon this ground, withdraw my approbation from it."

Some Catholic writers who try to “redeem” Washington claim his beliefs and behavior were actually based on the Stoic philosophy because of his self-admitted admiration for the Roman

Emperor Marcus Aurelius. However, anyone who considers the pagan “virtues” promoted by Freemasonry – the quest for wisdom, peace, toleration, perseverance and self-control – will note the similarity with tenets of Stoicism.

According to the Stoic philosophy, what counts is a man’s behavior, not his ideas. Before any situation of life the wise man - the model for the Stoic - was always calm and tolerant, refusing to show any emotion, which would distort his judgment. This would be the perfect man who lives according to Nature. To this fundamental religious indifferentism and moral tolerance of Stoicism, Freemasonry added a Deist principle - the Great Architect of the Universe or Eternal Reason - that would give a vague religious sense to the pagan way of life.

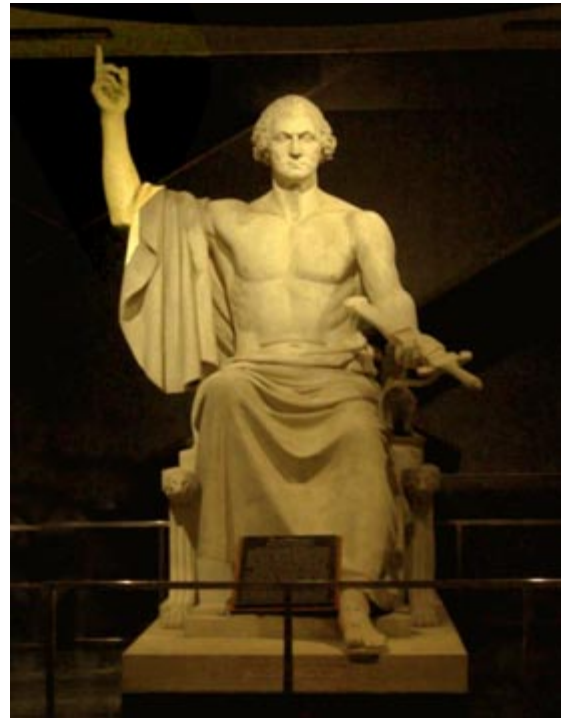
The two philosophies are very similar, and Masonry assumed part of Stoicism as its own. Therefore, when one asserts that Washington was a follower of Stoicism, he is in part correct. But he is also trying to make us swallow Masonry under the appearance of Stoicism.

Washington, like his more articulate contemporary and fellow-Freemason Jefferson, summarily rejected what they called “dogmaticism.” Like Jefferson, he was a Deist, a man who follows no particular religion but only acknowledges the existence of an impersonal God, without any articles of faith. He often spoke and wrote of the need to submit to the decrees of Providence. In Washington’s public addresses, he used the word Providence, not God. In his correspondence with the Masonic Lodges, he habitually refers to the Great Architect of the Universe. But nowhere does he mention Jesus Christ.

Washington appears to have died as he lived – faithful to his Masonic principles. His death is minutely described in the personal journal of Tobias Lear, his personal secretary for many years. He took no special leave of his family; he remained calm and without emotion, resigned to death - as any Master Mason would be.

An eye-witness account

New Hampshire's Tobias Lear, former secretary to the President, was on the scene during the long slow death of Washington on December 14, 1799 at Mount Vernon. His carefully written



The 12 ton statue of Washington in a Roman toga expresses his admiration for the pagan philosophy

account offers a detailed view of Washington's last moments. It is interesting to notice that nowhere does the fanciful fabrication of Ben Emerson enter this description. Here are Lear's words:

Doctor Dick came in about 3 o'clock, and Dr. Brown arrived soon after. Upon Dr. Dick's seeing and consulting a few minutes with Dr. Craik, he was bled again. ... About half past 4 o'clock he desired me to call Mrs. Washington to his bedside, when he requested her to go down into his room, and take from his desk two wills she would find there, and bring them to him, which she did. Upon looking at them he gave her one which he observed was useless, as being suppressed by the other, and desired her to burn it, which she did.

After this was done I returned to his bedside and took his hand. He said to me, "I find I am going, my breath cannot last long; I believed from the first that the disorder would prove fatal. Do you arrange & record all my late military letters & papers arrange my accounts and settle my books, as you know more about them than anyone else. Let Mr. Rawlins finish recording my other letters which he has begun." I told him this would be done. ...



Washington's death described in detail does not make any allusion to his conversion

About 5 o'clock Dr. Craik came again into the Room & upon going to the bedside, the General said to him, "Doctor, I die hard; but I am not afraid to go, I believed from my first attack, that I should not survive it; my breath cannot last long. The Doctor pressed his hand but did not utter a word. He retired from the bed side & sat by the fire absorbed in grief.

Between 5 & 6 o'clock Dr. Dick & Dr. Brown came into the room, and with Dr. Craik went to the bed; when Dr Craik asked him if he could sit up in bed. He held out his hand & I raised him up. He then said to the Physicians, "I feel myself going, I thank you for your attentions; but I pray you take no more trouble about me, let me go off quietly; I cannot last long."

They found that all which had been done was without effect; he laid down again, and all retired, excepting Dr. Craik. He continued in the same situation, uneasy & restless; but without complaining; frequently asking what hour it was. When I helped him move at this time he did not speak; but looked at me with strong expressions of gratitude.

About 8 o'clock the Physicians came again into the room & applied blisters and cataplasms of wheat bran to his legs & feet; after which they went out (except for Dr. Craik) without a ray of hope. ...

About 10 o'clock he made several efforts to speak to me before he could affect it, at length he said, "I am just going! Have me decently buried; and do not let my body to be put into the vault less than three days after I am dead. " I bowed assent, for I could not speak. He then looked at me again and said, "Do you understand me?" I replied Yes! " 'Tis well!" said he.

About 10 minutes before he expired (which was between 10 & 11 o'clock) he breathing [sic] became easier; he lay quietly; he withdrew his hand from mine, and felt his own pulse. I saw his countenance changed I spoke to Dr. Craik who sat by the fire; he came to the bed side. The General's hand fell from his wrist I took it in mine and put it into my bosom. Dr. Craik put his hand over his Eyes and he expired without a struggle or sigh.



Washington laying the cornerstone of the National Capitol
Another painting at George Washington Masonic National Memorial

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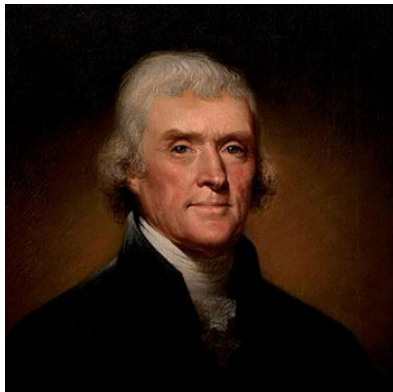
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Thomas Jefferson: Rationalist & Epicurean

Elizabeth A. Lozowski

Americans generally look up to Thomas Jefferson as an idol. His picture is featured on the \$2 bill, and a monument honoring him – one that strangely resembles the temples of the Greek gods – stands in our country's capitol. As a Founding Father of our country and the writer of the *Declaration of Independence*, I found myself asking, who really is this man? What were his beliefs and what was his aim in helping to found America?

The reality is often overlooked by many American Catholics, who, putting their place as American above that of being Catholic, like to claim that our Founding Fathers were all "good Christians" who based our government on Christian principles. As will be demonstrated in this series of articles, this supposition is far from the truth.



Thomas Jefferson grew up in the aristocratic circles of the American Colony of Virginia. He attended William and Mary College where he met Dr. William Small, a man who would have a great influence on the young revolutionary.



Jefferson writes in his autobiography: "It was my great good fortune, and what probably fixed the destinies of my life that Dr. Wm. Small of Scotland was then professor of Mathematics, a man profound in most of the useful branches of science, with a happy talent of communication, correct and gentlemanly manners & an enlarged & liberal mind. He, most happily for me, became soon attached to me & made me his daily companion when not engaged in the school; and from his conversation I got my first views of the expansion of science & of the system of things in which we are placed." (1)

Dr. William Small was a member of the Lunar Society, a membership attained through the recommendation of Benjamin Franklin. (2) This Society consisted of men devoted to the Enlightenment and the study of natural philosophy. Though not officially Freemasonic, many of its members had Masonic ties, e.g. Erasmus Darwin and James Watt, (3) both noteworthy for their contributions to modern society.

Erasmus Darwin developed his own theories of evolution before his grandson, Charles Darwin, popularized the theory with his infamous work. James Watt drastically changed the world by inventing the steam engine. From just these two examples, it is easy to see that the members of

the Lunar Society were aficionados of modern science who paved the way to the Industrial Revolution. (4)

It was this school of thought, built on Enlightenment principles and evolutionary theories, that contributed to Jefferson's formation. As a consequence, he was a devotee of modern science, which banished God to the outskirts of His creation, and of modern philosophy, which denied man's ability to attain knowledge of the truth.

Jefferson's models

In one of Jefferson's letters he mentions his "room being hung around with a collection of the portraits of remarkable men; among them were those of Bacon, Newton & Locke... They were my trinity of the three greatest men the world had ever produced." (5) It seems that Jefferson, who rejected the Holy Trinity, found another "trinity" to worship – three men who helped to destroy Christendom and replace it with the modern world.



Jefferson's models - Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton & John Locke

None of Jefferson's "trinity" were Catholic, either in thought or deed. In fact, they all despised the Catholic Church and the civilization she built: Francis Bacon, who became Lord Chancellor of England and Viscount of Alban in the time of James VI of Scotland, favored Puritanism and adamantly advocated for the execution of the very Catholic Mary Queen of Scots. (6)

Sir Isaac Newton rejected the Catholic Church, denying the divinity of Christ and the doctrine of the Holy Trinity along with many other truths of the Faith. In his copious theological research, he reinterpreted Holy Scripture and studied the supposed evolution of Christianity from shortly after Christ's death to modern times.

He considered himself to be one of the few pure Christians in the world and awaited the day when the Church of England would, following his example, become "enlightened." In

his *Memoirs of Newton*, John Conduitt names Newton “a Savior to mankind ... who was to introduce a freedom of thinking & to teach men not to give up their reason to any System howsoever dignified or established.” (7)

John Locke, a close friend of Newton, shared many of his religious beliefs. The two friends were particularly insistent upon religious tolerance and freedom of religion, claiming that a truly Christian nation would have no form of prejudice or persecution against differences of opinion concerning religion. Additionally, Locke developed the theory of Empiricism, in which every man could judge for himself what is morality and truth. He went so far as to say that we must judge the actions of Jesus Christ in relation to our own self-examination.



John Locke's thinking was embedded in the *Constitution & Declaration of Independence*

Jefferson adopted Locke's ideas as if they were his own, an attitude evident in his letters and writings. In a 1787 letter to his nephew and ward, Peter Carr, Jefferson offered the following advice: "Fix Reason firmly in her seat, and call to her tribunal every fact, every opinion. Question with boldness even the existence of a God; because, if there be one, he must more approve the homage of reason than of blindfolded fear. ...

"Do not be frightened from this inquiry by any fear of its consequences. If it end in a belief that there is no God, you will find incitements to virtue in the comfort and pleasantness you feel in its exercise and in the love of others which it will procure for you... Your own reason is the only oracle given you by heaven, and you are answerable not for the rightness but uprightness of the decision." (8)

It is apparent that the only god Jefferson worshiped was the god of reason, the logical consequence of following Locke's principles. Further, in a letter to Francis Hopkinson, Jefferson states: "I never submitted the whole system of my opinions to the creed of any party of men whatever in religion, in philosophy, in politics or in anything else where I was capable of thinking for myself. Such an addiction is the last degradation of a free and moral agent." (9)

Thus he religiously followed his own limited reason, deeming himself above Divine Revelation and more capable of discovering the meaning of life than any other man. It is the pride of an "enlightened man," who foolishly thinks that he does not need God. Ironically, Jefferson, who pretended not to have submitted his opinions to any man, clearly looked to Locke as a mentor and adopted his language and thinking.

In fact, the *Declaration of Independence* is very similar to Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, so closely did Jefferson follow the teachings of one member of his models. The



The Epicureans were concerned with happiness on this earth; the model for Jefferson's pursuit of happiness

same founding document also contains a peculiar phrase that betrays Jefferson's own philosophy of life: Replacing Locke's right to property as an inherent right of man, he inserted "the pursuit of happiness." This is the philosophy of an Epicurean.

Jefferson admitted his adherence to this philosophy in a letter to William Short: "As you say of yourself, I too am an Epicurean. I consider the genuine (not the imputed) doctrines of Epicurus as containing everything rational in moral philosophy which Greece & Rome have left us." (10)

The same letter includes as a kind of postscript "[A Syllabus of the doctrines of Epicurus](#)." The universe, according to this syllabus, is eternal with interchangeable parts, consisting of "matter and void alone." "Gods" are superior beings who enjoy happiness in their own sphere and do not meddle with the concerns of Earth.

The goal of life is happiness, which can be obtained through the practice of virtue and pleasure, with the absence of bodily pain to obtain peace of mind. Desire and fear must be avoided because they disturb happiness. Above all, "man is a free agent."

It is evident that these doctrines are not compatible with the Catholic Faith. Pleasure is not the end of life. On the contrary, Catholics should have a desire to suffer in imitation of Our Lord, that we might follow Him on the royal road of the Cross and merit eternal salvation.

A form of government that has as one of its underlying principles "the pursuit of pleasure" is destined to fail. For, if every man has a right to his own happiness, no one can prevent him from offending God in that pursuit. America was thus destined to end as it is today: with full rights for every man to do as he pleases, whether he wishes to change his gender or abort a child.

As Catholics, we must reject the teachings of Epicurus and Locke, and, for this reason, we should also question Jefferson's principles which denied the divinity of Christ and were against the authority and doctrine of the Catholic Church.

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Jefferson's Hatred for the Catholic Church

Elizabeth A. Lozowski

In my [last article](#), I demonstrated how the beliefs of Thomas Jefferson were founded on Bacon, Newton, Locke and Epicurus. In this article, I hope to expose his malice towards the True Faith and show just how opposed his views of government are to the Catholic view on this matter.



Jefferson held up as an American idol

Thomas Jefferson made no attempt to hide his hatred for the Holy Catholic Church, which he deemed to be the enemy of any free man. Pretending to admire the teachings of Our Lord, he interpreted them to suit his own selfish ideals and worldly interests.

His false respect for the person of Christ is shown in his blasphemous scorn of Christ's Divinity, which can be verified in the quotes that follow.

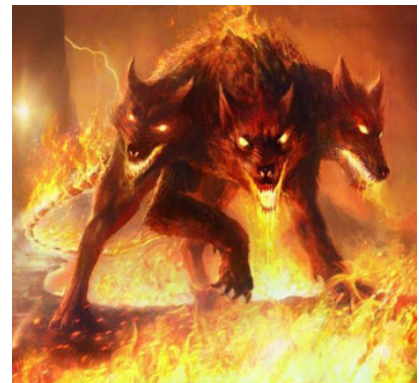
In a letter addressed to John Adams on January 24, 1814, Jefferson states that "**the whole history of these books [the Gospels] is so defective and doubtful** that it seems vain to attempt minute enquiry into it: and such tricks have been played with their text, and with the texts of other books relating to them, that we have a right, from that cause, to entertain much doubt what parts of them are genuine.

"In the New Testament there is internal evidence that parts of it have proceeded from an extraordinary man; and that other parts are of the fabric of very inferior minds. It is as easy to separate those parts, as **to pick out diamonds from dunghills.**" (1)

In another later letter to John Adams on April 11, 1823, Jefferson specifies what he means by "defective and doubtful" history:

"And **the day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the supreme being as his father in the womb of a virgin, will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter.**

"But may we hope that the dawn of reason and freedom of thought in these United States will **do away with this artificial scaffolding**, and restore to us the primitive and genuine doctrines of this most venerated reformer of human errors." (2)



Jefferson compares God to the three headed monster Cerberus

In another of his writings, he compares the Holy Trinity to the monstrous Cerberus: "**The hocus-pocus phantasm of a God, like another Cerberus, with one body and three heads**, had its birth and growth in the blood of thousands and thousands of martyrs." (3)

The god & bible of Jefferson

If Thomas Jefferson so scorns the True God, who could he possibly mean by "the Creator" and "Nature's God," to which he refers in the *Declaration*?

Indeed, the god to which he refers is not the Catholic God, for he speaks of the God of the New Testament and the God of the Old as if they are two different beings: one evil and the other good.

Deciding for himself what was true or false in Holy Scriptures, he used his razor to cut out passages and whole pages from the Bible and wrote *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*. Essentially it is "*Jefferson's Bible*," as it came to be called: a bible without miracles or the Resurrection and without the entire Old Testament.

On August 4, 1820, Jefferson wrote a letter to William Short in which he scorns Moses and the "empty rituals of the Old Testament," rituals that prefigured the rules and rites of the Catholic Church:

"[Jesus'] object was the reformation of some articles in the religion of the Jews, as taught by Moses. **That sect had presented for the object of their worship a being of terrific character, cruel, vindictive, capricious and unjust. ...**

"Moses had bound the Jews to many idle ceremonies, mummeries and observances of no effect towards producing the social utilities which constitute the essence of virtue. Jesus exposed their futility and insignificance. The one [i.e., Moses] instilled into his people the most anti-social spirit towards other nations; the other [Jesus] preached philanthropy and universal charity and benevolence.

"The office of reformer of the superstitions of a nation is ever dangerous. **Jesus had to walk on the perilous confines of reason and religion: and a step to right or left might place him within the grip of the priests of the superstition, a bloodthirsty race, as cruel and remorseless as the being whom they represented as the family God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, and the local God of Israel.**" (4)



Jefferson [rewrote](#) the Bible excluding the divinity of Jesus Christ

In his writing of April 21, 1803, *Doctrines of Jesus Compared with Others*, Jefferson spoke thus about Our Lord: "According to the ordinary fate of those who attempt to enlighten and reform mankind, [Jesus] fell **an early victim to the jealousy and combination of the altar and the throne.**" (5)



For Jefferson Jesus was just an exceptional man who reformed a bad religion

As can be determined from the above quotes, Jefferson considered Our Lord to be no more than a reformer who had extraordinary natural qualities and taught a good moral doctrine that was distorted by His followers. In his mind, Our Lord would simply be a precursor to the Enlightenment thinkers, like Jefferson, who would have perfected His ideas.

Additionally, Jefferson's claim that Jesus was a "victim of the altar and the throne" shows his disdain for the established Church – the true Jewish Synagogue established by God in the Old Testament – and the secular authority that was hierarchical in nature – the Roman Empire.

In Christendom, the altar became the Holy Catholic Church and the throne became the Holy Roman German Empire. These two building blocks of Catholic Civilization were the object of Jefferson's most intense hatred. As a principle writer of the Founding documents, it is not surprising that Jefferson imbued this distaste for the altar and throne into every document and every principle that he set forth for the new nation.

Priests as the enemies of Liberty

Yet Jefferson's hatred of the Church did not stop there. He directs more attacks against priests, who, in his view, undermine the rights of man. The priest, particularly the Catholic priest, was the enemy of his most-prized liberty.

Writing to Dr. Benjamin Rush in a letter dated September 23, 1800, Jefferson stated:

"The clergy ... believe that any portion of power confided to me [as President] will be exerted in opposition to their schemes. And they believe rightly: For **I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.**" (6)



Jefferson scorns the power of the priest

Now what is this tyranny other than the claim of Truth, which the Catholic Church wields over men? For any claim to Truth that forbids "free-thought" Jefferson brands as tyranny. And upon which altar do we suppose Jefferson is swearing? Certainly it is not a Catholic altar.

Jefferson further indicates his disdain for priests and those who follow them in a letter to Alexander von Humboldt on December 6, 1813:

"That they [Mexicans] will throw off their European dependence I have no doubt; but in what kind of government their revolution will end I am not so certain. **History, I believe, furnishes no example of a priest-ridden people maintaining a free civil government.** This marks **the lowest grade of ignorance**, of which their civil as well as religious leaders will always avail themselves for their own purposes." (7)

Again, in a letter to Horatio G. Spafford on March 17, 1814, Jefferson claims: "**In every country and in every age, the priest has been hostile to liberty.**" (8)

Addressing William Short on April 13, 1820, Jefferson bemoans the fact that mankind will never improve with the existence of priests: "**The serious enemies are the priests of the different religious sects, to whose spells on the human mind its improvement is ominous.**" (9)



Jefferson proposes we all live like Quakers following 'the oracle of conscience'

Finally, Jefferson writes to John Adams in 1813: "**We should all then, like the Quakers, live without an order of priests, moralize for ourselves, follow the oracle of conscience**, and say nothing about what no man can understand, nor therefore believe; for I suppose belief to be the assent of the mind to an intelligible proposition." (10)

A liberal society can only exist without the Catholic Church

The ideal government and American society that Jefferson had in mind was a society devoid of priests: An individualistic society where each man would decide for himself what is right or wrong.

How can a nation founded on such principles be said to be founded on Christian principles? The very principles and prerequisites for Jefferson's liberty demand a people who are not obedient to Church doctrine and follow their own ideas instead. On the other hand, a Catholic nation would be opposed to the revolutionary liberty of conscience, because, with the teaching of the Church, all people would obey the Catholic Faith rather than their own consciences .



A ridiculous depiction of Jesus Christ 'inspiring' the *Declaration*

We can be assured of Jefferson's stance in his final testimony in the last letter he penned, written to Roger C. Weightman on June 24, 1826:

"May it be to the world, what I believe it will be (to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all) the signal of arousing men to burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self-government.

"All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God." (11)

Need we further proof that Jefferson was not friend of Catholics? It is not possible to claim that the *Declaration* was founded on Christian principles if the man who wrote it was so opposed to true liberty – the liberty of the Catholic who obeys his Holy Mother the Church in all things.

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9. See her<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/98-01-02-1218>
10. See her<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-06-02-0446>
11. See here <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/declara/rcwltr.html>

Was Jefferson Inspired by St. Robert Bellarmine?

Elizabeth A. Lozowski

Before moving on to the next Founding Father, it is necessary to refute a common error of Catholics regarding the *Declaration of Independence*. Many allege that Thomas Jefferson was inspired by the teachings of St. Robert Bellarmine and, consequently, Thomas Aquinas, in his drafting of this highly praised document.

Thus, they come to the conclusion of Dr. Matthew Bunson, who [writes](#) in the *National Catholic Register*: “If, then, Jefferson was influenced by Bellarmine, the author of the *Declaration* was also shaped by Aquinas and the whole of the Catholic intellectual tradition. **And so, too, was America’s chosen form of government.**”

According to these Catholics, the United States of America is the most Catholic form of government that has ever existed in the history of the world. If that be so, one can only wonder why the governments of Christendom (comprised mostly of monarchies and aristocracies) that were directly under the Church’s guidance are excluded from this boast.

'All men are created equal'

The first proof offered to demonstrate that Jefferson was inspired by Bellarmine is the phrase “all men are created equal.” Supposedly, Bellarmine was ahead of his time in making this statement. However, upon analyzing the actual texts of the Doctor of the Church, a completely different idea of equality than that proposed in the *Declaration* is found.

The quote of Bellarmine that resembles the phrase quoted above is clearly taken out of context, as follows:

“When he [St. Gregory] says, ‘All men are equal by nature, but are made unequal by sin, and therefore one should be ruled over by another,’ **he does not mean that men by nature are equal in wisdom or in grace, but equal in essence and in human form, from which equality he rightly infers that one should not be dominated over by another, as man dominates over the beasts, but only that one should be ruled over politically by another.**”



Some Catholics pretend Jefferson was influenced by St. Robert Bellarmine

“Hence, in the same place he adds: ‘For it is against nature to act proudly or to wish to be feared by one’s equals; for, truly, by sin sinners are made like to beasts; and they fall from that integrity of nature in which they were created.’ Therefore St. Gregory says in the same place that after the first sin one man rightly began to dominate over another with threats and punishments inspiring terror, which would not have been the case in the state of original justice.” (1)



‘All men are created equal’ is used to obliterate monarchies as unjust

It seems strange that this is the quote used to refute hierarchy and kingship, since St. Gregory and St. Bellarmine clearly assert that the lesser gifted man should be ruled over by the greater. Indeed, Bellarmine wrote the treatise to counter the Anabaptist heresy that was promoting the idea that Christians should not exercise magisterial powers.

To equate the above quote with the phrase from the *Declaration of Independence* that “all men are created equal” is far-fetched, to say the least. And to think that Bellarmine was “ahead of his times” for repeating what St. Gregory stated 1,000 years earlier is absurd.

As the Church has always taught, all men are equal in essence, which is their human nature, and through Baptism, where men are adopted as the children of God. This equality, however, does not extend to the accidents of each man's life, which are necessarily different and create justifiable inequalities in many aspects of life. These inequalities require differentiated treatments.

The Church Doctor affirms inequality as a principle of the universal order established by God. If all men were truly equal in the sense that the revolutionaries use the word, Our Lady would not be the Queen of Heaven and Earth, nor would there be varying degrees of glory in Heaven.

Indeed, Bellarmine asserts in the same chapter that, even in the Paradise before original sin, there would have been many inequalities among men, who would have been ruled by a superior person:

“For even if servile subjection began after the sin of Adam, nevertheless **there would have been political government even while man was in the state of innocence. And this is proved, firstly, because even then man would have been by nature a political and social animal, and hence would have had need of a ruler.**

“*Secondly*, from Creation itself; because for that reason God made woman from man, and did not create many men at the same time, but only one, from whom all others were to be born; **so that**

He might show the order and supremacy which He wished to exist among men, as St. Chrysostom observes.

"Thirdly, since in that state of innocence there would have been inequality of the sexes, of height, of strength, of wisdom and of virtue, therefore, both supremacy and subjection; for in human society there should be order. But right order demands that the inferior be ruled over by the superior, the woman by the man, the younger by the older, the less wise by the more wise, the less good by the better; moreover, the fact that these diversities would have existed even then may be shown in this way." (2)

A government's powers derive from the consent of the governed

This should suffice to refute the first "self evident truth," so let us go on to discuss the second "self evident truth": "that, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

St. Robert Bellarmine yet again refutes this claim: "But in this place other matters should be noted. *First, political power considered in general, not descending in particular to Monarchy, Aristocracy or Democracy, comes directly from God alone;* for this follows of necessity from the nature of man, since that nature comes from Him Who made it.



The Church blesses the power of Kings to rule; *above*, Pope Leo III crowns Charlemagne Emperor

"Besides, this power derives from the Natural Law, **since it does not depend upon the consent of men; for, willing or unwilling, they must be ruled over by someone, unless they wish the human race to perish, which is against a primary instinct of nature.**

"But Natural Law is Divine Law; therefore, government was instituted by Divine Law, and this seems to be the correct meaning of St. Paul when he says: 'He that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.' (3)

"Note, *secondly*, that this power resides, as in its subject, immediately in the whole State, for this power is by Divine Law, but Divine Law gives this power to no particular man; therefore Divine Law gives this power to the collected body. Furthermore, in the absence of positive law, there is no good reason why, in a multitude of equals, one rather than another should dominate...

“Note, *in the third place*, that, by the same Natural Law, this power is delegated by the multitude to one or several, for the State cannot of itself exercise this power therefore, it is held to delegate it to some individual, or to several, and this authority of rulers considered thus in general is both by Natural Law and by Divine Law. **Nor could the entire human race assembled together decree the opposite, that is, that there should be neither rulers nor leaders.**” (4)

Bellarmino makes it very clear that the power of a government **does not come from the people, but from God**. Although he affirms that the power rests in the whole State, he at the same time declares that, according to Natural and Divine Law, the power does not depend upon the consent of the people.

Further on, Bellarmine writes another statement that may seem to support the *Declaration* if read on its own. However, when placed in context with the first three points made above, one can easily see that Bellarmine’s reasoning was not revolutionary. He states:



Bellarmino: Even in Paradise there would have been inequalities!

“Note, *in the fourth place*, that **individual forms of government in specific instances derive from the law of nations, not from the Natural Law**, for, as is evident, **it depends on the consent of the people to decide whether kings, or consuls, or other magistrates are to be established in authority over them**; and, if there be **legitimate cause**, the people can change a kingdom into an aristocracy, or an aristocracy into a democracy, and vice versa, as we read was done in Rome.” (5)

Thus, while Bellarmine asserts that people must consent to be governed, he does not prescribe this to the law of nature or to the Divine Law (both of which establish the authority of rulers, see third point in Chapter VI), but rather to the law of nations, the law that occurs due to the circumstances of various governments.

The partisans of the American form of government use the last part of Bellarmine’s fourth point to justify the third “self evident truth” – “that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.”

Although Bellarmine admits that the people may change their form of government for a legitimate cause, he does not state that it is a right of the people to do so, only that it is acceptable according to the Law of Nations. The *Declaration* claims that a government can – and

not only can but must – be overthrown if it “becomes destructive of these ends,” namely securing the rights of mankind to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

According to St. Bellarmine, government is necessary based on Natural Law and its reason for existence is to create order and to labor for the common good. Securing the rights of mankind is never mentioned.

He writes: “Political rule is so natural and necessary to the human race that it cannot be withdrawn without destroying nature itself ... It is impossible for a multitude to hold together for any length of time unless there be one who governs it, and who is responsible for the common welfare ...

"Finally, society is order among many, for a disorderly and scattered multitude is not called society; moreover, **what is order other than a certain succession of inferiors and superiors? Therefore, rulers have been necessarily ordained, if society is to endure.**” (6)



Bellarmino also defends the right of the husband to rule the wife

Read in context, Bellarmine’s view of government is quite different from that of the Founding Fathers. Indeed, it must be, for the Catholic view of government is not revolutionary in any way. To take the great St. Bellarmine out of context in order to support a revolutionary secular and anti-clerical form of government is to do a great injustice to the Saint, who was a faithful son of the Church.

May the dawn soon come when the true ideals of government are again implanted throughout the whole world and these liberal philosophies are entirely abolished, allowing societies to flourish organically. Now is the time for all Catholics to return to the true teachings of St. Robert Bellarmine and leave behind the revolutionary doctrine of Thomas Jefferson.

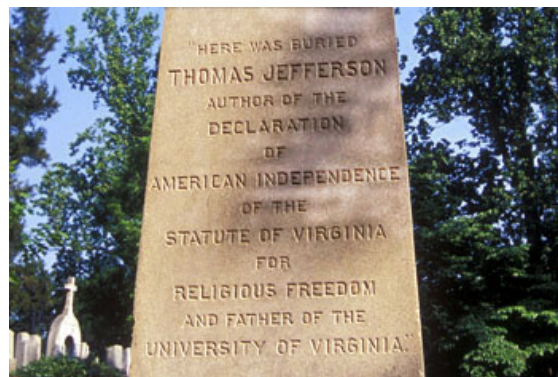
1. The quote refers to one of St. Gregory the Great’s writings (another Saint wrongly exploited by the Americanists) and is found in St. Robert Bellarmine’s *De Laicis* – Chapter VII, [see here](#).
2. See [here](#).
3. *De Laicis*, Chap. VI. “The Same Inference is Drawn From The Efficient Cause,” see [here](#)
4. See [here](#)
5. *De Laicis*, Chap. V. “The Same is Deduced from the End of Political Power”, see [here](#)

Religious Liberty in the Minds of Jefferson & Washington

Elizabeth A. Lozowski

Perhaps two of the most adamant supporters of religious liberty among the Founding Fathers were Thomas Jefferson and George Washington, two friends who successfully undermined a basic principle of Catholic Civilization – the rights and authority of the Catholic Church.

After writing the *Declaration of Independence*, Jefferson used his influence in Virginia, where he became the second governor in 1779. In this position, Governor Jefferson assiduously drafted the *Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom*, which passed as state legislature in 1786. This Statute, being the first of its kind, was used as a basis for the First Amendment of the Constitution that protects the "right" to religious liberty.



Jefferson's tomb, a proud defender of religious liberty & open enemy of priests & the Catholic Church

Jefferson was very proud of both of the documents he penned, having his tombstone engraved with the words “Author of the *Declaration of American Independence*, of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, and Father of the University of Virginia.”

In writing Virginia's Statute, Jefferson explained: "Where the preamble declares, that coercion is a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion, an amendment was proposed by inserting 'Jesus Christ,' so that it would read 'A departure from the plan of Jesus Christ, the holy author of our religion;' the insertion was rejected by the great majority, **in proof that they meant to comprehend, within the mantle of its protection, the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and Mohammedan, the Hindoo [sic] and Infidel of every denomination.**" (1)

A champion of tolerance & freedom of conscience

Jefferson's stance on religious liberty was not limited to the Statute, for he always vehemently opposed any type of "religious tyranny" and ardently supported freedom of conscience, as is evident in the following quotes:

- "Millions of innocent men, women and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined and imprisoned; yet we have not advanced one inch towards uniformity. What has been the effect of coercion? **To make one half the world fools, and the other half hypocrites. To support roguery and error all over the earth.**" (2)

- **"I never will by any word or act, bow to the shrine of intolerance.** I never had an opinion in politics or religion which I was afraid to own; a reserve on these subjects might have procured me more esteem from some people, but less from myself." (3)
- **"Religion is well supported;** of various kinds, indeed, **but all good enough;** all sufficient to preserve peace and order: They [Pennsylvania and New York] are not more disturbed with religious dissensions. On the contrary, their harmony is unparalleled, and can be ascribed to nothing but their **unbounded tolerance, because there is no other circumstance in which they differ from every nation on earth.** They have made the happy discovery, that **the way to silence religious disputes is to take no notice of them.** Let us too give this experiment fair play, and get rid, while we may, of those tyrannical laws." (4)
- "Believing with you that **religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God,** that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, **I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between church and state.**" (5)
- **"I am for freedom of religion, and against all maneuvers to bring about a legal ascendancy of one sect over another."** (6)
- "In our early struggles for liberty, **religious freedom could not fail to become a primary object.**" (7)
- "On the contrary, we are bound, you, I, and everyone, **to make common cause, even with error itself, to maintain the common right of freedom of conscience.**" (8)



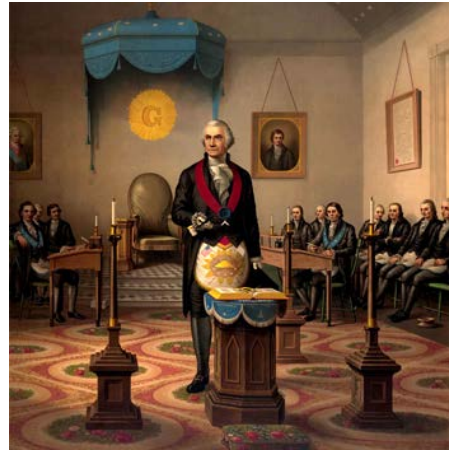
The myth of the 'Christian' founders dominates, but is not based in reality

To the person infected with American ideas, these quotes may not seem radical. However, they are in direct conflict with the very heart of our Catholic Faith. Error should have no right, for freedom to do evil is not true freedom at all. The traditional Magisterium of the Church has supported this teaching through the centuries (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)).

It is apparent that Jefferson, who had no concern for the salvation of souls, held Liberty dearer than Truth itself. Yet, though he professed freedom of religion, this liberty only applies to those whose consciences dictate tolerance and relativism. A person whose conscience forces him to defend the truth of the Catholic Church and Catholic Civilization could not be given freedom of conscience since Jefferson's goal is to be free of such people in this new nation.

An ally for religious liberty: 'the old fox' Washington

An unlikely friend of Jefferson was George Washington, the “old fox” who has deceived the world into thinking he was a "good Christian." Most of our readers must be familiar with the famous painting of George Washington kneeling in the woods, decked in his war apparel, presumably beseeching God to bless the Revolution.



In fact, Washington never knelt in prayer, but he often donned his masonic apron

The real George Washington has nothing to do with this Protestant myth, for he refused to ever kneel in church and never confessed belief in Our Lord Jesus Christ. (9) Jefferson affirms this in his *Autobiography* entry for February 1:

“Feb. 1. Dr. Rush tells me that he had it from Asa Green that when the clergy addressed Genl. Washington on his departure from the govt., it was observed in their consultation that he had never on any occasion said a word to the public which showed a belief in the Xn [Christian] religion and they that they should so pen their address as to force him at length to declare publicly whether he was a Christian or not. They did so.

"However he observed **the old fox was too cunning for them. He answered every article of their address particularly except that, which he passed over without notice.** Rush observes he never did say a word on the subject in any of his public papers except in his valedictory letter to the Governors of the States when he resigned his commission in the army, wherein he speaks of the benign influence of the Christian religion. I know that Gouverneur Morris, who pretended to be in his secrets & believed himself to be so, has often told me that **Genl. Washington believed no more of that system than he himself did.**” (10)

With this in mind, it is no wonder that George Washington was an advocate of religious liberty. An organization founded in 2009, the [George Washington Institute for Religious Liberty](#), documents well the evidence for the first President’s beliefs.

Throughout the course of his Presidency, Washington addressed several different religious leaders and organizations, promising to uphold their rights to believe as they wished. The reader may find George Washington's plethora of letters to various religious institutions [here](#).

Shortly after his election, President Washington, accompanied by Thomas Jefferson, delivered one of his most notable letters in person to the Jews of Rhode Island. Washington's "Letter to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island" states the following:

"It is now no more that toleration is spoken of as if it were the indulgence of one class of people that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights, for, happily, the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens in giving it on all occasions their effectual support ...

"May the children of the stock of Abraham who dwell in this land continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants – **while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree and there shall be none to make him afraid.** May the father of all mercies scatter light, and not darkness, upon our paths, and make us all in our several vocations useful here, and in his own due time and way everlastingly happy." (11)



The two friends shared the same aims regarding a State founded on religious liberty

Before his visit, the Jews had written Washington a letter penned by an influential Jew, Moses Seixas, which bemoaned their former deprivations of their rights as citizens, and praised the new Government "without bigotry," affording "Liberty of conscience" to all.

"This so ample and extensive Federal Union whose basis is philanthropy, mutual confidence and public virtue," Seixas concluded, "we cannot but acknowledge to be the work of the Great God, who ruleth in the Armies of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the Earth, doing whatever seemeth him good. (12)

Moses Seixas was a Jewish Freemason, a member of the same lodge as Washington; thus the two shared a brotherhood. He later rose to the degree of Deputy Grand Master for two years, and finally on June 22, 1802, Seixas was elected Grand Master at the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Rhode Island's annual meeting. (13)

For those who still believe that the Founding of America was Catholic, let them study well the above letter. The Jewish sect has never aligned itself with any Christian government, but has rather always fought to undermine the Catholic Church and her influence on society, as

demonstrated in Msgr. Delassus' excellent work *Americanism and The Anti-Christian Conspiracy*. For this reason, a Catholic should take caution in supporting a Government that a leading Jew acknowledges as the work of "the Great God."



Freemason Moses Seixas welcomes his 'brother' Washington at Newport

The compliment is especially revealing because it is spoken by a fellow Freemason. George Washington did not attempt to conceal his complete adherence to that secret society enemy of the Church. In a letter to the Masons of King David's Lodge in Newport, Rhode Island he writes: "Being persuaded that **a just application of the principles, on which the masonic fraternity is founded, must be promotive of private virtue and public prosperity, I shall always be happy to advance the interests of the Society,** and to be considered by them a deserving Brother."

Religious liberty has always been one of the "interests" of Freemasonry, for above all other errors this Secret Society promotes, religious liberty does the most to belittle and suppress the Catholic Church, whose mission is to the conquer the world for Our Lord Jesus Christ. Freedom of religion gives license to godlessness and takes away the rights of true religion, as Pope Gregory XVI prophetically foresaw in 1832:

"So the restraints of religion are thrown off, by which alone kingdoms stand. We see the destruction of public order, the fall of principalities, and the overturning of all legitimate power approaching. Indeed this great mass of calamities had its inception in the heretical societies and sects in which all that is sacrilegious, infamous, and blasphemous has gathered as bilge water in a ship's hold, a congealed mass of all filth." (14)

1. Thomas Jefferson, "[The Virginia Legislature, Review and Reform of the Law,](#)" in Autobiography.
2. Thomas Jefferson, "[Religion](#)" in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1782), p. 286.
3. [Thomas Jefferson the Freethinker.](#)
4. Thomas Jefferson, "[Religion](#)" in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1782), p. 287.
5. Letter of Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Association, Connecticut, January 1, 1802.
6. Letter of Thomas Jefferson to Elbridge Gerry, 1799.
7. Letter of Thomas Jefferson to Baltimore Baptists, 1808.
8. Letter to Edward Dowse, April 19, 1803.
9. Stewart, Matthew. "*Nature's God: The Heretical Origins of the American Republic.*" United States: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014. Print.
10. <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/jefferson-the-works-vol-1-autobiography-anas-1760-1770/simple>
11. <https://www.gwirf.org/washingtons-letter-to-the-hebrew-congregation-of-newport-rhode-island/>
12. <https://www.gwirf.org/moses-seixas-letter-to-president-george-washington/>
13. <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/moses-seixas/>
14. [Mirari Vos - Papal Encyclicals](#)

The Livingston Ghost

Marian T. Horvat, Ph.D.

In the 1790s the German Lutheran family of Adam Livingston, made of quiet unimaginative farmers with no fanaticism, was living [near present day Middleway, West Virginia](#). It began to experience inexplicable occurrences after a certain incident.

One day Adam took into his house a wandering stranger who was near death. The man begged that a Catholic priest be sent for, a request Mr. Livingston disregarded because of his Lutheran aversion to priests. The man died that night and Adam Livingston buried him on the property.

Shortly afterwards, strange happenings started. His barns inexplicably burned down, his livestock began to die and uncountable thunderous hammerings could be heard at all hours in the house. Furniture moved by itself and crockery smashed to the floor.

Even more unsettling was the clipping. It was almost impossible to keep a sheet of paper or piece of cloth whole in the house without having it torn or shredded. Bedding, shirts, dresses and documents in the house would be shredded or cut into crescent shapes.

Sometimes the clipping occurred to clothing even while on the person. One Presbyterian lady indignantly recounted how her best hat had been torn to pieces while on her head as she made a call of friendly inquisitiveness. So notorious had these eerie actions become that the small farm village itself came to be called Cliptown, and the house "the wizard's clip," in reference to the clipped cloth.

Mr. Livingston, reading in his Bible that Christ had given to his ministers power over evil spirits, turned to his Lutheran minister, who brought a volume of Protestant tracts to read and make the house holy. In his very hands the tracts were torn to pieces. He fled and later admitted it was not in his power to banish the evil spirit in the house.

When Mr. Livingston insisted that he must have that power for he had found it in his Bible, the parson replied that this power only existed in old times, but was done away with now.

Livingston turned to an Episcopal minister and, then, to a Methodist, but both were met with flying stones. He even tired a local "conjurer," who likewise had no success.

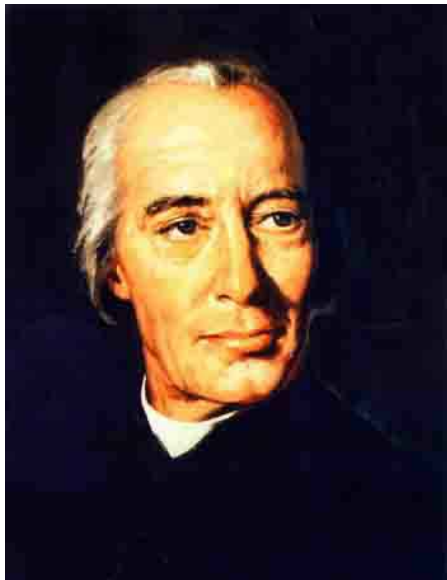


A memorial to Livingston was raised on the property he left to the Catholic Church on his death

Mr. Livingston thereupon had a dream where he saw a "minister dressed in peculiar robes" atop a mountain. A voice he claimed was the same as that of the dying beggar spoke to him, saying: "This is the man who will bring you relief."

His Catholic neighbor Richard McSherry recognized the clothing described to him as that of a Catholic priest at the altar. He told Livingston that there was a Catholic priest lodging overnight in a farmhouse in the neighboring town, and together they went there to seek his help. When Livingston saw Fr. Dennis Cahill, the pastor of a church at Hagerstown, Maryland, 20 miles north of Cliptown, he cried out, "There is the man!" (from his dream).

The sensible-minded Fr. Cahill did not relish making a detour to Ciptown over something he considered to be Lutheran nonsense. However, he agreed to accompany them to the house. En route a purse of money slipped from his pocket, causing him great consternation, for he was a practical man and funds were hard to come by for Catholic communities in Protestant Colonial America.



Fr. Demitrius Galitzin, a Russian prince become priest, carefully reported the whole incident

He entered the house in this distracted mood, blessed it and sprinkled it with Holy Water. On his way out, to his surprise, he found the bag of lost coins at the doorway. After this hasty sprinkling of the house, there were for a year or so no disturbances in it.

Then they began again. This time Mr. Livingston did not hesitate. He immediately called Fr. Cahill, who did not feel he was adequately prepared to make an exorcism. He had recourse to the most renowned and scholarly priest of the area, Fr. Demitrius Augustine Gallitzin, the Russian Prince who had come to the Allegheny Mountains at age 22 to become a priest, found the town of Lorreto and act as its pastor until the end of his life (1770-1840).

Fr. Gallitzin was skeptical of the reports of a demonic presence. He rode the 60 miles and entered the house, only to be met by a thunderous roar, as of innumerable wagons. He called for Fr. Cahill and together they performed an exorcism. A Mass was said, and an immediate and lasting calm descended.



Until today markers with a clippers & crescent moon are around Livingston house

Fr. Gallitzin stayed on in the region for three months, living with the Irish neighbor McSherry, in order to make an accurate report of the whole affair to the Bishop. He interviewed many residents and spoke often to Livingston, who affirmed that he had continued to hear "the Voice," as he called it, the voice of the man in the dream who had told him to find a priest. The voice taught Adam Livingston many things about the Catholic doctrine of

Purgatory and other mysteries of the Faith, teachings that Fr. Gallitzin recognized as perfectly accurate.

Before Fr. Gallitzin departed from Cliptown, Livingston and his wife and a half-dozen others from this region had become Catholics.

Time passed, the story continued to be told, and many others converted from Protestantism to the Catholic Faith. (1)

1. Quotes and facts were drawn from the well-documented *Mitri, or Story of Prince Demetrius Augustine Gallitzin 1770-1840*, by Daniel Sargent, NY: Longmans, Green & Co., 1945, pp. 113-16, 126, 146, 199.



The Stranger's Grave is still maintained on Livingston's property in a plot called Priest's Field

Bl. Philippine Duchesne: Failures Became Her Success

Marian T. Horvat, Ph.D.

Rose Philippine Duchesne was born into a prosperous and prominent lawyer in Grenoble, France in 1769. Her family was Catholic, her mother pious, but the men in the family were ambitious and liberal in their politics. Her father had become an enthusiastic supporter of the new ideas of liberty that were spreading all over France among the old aristocracy and high bourgeoisie in the last decade of the *Ancien Regime*. His activities in the revolutionary clubs and Masonic groups that promoted Voltairian ideas would cause great grief for Philippine and her mother. (1)

The Duchesne blood came to the fore early in Philippine – revealing itself in strong doses of willfulness, stubbornness and independence. This served, however, to help her resist the marriage proposals her parents arranged for her, and remain faithful to the religious vocation she knew God had given to her since the “call,” as she termed it, at age 8 on her First Communion day.

We can catch a glimpse of her strong will and determination in the story of her entrance at age 18 into the Visitation Convent of St. Marie d’en Haut nearby her home. One morning she left home in the company of an aunt to visit the convent. Once there, she simply announced her intention to stay, and set her distraught aunt home alone to face her enraged father.

He rushed to the convent to confront his daughter and take her home, but left resigned to the decision of Philippine, so like him in temperament. She did, however, acquiesce to her father’s wishes that she not take her final vows until she was 25 because of the political upheaval in France.



Philippine Duchesne, 1769-1852

1. What happened to Philippine’s father? In 1814, he died with Philippine and her sister at his side, after receiving Confession and Extreme Unction. His conversion was a triumph of the daughter’s faith, trust and prayer, made powerful by the complete sacrifice of self. Louis Callan, RSCJ, Philippine Duchesne, *Frontier Missionary of the Sacred Heart* (Newman Press: 1966), pp. 128-9.



Courtyard of Sainte Marie en Haut in Grenoble, France

Nor was it long before her father's well-founded fears came to realization. In 1792, while Philippine was still a postulant, the nuns were dispersed by order of the Government. During the Reign of Terror, St. Marie Convent was used as prison for those who opposed the Revolution in the area.

Instead of returning to her family villa as expected, Philippine took a flat in Grenoble with another woman and organized the Ladies of Mercy. These ladies risked their lives to bring material and spiritual help to those imprisoned at St. Marie or to assist the priests living as fugitives. To her worried family

members, she always gave the same answer: "Let me be. It is my happiness and glory to serve my Divine Savior in the person of those persecuted for His Sake."

In 1801, after Napoleon Bonaparte had overthrown the revolutionary Directory, Philippine used her own funds to purchase the badly damaged Convent of St. Marie d'en Haut from the State. Several nuns joined her there, but soon left, complaining that the work was too difficult and Philippine too exacting in demanding compliance to the old Rule. It was the first of many failures for Philippine Duchesne, but she remained on the former Visitation grounds, convinced that God had a plan for her and her beloved Convent.

Three years later, History records the providential and touching meeting of Mother Madeleine Sophie Barat, founder of the Society of the Sacred Heart, and Philippine Duchesne. As Mother Barat, only 25-years-old, entered the Convent of St. Marie on December 13, 1804, she was met by Philippine, who fell to the ground, kissed her feet, and repeated the psalmist's words: "How lovely on the mountain are the feet of those who bring the Gospel of peace."

"I let her do it through pure stupefaction," Mother Barat said as she told of that first meeting. "I was utterly dumbfounded at the sight of such faith and humility, and I did not know what to say or do."

At age 35, Philippine Duchesne signed over her Convent to the Society and became a postulant in a new community. One year later her first vows were taken, and she finally pledged herself to poverty, chastity, and obedience.

The next years were busy ones for the fledgling community. Mother Barat quickly recognized the organizational qualities in the great and generous soul of Mother Duchesne, who became secretary general of the Order and was given charge of the new motherhouse in Paris. Had she remained in France, she would have enjoyed the honor of her community, the consolation of her close friendship with Mother Barat, and the company and support of her distinguished and prosperous family.



The Chateau de Vizille, a country home of the family of Philippine Duchesne

Instead, what took root in her heart was a great desire to bring the Gospel to the forsaken “savages” of America. After hearing a sermon from a traveling missionary in 1805, Mother Duchesne felt irresistibly drawn to the foreign missions. For twelve years, with holy impatience, she pleaded to go, offering all her works, prayers and sacrifices for the sake of her “dark souls” in America.

In January of 1817, Bishop Louis Dubourg of St. Louis, Mo. came to France to beg for sisters to be spared for the American missions. Mother Barat had neither spare funds nor sisters for the enterprise. But the indomitable Philippine intervened, for a second time throwing herself at the feet of her Superior, begging consent to go. There was a poignant moment of silence – and permission was granted.

At last, in March of 1818, Mother Philippine Duchesne, age 49, was placed as superior over a band of four other missionary sisters who set sail for the New World on the vessel Rebecca.

Failure, not success in America

The sisters arrived in New Orleans with no instructions from Bishop Dubourg. Mother Duchesne soon came to the sore realization that they had been called to America not to work with the Indians, but to educate the daughters of merchants and farmers. Months later, when the sisters finally arrived in St. Louis (MO) they were asked to establish themselves in St. Charles, 14 miles from St. Louis on the Mississippi River, which Mother Duchesne described as “the remotest village in the United States.” In a one-room shanty on a two-acre plot without a tree or blade of grass, they established the first Convent west of the Mississippi and the first free school for girls in the United States.

In her famous letter describing that first brutal winter, she reported how water froze in the pails on the way from the creek to the cabin, how food froze to the table, and how the sisters often had no fire for lack of tools to cut wood. (2) By the spring of 1819, the house in St. Charles was considered impracticable, and a new foundation with a convent, novitiate and boarding school was begun at Florissant, north of St. Louis, Mo.

2. The large correspondence of Mother Philippine Duchesne with Mother Barat, other religious, family members and friends, as well as pertinent material from the archives of the Society of the Sacred Heart, was organized in a biography by Louis Callan, R.S.C.J., published by Newman Press in 1957. The quotes and information in this article was taken from an abridged version of that biography titled *Philippine Duchesne: Frontier Missionary of the Sacred Heart 1769-1852*, published in 1965.

While the hardships of life might have resulted in a breakdown of discipline, Mother Duchesne insisted that the Rule and customs of the new convent be faithfully followed. When Bishop DuBourg requested certain relaxations to accommodate the more easygoing American spirit, Mother Duchesne firmly refused.



Above, St. Ferdinand's Convent, built in 1819 under the supervision of Mother Duchesne. This convent became the first Mother House of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart outside of France; the site of the first Catholic school for Indian girls in the United States; the first free school for girls west of the Mississippi; and the first novitiate for women in the upper Louisiana Purchase Territory.

Below, Old St. Ferdinand's Church, the oldest Catholic church building between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. St. Ferdinand's served as the focal point of the Catholic Indian Mission movement, begun by Father De la Croix in 1820. Father DeSmet was ordained at St. Ferdinand's in 1827.



During the next years the congregation made a slow but steady progress. As American born girls joined the growing band of sisters, Mother Duchesne opened four convents and two schools in west central Louisiana. Supported by the prosperous French-speaking plantation owners, these schools saw a success that Mother Duchesne would never personally experience in her own impoverished foundations in Missouri. Finally an orphanage, academy and free school were begun in the original destination, St. Louis, Mo., and in 1828, the Sisters returned to St. Charles to cheers and applause of the townspeople. Mainly because of her perseverance and organization skills, twelve Sacred Heart schools had opened in the New World by 1850.

But Mother Duchesne felt herself a failure: she met no success with the few Indian free schools for girls she tried to establish. Because she could not learn English, she could not teach the American girls or interact with their parents. "Americans only admire those who have good looks and speak their language," she would explain, and then tell how she was lacking in both regards. The gracious charms and formal manners of the French Old Regime, which she never changed, left her out of touch with the more egalitarian and relaxed American way of life. She brought this European formality and ceremony to the lives of the young ladies she influenced, a culture and refinement that would be a signal mark of the alumni of the Sacred Heart up until the 1960s, when the schools suffered the effects of the Cultural Revolution that entered the religious orders and Church with Vatican II.

For 22 years, Mother Duchesne was forced to bear the heavy yoke of directing those who seemed to not want her directorship. Some Sisters also resented her formal ways and insistence on Rule, although all admired her spirit of prayer and sacrifice. At council meetings, she found it difficult to make her opinion prevail, since the common issue of her enterprises was failure, while the New Orleans foundations always met with success.

When Mother Barat once suggested that she move to New Orleans, she replied in a letter: “I carry in my heart a great fear of spoiling things wherever I shall be, and this because of the words I think I heard in the depths of my soul: You are destined to please Me, not so much by success as by bearing failure.”

In 1834, at age 65, Mother Duchesne retired to Florissant, the “poorest and humblest house of the congregation.” Still burdened with the administrative functions of governing the growing congregation in the United States, she nonetheless considered herself of no practical use.

Finally, in 1840, she was permitted to resign as Superior of the American Mission. Her life became more and more the hidden work of prayer, suffering and providing whatever small service she could perform for her community and the Jesuit missionary priests who were carrying out the work of converting her beloved Indians. “All desire but that of doing God’s holy will has been extinguished in me,” she wrote to Mother Barat.

Finally, the Mission to the Indians

As soon as the Belgium missionary Jesuits arrived in Florissant, MO, in 1823, Mother Duchesne became their enthusiastic supporter and friend. Even though her own foundations were always in dire need of money and goods, she found a way to provide small gifts of money, altar linens and clothing to aid the missionary work. In turn, the priests considered her a vital partner in their missionary ventures because of her constant prayer and many acts of mortification she offered for their work.

A special friendship that lasted until her death formed with the young postulant Fr. Peter John De Smet, the future great missionary to the Indians of the Rockies. He made it a top priority to pay his respects to “good Mother Duchesne” on every return from his Indian missionary visits. “I never returned from one of these visits but with an increase of edification, with a higher opinion of her virtues and sanctified life and always under the full conviction that I had conversed with a truly living saint,” he wrote. “I always considered Mother Duchesne as the greatest protector of our Indian missions.”

In 1840, Fr. De Smet asked the Assistant General of the Society of the Sacred Heart for some nuns to open a school among the Potawatomis at Sugar Creek in present day Kansas. Although ill and weakened by a life of hardship, penances and privation, Mother Duchesne, age 72, requested permission to join the colony. A final time, Mother Barat acquiesced against all good sense to the indomitable Rose Philippine Duchesne.



This portrait of Mother Duchesne was reportedly done by an Ursuline nun in New Orleans and said to most closely resemble what she really looked like

In July 1841 the group arrived in Sugar Creek where they were warmly received by the Indians - who offered them gifts of human scalps. Having never mastered any Indian language, Mother Duchesne could not teach; her infirmities rendered her incapable of the hard mission work. Instead, she spent her time in prayer and small acts of charity. The Indians loved and respected the “Woman-who-prays-always,” the name they gave her. She spent four hours in the morning and four in the afternoon motionless before the tabernacle, a spectacle that amazed the Indians and won their love and veneration.

One night when she was making an all night vigil, an Indian crept up and left some kernels of corn on the hem of her habit to see if she really remained in prayer motionless for those long hours. He returned the next morning and found the grain in the same place.

Her health continued to weaken under the hardships of life at Sugar Creek. Finally, after only one short year in the Indian mission, to her great disappointment, she was forced to return under obedience to Florissant, where she spent the last ten years of her life in poverty, mortifications, suffering and prayer.

“I feel that I am a worn-out instrument, a useless walking stick that is fit only to be hidden in a dark corner,” she wrote about these times. For her sleeping room in the Florissant Convent, she chose a narrow closet beneath a staircase. Visitors today to the Convent can still see that narrow sleeping place, a testimony to the humility and mortification of a great woman who held herself as nothing in eyes of the world.

In fact, Mother Duchesne was much more highly esteemed and venerated than she imagined. She was almost transfigured by Holy Communion. A wonderful light was seen to shine from her countenance after she had received, as if a flame were reflected on her face. The children used to wait to reverently watch her come out of the chapel after her thanksgiving.

“The clergy and laity, in fact, everyone who knew her, esteemed Rev. Mother Duchesne as a saint,” testified Mother Anne Shannon, a former student at Florissant.” She was gifted with an admirable spirit of prayer and often spent whole nights on her knees before the Blessed Sacrament, without any support whatsoever.”



The closet room under the stairway in the Florissant convent that Mother Duchesne used for her sleeping room the last 10 years of her life

“Never did I leave her without the feeling that I had been conversing with a saint,” Fr. De Smet, SJ, repeated in a letter of October 9, 1872.

On November 18, 1852, the heroic life of Philippine Duchesne came to an end. She had kept the fast and early that morning, made her confession, received Communion and received Extreme Unction. She was sinking rapidly, but when she heard the invocation, “Jesus, Mary, Joseph,” she was able to answer, “I give you my heart, my soul, and my life – oh, yes, my life, generously.” These were her last words.

When Mother Rose Philippine Duchesne died at age 83 in St. Charles, Mo., Fr. De Smet wrote her religious Sisters: “No greater saint ever died in Missouri or perhaps in the whole Union.” He urged them to write a biography, but it was not done. The apostle of the Sacred

Heart who came to America to work and save the souls of Indians was put aside in death, just as she was in life. Forty-three years after her death in 1852, Philippine’s cause was officially opened at the Vatican and Pope Pius X declared her “Venerable.” On May 12, 1940, she was beatified by Pope Pius XII, and canonized 44 years later on July 3, 1988.

A lesson for Americans

What is the message for us, Americans, that Divine Providence provided by the example of the heroic life of Mother Philippine Duchesne?

In my opinion, her life represented the opposite of the American way of life and points to the direction we should follow to redress our faults.

Her life was, as she defined it, a sequence of failures. The first order she entered closed; she did not feel realized in the second institution until she came to America to convert the Indians. Then, instead of carrying out this long-desired mission, she was ordered to teach girls and found convents. The work was more difficult because she never learned to speak English. She founded one convent that failed, then another that foundered. The girls there were ungrateful and worldly, and the Sisters chafed under her governance and wanted to relax the Rule.

When she finally was permitted to go to work in an Indian mission, she was already 72-years-old, too old to work or learn the native language. But after only one year, she was denied even that great consolation - she was ordered to leave the Indian mission and return to Florissant. She died there, without having accomplished what she felt called to do.

This constant failures of her planned enterprises and a success only on the spiritual level is, in my opinion, a lesson for Americans. Often we only value the immediate success, the practical way of doing things, and a good appearance in the results.

The life of Mother Duchesne is a call for us to abandon this way of being that idolizes appearances and success. It is a call to follow the will of God when we experience incomprehension, darkness, and failure. If we will turn our eyes to the path of the Cross of Our Lord and walk on it with courage and confidence, we will transform our mentality, our country, and our people into an elect nation called to help build the Reign of Mary.

Testimony of Fr. De Smet

One of those who listened to Fr. De Smet speak of Mother Duchesne in 1847 made these notes of what he said:

“He said she had climbed all the rungs of the ladder of sanctity, and never had he seen a soul more ardent in love for Our Lord. In his opinion, she rivaled St. Teresa.

"Never had he known a person who was poorer in all that concerned her private life, and in this she imitated St. Francis of Assisi. Nor a more apostolic soul, eager for the salvation of souls, and he thought St. Francis Xavier had shared with her his zeal for the conversion of the infidels.

“Ending his talk he said: Now she is on the sorrowful way of Calvary to which old age and infirmities have condemned her, but no matter how hard that road may seem to her, she is climbing it with all the fervor of youth. She has struck deep roots in American soil and they will one day bear an abundant harvest. I should not be surprised if some day she were raised to our altars.” (Callan, *Philippine Duchesne*, pp. 462-3.)

The Burning of the Ursuline Convent in Charlestown

Marian T. Horvat, Ph.D.

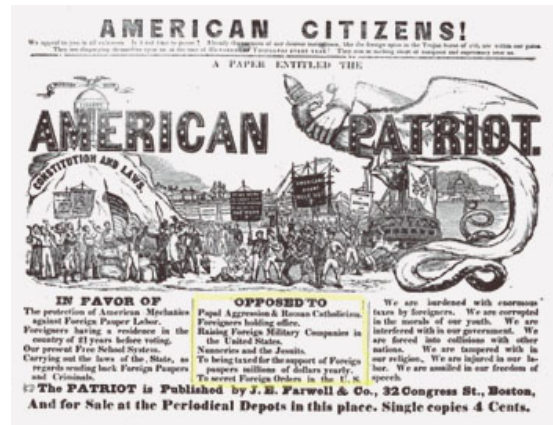
In his book *The Blessed Eucharist*, Fr. Michael Muller mentions the incident of a man who desecrated the Blessed Sacrament during the burning of the Ursuline Convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts, in 1834. Triggered by his very brief description of that sacrilege and how God's hand swiftly struck down against the guilty one, I went to look for further data. Here is a more detailed presentation of what occurred on the hot summer evening of August 11 in that Puritan town, today annexed to Boston.

An intense anti-Catholic environment

While many people realize that our country's [colonial period](#) was vehemently anti-Catholic before the American Revolution, they often imagine that religious tolerance of Catholicism magically appeared after the First Amendment was ratified in 1791 ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof"...). Although this amendment granted freedom of religion to all American citizens and began the eventual repeal of anti-Catholic laws from statute books in the States, the deep roots of a virulent anti-Catholicism were not so easily deracinated.

Open manifestations of hatred for Catholics reached new peaks in the early 19th century when Protestants became alarmed at the heavy influx of Catholic immigrants from Ireland and Germany into America. In 1790, there were only 30,000 Catholics counted in the entire country, but 40 years later that number had grown to 600,000. In the 1840s, with another great wave of Irish immigrants, the number of Catholics in America had soared to 1.75 million, and, amid the many fragmented sects of Protestantism, Catholicism had become the largest single religion in the country.

The predominantly Episcopalian and Puritan Protestants, who viewed the Catholic Church as the Whore of Babylon, feared and distrusted the growing presence of this new Catholic labor force and its flourishing institutions on American soil. In the 1830s and 1840s, prominent Protestant



Above, the anti-Catholic *American Patriot* - hatred for the Pope, the Jesuits and nuns; below, a Protestant cartoon showing fear of the growing influence of Catholic schools

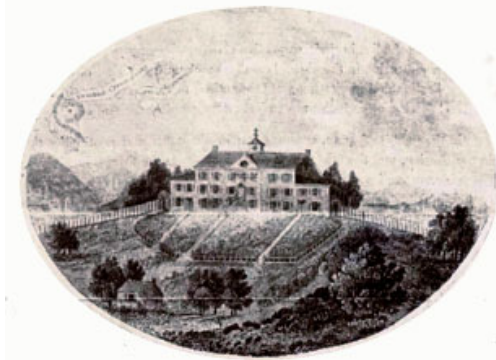


leaders organized into the Nativist movement and attacked the Catholic Church as not only theological unsound but an enemy of republican values. There was even a movement led by Lyman Beecher to exclude Catholics from new settlements in the West.

These decades saw incidents of mob violence against Catholics, the burning of their properties, and even outright murders. An early episode of such aggression was the burning of the Ursuline Convent in Charlestown, showing us how intense that popular sentiment against Catholicism was.

An unruly mob storms the Ursuline Convent

In August of 1834, resentment and hatred had risen to a high pitch in Charlestown, a town on the outskirts of Boston, against the growing Irish Catholic population. The odium found a target in the prospering Ursuline Convent and its teaching Academy founded in 1826 on a 24-acre enclosed property on Mount Benedict, a hill overlooking Boston Harbor.



The Ursuline Convent on Mount Benedict

Many prominent Protestant families had enrolled their daughters in the Ursuline Academy to receive a European-style education. Naturally, conversions followed, such as Episcopalian Rebecca Reed, who was enrolled as a day student and then became a postulant in 1832. To the Protestant farmers and workers of Charlestown, with their deep Puritan roots, it looked like these girls were being corrupted by Rome.

Six months into her novitiate, Miss Reed left, angry that the Mother Superior had judged her an unstable candidate and refused to allow her to take her first vows. Encouraged by the Episcopalian minister William Croswell she wrote a dramatic account of the supposedly macabre practices and dictatorial rule in the Convent. This self-dramatized piece on her exit from the Convent was published, largely spread, and stirred to high pitch anti-Catholic sentiments against the Ursuline establishment.

Then, two weeks before the riot, Sister Saint John, assistant to the Mother Superior, left the Convent in the middle of the night. This Sister, who was suffering from a nervous condition, returned of her own will the next day. Rumors began to fly, however, that her return had been forced. Local papers published stories about a “mysterious woman” being kept against her will in the Ursuline Convent, and signs were posted calling for the workmen of Boston to “demolish the Nunnery.” Local officials visited Sister St. John in the Convent and issued a statement reporting her in good health and free to leave if she wished. Despite these facts, anti-Catholic sentiment among the Protestant populace seethed.

On the evening of August 11, 1834, an unruly, drunken mob – some with faces painted like Indians - gathered at the Convent gates. Using foul language, they confronted the Mother Superior, demanding the release of the “mysterious woman” supposedly being held against her will. When she boldly refused, they tore down the gate and entered to wreak havoc.

They broke the windows, destroyed the furniture and musical instruments, and built a large bonfire, feeding it with the church Crucifix, altar ornaments and books from the Convent library as a crowd of 4,000 looked on. Charlestown’s Protestant firemen, who had been called early to the scene, stood idly by or returned to their stations.

The Holy Eucharist is desecrated

When the mob started to tear down the front gate, Mother O’Keefe of Saint Joseph and Sister Saint Ursula rushed to the Chapel to remove the Tabernacle, which housed a ciborium containing consecrated Hosts. They hid it in a rose bush in the Convent garden, thinking it could be retrieved after the rabble left. Then they joined the other sisters and girls, who had gathered in the garden and were fleeing through a hole they had ripped in the wall to escape and find shelter and safety at a neighboring farmstead.



The silver ciborium only returned to the Ursulines a century later

Outside the burning Convent, a rough laborer from Newburyport named Henry Creesy and several others had found the Tabernacle from the Chapel’s altar in the rose garden. Inside was a silver ciborium containing consecrated Hosts. Laughing and tossing the chalice aside, Creesy placed three of the Hosts in his breast pocket. He looked up and saw flames coming from the Convent window. Shrieking with laughter, he mockingly exclaimed, “Now I have God’s body in my pocket.”

By one-thirty a.m., the whole building was engulfed in flames. The uncontrollable mob was not finished. They went to the garden mausoleum under the pretense of releasing imprisoned sisters. They found only the graves of six or seven sisters, which they proceeded to desecrate, prying the tops off the coffins and throwing the bones onto the floor. Then they set fire to the remaining buildings on the grounds, the barn, the stables, an icehouse and a restored farmhouse. By daybreak, the Ursuline Convent on St. Benedict Hill was a heap of smoldering ruins.

Not satisfied with this outrage against the Catholics, they returned the following night and tore up the garden beds and destroyed the orchards.

God's Hand Strikes the Protestants

Marian T. Horvat, Ph.D.

The vengeance of God was swift in striking the blasphemous Henry Creesy. The night after his sacrilege committed during [the burning of the Ursuline Convent](#), he entered Bite Tavern in Newburyport, not far from Charlestown. Drunk and drenched with rain, he ordered one whiskey, then another, and another. His behavior became more and more erratic. Finally, he drew his knife and threatened those around him. As the barkeeper and several others moved to subdue him, he drew the knife to his own throat, severing his windpipe. The cut was so violent the head scarcely remained connected to his body.

His body was moved to a bed upstairs. There in his shirt pocket the three consecrated Hosts were found. Immediately those present realized that he was one of the men who attacked the Charlestown Convent the night before, the one who had stolen the Hosts. One of the men turned pale and cried out, "God is already taking vengeance on those who profaned that sacred place!"

More devastating effects

The next day, a committee of respected citizens was formed to investigate the riot. The nuns were cleared of any illicit activities, and 13 men were arrested for rioting. When the case came to trial in December, the jury convicted only one 17-year-old boy, Marvin Marcy, who was made scapegoat for the riot. The following October, the Governor also pardoned and released him. A bill to pay State compensation to the Ursuline Order failed to pass the legislature. For the Catholics of Boston and Charleston, these outcomes constituted a clear injustice, but there were no recourses for them to take.



The ruins of the Ursuline Convent stood for a half century, a reminder of the 1834 act of terror

It did not escape their attention, however, that many of the persons connected with the riot suffered personal disasters. Rebecca Reed, the apostate who wrote the book about Convent life, went mad and died four years later at age 26 of tuberculosis. The Episcopalian minister who had encouraged her apostasy developed an uncontrollable facial tic and a nervous disorder that ruined his career. The daughter of selectman John Runey, who had applauded the mob by burning the Convent, also became insane shortly after the trial. The youth Marvin Marcy also went mad.

Then, one year later, another dramatic fire broke out in Charlestown. It started on August 25, 1835 and burned from 5 p.m. to 1 or 2 in the morning, almost the same period as the Convent fire. Sixty houses including two hotels and a bank were completely consumed. Catholics – and even many Protestants – believed it was God’s hand acting in response to the horrible outrage committed by that town upon the Ursuline Convent on the night of August 11, 1834.

One can see in this episode how Catholicism was persecuted in the United States

Tolerant Catholics, Militant Catholics

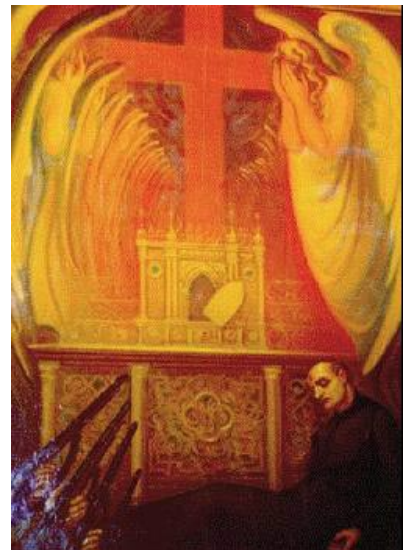
Some lessons can be learned from comparing the Charlestown public reaction to this sacrilege with the healthy reaction of the people of Riobamba, Ecuador to a similar blasphemous act.

In the late 19th century the anti-clerical Liberal government of Ecuador was instigating many acts of violence against the Catholic institutions. On May 4, 1897, some Liberal troops broke into the Chapel of St. Philip’s College in Riobamba. The soldiers attacked and wounded Fr. Emilio Moscoso, a Jesuit who died trying to defend the Blessed Sacrament.

A soldier then opened the Tabernacle, emptied the chalice and stamped on the Sacred Hosts. The group mockingly drank spirits from the chalices, making parodies of the Mass and Holy Sacraments. The public of the entire city of Riobamba rose up in fierce outrage.

In reparation for this sacrilege a new order of tertiary Franciscans, the Congregation of Franciscan Mothers of the Immaculata, was founded three years later. Its purpose was to make reparation for that sacrilege and others committed during those years of Freemason governments. Each year on May 4, Catholics of Riobamba would gather in a Mass in St. Philip’s Chapel to commemorate the martyred Jesuit and make reparation for the desecration of the Blessed Sacrament that had taken place. Such was the love and respect of the Catholic people of Riobamba for Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

In Charlestown, on the contrary, there was no talk of public reparation for the described crimes. Faithful Catholics, contaminated by human respect, were trying to blend and fit into the predominantly Protestant culture and were anxious not to incite more acts of violence against their persons or properties. The subservient Catholic Hierarchy did nothing, fearful of attracting more adverse attention.



A painting of the terrible desecration and the martyred priest in St. Philip's in Riobamba

The sacrilege against Our Lord and the acts of terror against the undefended Ursuline Sisters, as well as the destruction of their property, became just an “unfortunate incident,” one to be forgotten as soon as possible. This is a mentality we should reject in order to acquire the true militant spirit of our Holy Mother Church.

The Ursuline Convent was never rebuilt. Its ruins stood there for the next half century as a reminder of the virulent hatred against Catholics. The site was leveled in 1875 and the bricks incorporated into Boston’s Cathedral of the Holy Cross. Today, few persons even know about this terrible sacrilege that occurred, a most lamentable episode in our American Catholic History.

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A Rich & Organic South Pays the Bills of a Revolutionary North

Phillip Mericle

Book review of [*The North & The South and Secession: An Examination of Cause and Right*](#), Book I, by Adam S. Miller, Monrovia, MD: Tower of David/Marian Pub., Inc. 2006, 114 pp.

In this first book of a series of four, Adam Miller takes it upon himself to begin the refutation of the many myths that have been spread around the bloodiest conflict in our History, the American Civil War (1861-1865). Taking a Catholic perspective, the author examines the cultural, economic and political events before and during the war and focuses in on the vital topic of legitimate authority regarding states rights and powers of secession.

The author presents his information in a concise and engaging manner. Primarily written as a polemic, the book constructs a framework of the American North and South before delving into the issues of secession and the conflict proper. In this work Miller makes a strong argument that the Southern States had acted correctly and were well within their legal rights to withdraw from what had become an exploitative and tyrannical Union.

With this series, the South, so vilified in the revolutionary media and historical propaganda textbooks, is shown for what it really was: a traditional, honorable and religious society standing against the unjust authority of a central government run amok.

Social, political & economic war

The author begins by painting a picture of a Southern society and way of life very different from now. It was a more genteel life of the countryside, with only 1/10th of the population living in cities. The agrarian pace of life was complemented by a strong Catholic influence left by the Spanish and French colonies as well as Catholic immigrants.

Historically, there were over 80 Catholic settlements in the South before 1682. Though predominantly Protestant, the South was more strongly influenced by Catholic Europe in its hierarchy, moral orientation and family centered life. The South had a society greatly influenced by the organic life and charm of an Europe previous to the Enlightenment. It counted many Catholic politicians and men of influence among its members.

The North contrasted with the South in almost everything. In the North Protestantism and Rationalism had taken deep root. Economic output was the gauge for success and utilitarianism was the order of the day. Beauty and hierarchy were scorned in favor of barren pragmatic utility.

Homes were considered more as places for individuals to rest before returning to factories than the center of a family life.

Nearly half of Northerners lived in cities. It is true that numerically there were more Catholics in the North, as the population was simply larger, but Northern society was much more hostile to Catholicism. Many Catholics either hid their faith or lost it entirely in the face of rampant persecution. Numerous acts of violence were committed against Catholics in the North, including murders, assaults and the burning of convents. These crimes were unjustly overlooked by the anti-Catholic police and politicians



Before the Civil War, a lively and civilized trade on a New Orleans port

Before the war, as the nation developed, the North and the South drifted further apart. The North slowly gained a majority of members in the House of Representatives and the Senate and it was not long before laws were being passed that deliberately favored the North and harmed the South.

It would have been natural for the South to send its cotton to northern factories to be made into cloth goods. With cotton plantations in the South and many nearby Northern factories this would seem a matter of good business sense. However, Northerners industrialists were so greedy that the exorbitant prices they charged for such work made it cheaper for the South to export its cotton all the way across the seas to European factories, and this is what many Southerners did.

To 'remedy' this loss of business the Northern-dominated Congress continuously passed tariff laws to charge taxes on such trade. Thus, the Southerner was being penalized for using good business sense, while the North was rewarded regardless.

In 1860, the South alone would have been the third largest economy in the Western world, shattering the myth of the South being destitute and backwards. However, because of steep tariffs approved by the pro-Northern Congress, by the 1850's there were approximately \$90 million in dues paid by the South, compared to only \$17 million paid by the North. Since 1833, nearly all of this surplus tax revenue had been regularly applied toward developing the North.

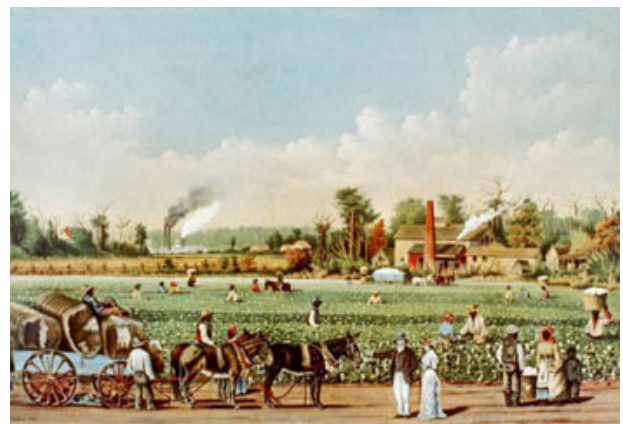
With these federally enacted measures it was clear that the federal government was increasingly serving the interests of the Northern industrialists to the detriment of the South.

History, authority & right

Miller takes special care to study the legal rights and implications regarding the authority of the States and the powers of secession. As a Catholic, he points out that authority ultimately comes from God and not the consent of the people, as the revolutionaries like to pretend. This principle could be found in any form of government before the Enlightenment, mainly in Catholic monarchies. Even the pagan authority of ancient Rome merited obedience from its Catholic subjects, so long as it did not demand sinful acts.

It was the reigning authority of King George III that granted sovereignty to the American States in the 1783 treaty of Paris. Following this, and the abortive Articles of Confederation, the States met to ratify a new Constitution that would delegate authority to a weak central government, thus forming our first federation. According to natural law, federal governments such as these have the power to look after the common good, such as in matters of common defense, but the authority delegated to the federal government does not surpass that of the sovereign States that compose the Federation.

The States – either from the South, like Virginia or from the North, like Vermont – possessed an authority that was the basis of that of the central government, and the Founding Fathers sought to safeguard this sovereignty with Article II of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. This established that all powers not explicitly granted to the federal government by the Constitution were retained by the States. At the Philadelphia Convention that framed our Constitution, the Founding Fathers unanimously rejected giving the government powers to invade non complying States.



A calm, rural, organic way of life was developing on the Southern plantations

With these points Miller gives us a picture of the United States of the early to mid 19th century. We have, on the one hand, the tradition oriented and agrarian South and, on the other, the pragmatic and utilitarian North. Controlling two of the three branches of the federal government, the North began a systematic exploitation of Southern wealth, passing laws that favored Northern industry and hurt the agricultural South.

As the two regions continued to drift apart, few believed it was possible for such radically different regions to co-exist under one government. Many noted that the North and the South were two cultures completely alien to each other, with only language as the common bond between them.

As the economic and political power of the North grew, it seemed that the very way of life of the South was in danger. The laws and tariffs of the land were designed by Northern politicians to drain Southern business. Northern congressman took public money – much of it squeezed out of Southern business and farms – and distributed it exclusively to the North. As the few Southern politicians exhausted every conceivable means to protect their economy, culture and heritage, it seemed that there was hardly any recourse left for the South.

With the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860, a president elected with less than 40% of the popular vote and no support from a single Southern State, every branch of the federal government was now occupied by powers acting in Northern interests.

Though conventional history texts like to depict Lincoln as a president who worked to alleviate North-South tensions, it must be remembered that the Republican Party, Lincoln's party, had actually been founded on an explicitly pro-North bias, favoring big business, industry and high tariffs. Proving his party loyalty, Lincoln quickly raised tariffs from 18.8% to a painful 47.5% following his election.

Thus, in 1860-1861 many Southerners concluded that they could no longer hope for any redress from the federal government. It seemed to the South that the only way to protect its interests, security and liberty was to withdraw entirely. The Southern States began to secede.

“We ask no conquest; all we ask is to be left alone; that those who never held power over us shall not now attempt our subjugation by force of arms.” – Jefferson Davis, Mississippi senator and President of the Confederate States of America



Today you can visit Oak Alley Plantation, a restored estate in New Orleans along the Mississippi

The Invasion of the North against the South – Myths & Reality

Phillip Mericle

Book review of [*The North & The South and Secession: An Examination of Cause and Right*](#), Book I, by Adam S. Miller, Monrovia, MD: Tower of David/Marian Pub., Inc. 2006, 114 pp.

My [last article](#) analyzed some of the cultural, economic and political factors that led up to the secession crisis of 1860-1861. The North, filling its coffers with wealth extracted through tariffs imposed on the agrarian South, finally solidified its power with the election of a pro-Northern president, Abraham Lincoln. As a consequence, one Southern State after another began to quit membership in the Union and exercise their right to secede.

Secession

The Republican Party was originally a sectional party predicated on furthering Northern interests, and it was the election of Republican Abraham Lincoln in 1860 that precipitated the secession of several Southern States. Before this time different States, some of them Northern, had threatened to secede over various issues, and there was no doubt as to the legality of such an action. Just that year (1860-1861) Congress had even tried and failed to pass a law that would have officially outlawed state secession.

Many at the time knew that the federal government simply did not have the legal capacity to prevent States from seceding. The Constitution granted no such federal authority. Despite this legal framework, despite the Constitution, and despite the wishes and intentions of the founding fathers (expressed through letters, the Federalist Papers, and the Second amendment and the Bill of Rights) Lincoln retaliated with war.

He called for 75,000 volunteers to put down what he termed the “rebellion” of Southern States. Civil liberties were suspended, and thousands of people who opposed Lincoln’s actions, even loyal Northerners, were imprisoned without trial or due process of law.



An unconcerned Lincoln with his political machine interested only in 'rolling out the bucks' to the detriment of the South

Since no war can be fought without some semblance of a just cause, several myths were invented and propagated to justify Lincoln's course of action. As he led the Northern armies in an aggressive and unjust war to despoil the South and destroy opposition to the illegal usurpation of power by the federal government, he did so under a false banner of justice, liberty and freedom.

In order to justify these illegal actions and the federal government's use of force in coercing the Southern States, several myths, misrepresentations and outright lies were constructed. These falsities have been perpetuated and enshrined in our education system and media to this day. Miller refutes each one of these myths by presenting the true historical facts.

First myth: the South was poor and backwards, while the North was rich and sophisticated. This is a lie as we saw in Part I of this series.

Second myth: The war was to preserve the Union. This is, simply speaking, a lie. The seceding States did not threaten the existence of the Union. They did not attempt to conquer the North nor did they demand the dissolution of the United States. They only exercised their right to leave the Union and practice their sovereignty and self governance. They were fighting for independence. As such the expression "Civil War" is a misnomer, as the control of the Northern government was never contested. Miller offers a few alternative titles, such as "The War for Southern Independence," "The War of Federal Aggression" or "The War against Southern Secession" as more accurate options.

Third myth: Secession was treason. This is also a lie. No law prohibited or condemned States for seceding. The power to prevent a State from leaving the Union was not explicitly granted to the federal government and was, thus, retained by the States both by Natural Law and the Constitution.

Even after the war, when Confederate President Jefferson Davis and other Southern leaders were arrested on charges of treason, they were released without trial. The Chief Justice released them without pressing charges because he recognized that any trial would prove they had done nothing illegal, and pressing charges would only serve to strengthen the South's position and undermine the myth that the North was acting legitimately.

Slavery was not the focal point of the war

Fourth myth: The war was fought to free the slaves. This is a blatant lie, although it is the most tenacious and emotionally charged myth. Hardly a student can pass a history course without having it pounded into his head that the South fought to defend the institution of slavery and that the North fought to free slaves in the name of liberty and justice. This particularly sensitive myth deserves special attention.

As discussed, the South went to war primarily in defense of its cultural, political and economic survival. When the vote for secession was made, many pro-secessionist counties had few or no slaves, such as the primarily German Comal County in Texas, while some of the most heavily slave populated areas voted in favor of cooperating with the Union, e.g. the majority of the slave holding families in Southampton in Virginia voted against secession.

Several of the most prominent Southern generals, including Robert E. Lee and J.E.B. Stuart, owned no slaves, nor did the average Southern soldier, who was fighting to protect himself and his home from the pillaging armies and scorched earth tactics of the federal army. Statistically, the majority of Southerners were not slave owners.

Even the Confederate government considered slavery non-essential to their independence. This is so true that Confederate diplomat Duncan Kenner did not have any problem in offering the abolition of slavery as a bargain to attract the support and diplomatic recognition of the Confederacy from England and France (countries that held anti-slavery positions), though his proposal was not accepted.



Before the Civil War, plantation workers harvesting cotton; after the war, destroyed plantations and no foodstuffs or products

These are facts that show anyone who is impartial that the South did not fight the war to protect its system of slavery.

Another truth that invalidates this revolutionary saga is that the North actually did not fight to end slavery. In reality, when Lincoln called for volunteers to wage war against the seceding States, there were more slave States in the Union than there were in the Confederacy.



This call for soldiers only confirmed Southern fears that the government had become tyrannical, causing more Southern States to secede in protest of a government that was forcing States to remain members at gunpoint. As part of the official government line, Northern diplomats were instructed to respond to foreign inquiries regarding slavery by stating that this institution would remain unchanged. Even as late as 1861, the exclusively Northern government (the South had seceded) proposed and, then rejected, an amendment to abolish slavery.

To completely shatter this myth of an anti-slavery North, it must be remembered that in the Northern States of Delaware and Maryland as well as the occupied border States of Missouri and Kentucky, slavery enjoyed full protection of the law during the war, with some areas retaining slaves until after the war ended. The federal government protected slavery in these States and even enrolled slave holders from these areas to fight in the Union army against the South.

Even the fabled Emancipation Proclamation only declared slaves to be free in areas that defied the Union, meaning that any slaves in the Northern States or Union-controlled Southern areas remained in bondage. To try and retain white loyalty in areas that were conquered, Lincoln went so far as to cancel liberation orders of Northern abolitionist generals who tried to free slaves in the Southern lands they invaded.



Columbia, a symbol of the country, accuses an indifferent Lincoln of the needless loss of lives

In this way emancipation can be seen as a pragmatic military move by Lincoln, intended to encourage slaves to flee the South, undermining its economy while still retaining the loyalty of Northern slaveholders. Thus, with the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln declared free the slaves in States where he had no control and preserved slavery in the lands under his authority, effectively freeing nobody.

The myth of a war of emancipation fought to end slavery, thus, crumbles under historical scrutiny. Any claim to the contrary in our textbooks or media is mere propaganda intended to draw attention away from the unjustifiable, illegal and immoral actions of Lincoln and his government. Such claims defend that usurpation, which bloated the powers of the federal government and established a Union of coercion.

A just appraisal

In this book Miller demonstrates that the Civil War was a war of survival for the Old South against the federal attack. Lincoln usurped State authority, ordered the illegal and unconstitutional invasion of the South, illegally imprisoned thousands of Northerners who opposed him and waged war on false pretenses to secure unlawful power for the federal government. The South legally, morally and philosophically had the right to defend itself from that tyranny. Never again would the States possess the same degree of sovereignty that they had prior to Lincoln.

Slavery was but a factor in the war, not the cause. Rather, the cause that brought the Nation to a secession crisis was the increasing overall cultural, political and economic oppression of the South by the North.

It was on the false pretense of “preserving the Union” that Lincoln then perpetrated the war, leading the industrialist North to crush the honor-bound and traditional-minded South in a conflict that cost our nation untold destruction and hundreds of thousands of lives. Never again would our Federation be the same.

As an historian, I enjoyed the density of information presented by Miller in this first book of his series. He presents the material in a systematic and straightforward manner without being pedantic. Each topic is addressed from multiple angles, guaranteeing a strong argument from different perspectives. I look forward to reviewing the rest of the series, and I would recommend this book to anyone who wants a Catholic perspective on the causes and justifications for the “War for Southern Independence.”



The Saratoga farmstead in Virginia circa 1860;
most Southern landowners before the Civil War were small farmers

Slavery in the North & South - Myths & Reality

Phillip Mericle

Book review of [*The North, The South & Slavery*](#), Book II, by Adam S. Miller,
Monrovia, MD: Tower of David/Marian Pub., Inc., 2015, 120 pp.

In the second volume of his series on the South, Adam Miller takes on the controversial topic of the slavery in the United States. Miller's belief that the South has been unjustly vilified by the Northern victors of the war leads him to expose the many distortions surrounding the institution of slavery. He does not seek to justify slavery as it is popularly understood, but rather attempts to expose and refute the myths and misrepresentations surrounding it.

From the start he makes a positive Catholic assertion: Every man is a slave, either to sin or the Will of God. Only those who humbly submit themselves to the Divine Will, above their own will, can be truly free. Catholically speaking, humility and obedience are praiseworthy virtues, and there are numerous examples of saints who were slaves during their time here on earth.

Remember that slavery existed both in the Old Testament and at the time of Our Lord and received no condemnation, nor has the Church condemned slavery *per se*, but rather its abuses. Taking apostolic examples, the author also cites that St. Paul himself urged slaves to obey their masters.

He cites several Popes condemning the abuses of slavery, the slave trade, the unjust enslavement of persons, the separation of slave families and enslavement based on race. Further, slavery is only justified by the Church in conditions where a person is captured in a just war, as punishment for heinous crimes and being born into the state of slavery.

Pope Gregory XVI explicitly condemned the slave trade with the full support of the American Bishops of the South. Creation itself is hierarchical, though Miller stresses that as in all institutions, such as education, employment and marriage, there are instances that transgress the bounds of acceptability. No matter where one seeks there is the taint of fallen human nature.

Americans must further be aware, the author warns, that much of the modern conception of slavery comes from the warped and condemned teachings of equality and liberty espoused by the revolutionary thinkers of the 18th century. These revolutionaries redefined liberty, not as the freedom to do God's Will, but as freedom from all authority outside oneself.

Espousing ideas condemned by the Church, these men rebelled against the very order of God in their quest for *self*-governance. Such ideas have contaminated our society today and are in no small part responsible for the robotic repulsion to the idea of human slavery regardless of time or circumstance.

Having analyzed slavery from the Catholic perspective, Miller demonstrates, chapter by chapter, that slavery in America did not start with racism (the first slaves were Catholics and Irish), that the South was not wretched as reported, that the North practiced its own forms of slavery and that Northerners were often much more racially prejudiced than Southerners.

Hypocrisy of the North

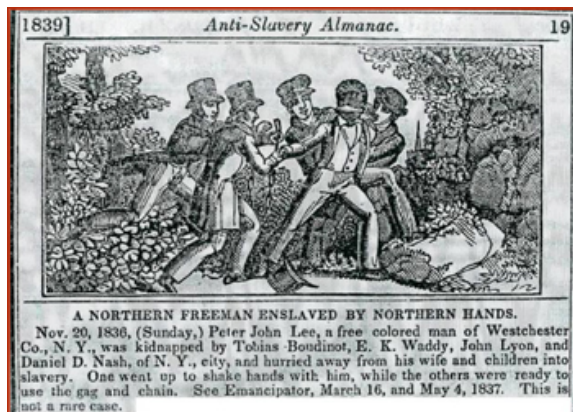
The North, historically, had slaves just as the South, though it died out as economically unfeasible. The slave trade brought profits to the North and was perpetuated long after Popes condemned the practice. In the course of a few years Northerners imported far more slaves than were ever freed by such abolitionist movements as "the Underground Railroad." Ironically, Southern backed legislation intending to end the slave trade was vigorously opposed by the North.

Contrary to the myth, the North was **not** racially tolerant. Most Northern abolitionists, including Abraham Lincoln, believed that blacks should be sent to live somewhere else, but few ever dreamed of allowing blacks to mingle in white society.

Many Northern States outlawed the black vote as late as 1867. Several imposed laws designed to prevent non-whites from settling. The American Colonization Society, an organization funded by the North, even sought to solve the "problem" of free blacks by sending them to Liberia.



The good relationship between George Washington & his slaves at Mt. Vernon farm in Virginia reflects well their situation in the South



It was not uncommon for a freeman in the North to be taken and re-enslaved

Racism was so fierce that many blacks who had escaped slavery in the South were forced to go on to Canada to flee the race violence of white Northerners. French sociologist Alexis de Tocqueville noted during his visit to the U.S that racial prejudice ran deep in the North. There, he said, whites outright refused to work alongside blacks, as was common for workers in the South.

When Lincoln declared the Emancipation Proclamation there was a spike in the desertions in the Northern army, with some officers even submitting their resignation. Many had been told

the war was to “preserve the Union,” and riots broke out in several Northern cities to protest a war for liberating blacks. Blacks who fought in the Union army did not even receive the same pay and benefits as their white comrades. Lincoln himself can be frequently found espousing ideas of racial purity and the inferiority of blacks.

Slave of the South, slaves of the North

After exposing the prejudiced treatment of blacks in the North, Miller devotes several chapters to comparing the condition of the average Northern worker with the average Southern slave. In this way the reader gets a more contextual understanding of slavery as it existed in 19th century America and the hardships endured by the working man.

Northern factory owners routinely paid a barely livable pittance and, if injury or sickness would occur, the worker would be thrown out. Many factories employed women and children under abusively small wages. White workers, including children, often worked 16 hour-a-day shifts locked in their factories performing repetitive tasks with dangerous machinery, leading to workplace death tolls in the tens of thousands every year.

The family cell was undermined, as fathers and mothers could be kept away from home for weeks or months at a time, if they weren’t crowded into tenements surrounding the factory complexes. At other times workers were obliged to live in “company towns” where they were provided shacks for housing and were paid in money that was only good at the exorbitantly expensive company store.

The massive industrial system of the North deprived workers of just wages, reduced supposedly free men, women and children (some of whom were literally kidnapped from England and brought to America to work) and discarded those who could no longer turn a profit. It was slavery in all but name.

By contrast Miller examines the condition of the average slave in the South. Contrary to some deeply held myths, many slaves made money, and it was common for slaves to be allotted plots of land where they could grow their own crops for market. In some cases slaves saved up fair amounts of wealth and there were even slaves, as in the case of [Simon Phillips](#), who loaned money to their masters when the owner was in financial distress.

Those who owned few slaves and were not financially well off worked alongside their slaves day in and day out, a

practice that was abhorrent to white Northerners. It was also common for slaves to be given training in specialist skills, which would serve them well if they were freed or hired out. In this way a large plantation could resemble a medieval estate, with an amiable and hierarchically ordered self sustaining society.

While relations between master and slave were often quite positive, the positions of abolitionists were frequently delusional disingenuous. One slave, Harrison Berry, was so fed up with such Northern distortions that he wrote [a book defending slavery](#) and the South. This not only shocked Northerners who believed that slaves were universally miserable, but it destroyed a further myth by showing a slave could write.

This and other works exposed the exaggerations and misrepresentations in such popular, though unrealistic, titles as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Later, the 1930's slave testimonies, collected by the American government, also show that less than 30% of the interviewees, elderly blacks who still remembered being slaves, had anything negative to say about their masters at all. Some even reported living in better conditions than were available in the '30s.

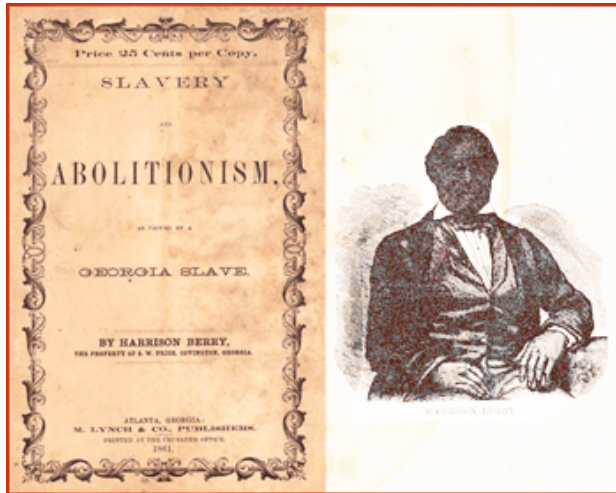


Above, Northern factories where workers had 16 hour days; below, slaves in Southern plantations of rice & cotton (South Carolina) had a more humane labor



Black confederates

As a final blow to the many racially charged myths surrounding the South, Miller goes on to cite that there were [many blacks](#) who actively supported the Southern cause. The numbers in support of this controversial position show that an estimated 60,000 – 93,000 free blacks elected to serve the Confederate cause in one capacity or another, some of them even bearing arms. Another 200,000 blacks who were still slaves served the Confederate cause as workers.



In 1861, slave Harrison Berry wrote a book defending slavery & the South

There were numerous manifestations of black patriotism for the Confederacy at the outbreak of the war, and as the Northern army marched through the South it was not uncommon for slaves to bury their master's wealth and their own to try and protect it from the Northerners. As many plantations were left under the supervision of women or the elderly, one would think the situation was ripe for slave rebellions, yet despite this opportunity, and even the efforts of the Union army to incite rebellion, there was not one slave uprising in the South during the entirety of the war.

What the author presents is an image of 19th century America that strongly contradicts the myths constructed by the Northern victors of the war. The North, far from being the champion of liberty, was hypocritical both in its treatment of blacks and the abuse of its own impoverished masses. Although Miller does not deny that there were abuses of slavery in the South, he gives a more comprehensive perspective of it that dispels many of the fictions established by abolitionists.

The book itself, like [the first](#) of the series, is densely filled with information and examples to demonstrate its points. I imagine that this work may elicit a fair degree of needed debate among historians, and I hope it goes some way towards correcting the historical errors to which we have been subjected.

An Episode Revealing ‘Dishonest Abe’

Phillip Mericle

Book review of [*The North, the South and Lincoln’s War Policies*](#), Book III, by Adam S. Miller, Monrovia, MD: Tower of David/Marian Pub., Inc., 2015, 196 pp.

With the election of the radically pro-North Abraham Lincoln in November 1860, many in the South concluded that they could no longer rely on the Federal Government to protect their interests. The republican-led North, determined to dominate and exploit the South, now held complete sway over each branch of the Federal Government. In recognition of this threat, several States in the South, led by South Carolina, began to secede, coordinating to form their own government, the Confederate States of America.

As the South left the Union most of the militia units retained their loyalties to their State. A few units of federal soldiers, however, were stationed in the South and this quickly gave margin to a very dangerous controversy.

While President Buchanan – Lincoln’s predecessor – was making conciliatory promises towards the South, he secretly corresponded with soldiers stationed in South Carolina. In late December approximately 80 federal soldiers, under cover of night, left the Southern fort they were originally stationed at and occupied the more defensible Fort Sumter that rested on an island in the bay of Charleston Harbor, South Carolina.

This action, implicitly supported by the Federal Government, precipitated a reaction by the South: An uneasy siege of Fort Sumter made by Southern forces took place, with neither side firing willing to fire the first shots. Soon, this situation at Fort Sumter would escalate and be used by the North as *casus belli* [motive for a war].

In the *third volume* of his series Adam Miller analyses the wartime policies of Lincoln and his administration as well as the conflict itself. This terrible war - which resulted in more American casualties than nearly every other American war combined, wreaked unimaginable catastrophe on the South, established a colossal and despotic Federal Government and set the tone for the relation between State and Federal Government down to our very day - can well be said to be one of the most influential events in American History. The books presentation of Lincoln’s is significantly different from that portrayed in our conventional history texts and undermines the popular myths surrounding this most revered figure.

Fort Sumter

When Abraham Lincoln took office in January of 1861, he inherited the Fort Sumter crisis. For months federal soldiers had held Fort Sumter. Already one disguised supply ship had tried to deliver soldiers and ammunition to the Fort, but had been turned back by Southern warning shots. This attempt to give logistic support to those soldiers was a blatant violation of promises made towards the South. Lincoln would prove himself no more honest.

To bring the Fort Sumter affair to a peaceful conclusion, several prominent Southern commissioners were dispatched to Washington D.C. with due juridical evidence of State ownership of the Fort and a genuine desire to arrive at a peaceful outcome. Indeed, several state ordinances passed in 1805 stipulated that ownership of such properties was only ceded to the government under highly specific conditions. Additionally, under Lincoln's predecessor an armistice had been signed between the Federal Government and the seceded State of South Carolina agreeing that such Fort would not be reinforced.

This agreement had already been violated twice by the North when federal soldiers took Fort Sumter and, again, when the North attempted to land an additional reinforcement of 200 men. But the South so keenly desired peaceful secession that it was willing to give Lincoln a trust of good faith. Despite these peaceful overtures, Lincoln dealt with the commissioners and their juridical evidence by *ignoring them*, attesting both to his dishonest shrewdness and his commitment to instigate a conflict.



Fort Sumter

The good-willed Southern commissioners were left waiting for a month on vague promises of a hearing and were even assured that they would *be informed* of any military movements. These delays were made to buy time for Lincoln and his staff to arrange for their real plan for the Fort. Finally, the commissioners were forced to give up in mid-April as the military conflict began. This diplomatic dishonesty alone should be enough to undermine Lincoln's reputation. But his acts of deceit went further...

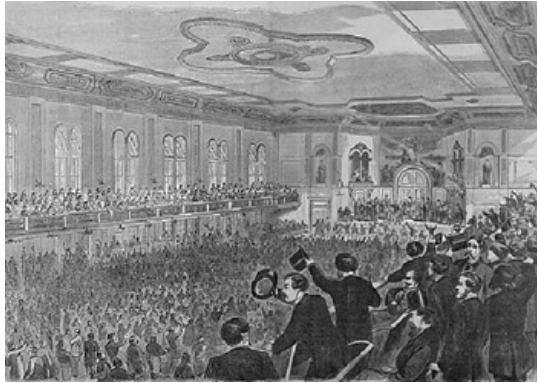
Dishonest Abe & the first shots

While the Southern commissioners were still waiting in good faith to be heard, Lincoln and his administration set in motion more plans that would escalate the situation and force the South's hand. A military convoy of 12 ships, outfitted with supplies, ammunition, 2400 soldiers and 230 heavy cannons, was sent from Northern ports to rendezvous off the coast of Fort Sumter. An invasion fleet had been dispatched.

The Confederacy had already intercepted several messages proving that Lincoln's peace envoys sent to discuss the "evacuation" of the Fort were in reality attempting to organize its reinforcement. With that and other intelligence, the South knew that Lincoln had committed blatant deception and that an armed fleet was on its way. On April 12, as the Northern invasion fleet, filled with guns and men, assembled in Confederate waters and the last plea for the Fort to be evacuated was put off, Confederate forces deemed that they had no option but to open fire on Fort Sumter, the foothold of the Northern army.

Cannons roared, but strangely the fleet stayed anchored outside the harbor, offering no assistance to the desperate Fort. The next day, the Confederate general – seeing that the Northern fleet was

offering no assistance to the Fort – ceased fire and once more asked the Fort to surrender. The Northern commander, seeing that he was receiving no help from his promised reinforcements, accepted. In one of history’s strange ironies not a soldier died during this exchange of fire. The bloodiest war in American History opened with a “battle” wherein no blood was shed.



The delegates of South Carolina vote for secession in December 1860

Abraham Lincoln’s sending an armed fleet into Southern waters to reinforce a Fort illegally held by the federal military can only be construed as an act of war. Though the fleet did not engage in combat and, eventually, turned back *without even picking up the men who surrendered at Fort Sumter*, it does not change the fact that it was an armed fleet that had entered Southern waters with overtly hostile intentions.

Any such action performed by one country against another easily classifies as an act of war itself, regardless of whether the fleet actually fights. A man

who puts a loaded gun to another’s head does not need to fire first for his target to have a right to defend himself.

Yet, the South, which was in truth reacting to an invasion, is vilified in history books as having been the aggressor, alleging that from the South were the first shots fired. Several European newspapers recognized the incident to be a duplicitous ploy intended to give Lincoln and his cabinet a *casus belli*.

Even before this, in January of 1861, Northern soldiers had opened fire upon confederate forces at Fort Pickens, Florida, an act of war that is simply omitted from most history books that favor depicting the South as the aggressor.

Thus, Miller demonstrates that the true circumstances surrounding the opening of hostilities are warped and distorted and that our history texts fail to acknowledge Lincoln’s wholesale deception towards the South. Instead, American History, here so clearly written by the winners, sees the South as the aggressor and Lincoln as the great “Honest Abe.” The opening of the war should show, if anything, that right from the outset Lincoln was anything but honest.



In the Battle of Fort Sumter – in the background – both sides shot and no one died

A Dictator Called Abraham Lincoln

Phillip Mericle

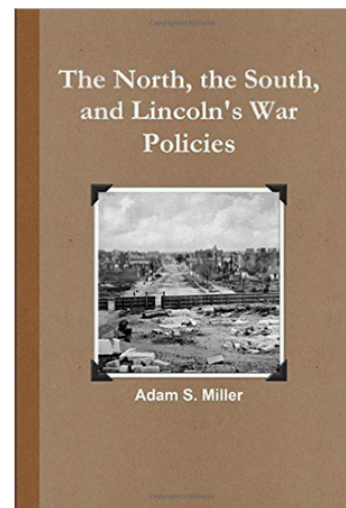
Book review of [*The North, the South and Lincoln's War Policies*](#), Book III, by Adam S. Miller, Monrovia, MD: Tower of David/Marian Pub., Inc., 2015, 196 pp.

“Our work has been the next thing to annihilation. ... In the record of wars we read of vast armies marching through an enemy's country, carrying death and destruction in their path... History, however, will be searched in vain for a parallel to the scathing and destructive effect of the invasion of the Carolinas”

- Northern Major George W. Nichols, staff officer to Gen. Sherman

While studying the latter half of the book *The North, the South and Lincoln's War Policies*, I was reminded of the words of Our Lord: “By their fruits you shall know them.” With this moral criterion we can scrutinize the actions of Lincoln, disregarding his lofty and duplicitous rhetoric, to get an image of what kind of man he really was. What emerges is an image in stark contrast to the humanitarian savior of our nation that Lincoln is so often titled.

On top of the diplomatic maneuvering and deception that allowed Lincoln to secure his *casus belli* [at Fort Sumter](#), Miller presents numerous examples of Lincoln's duplicity in dealing with his own people in the North. In blatant disregard for the constitutional limitations placed on the Executive Power of the government, Lincoln would inaugurate what was effectively an American Police State.



Lincoln began by calling up troops in direct violation of constitutional law, which grants such powers only to Congress. Following this, he suspended the writ of *habeas corpus*, which is a legal instrument protecting the citizen from an arbitrary imprisonment and gives him the right of a fair trial. The power to suspend this law is also only granted to Congress. Accordingly, when Maryland Chief Justice Roger Taney struck down Lincoln's action, the President simply ignored him and continued to imprison opposition.

This was an usurpation of the Judicial Power by the Executive Power, which, along with the Legislative Power, constitute the three branches of our representative regime. In this way, Lincoln clamped down on anybody who opposed him, resulting in the imprisonment of at least 13,000 and possibly as many as 30,000 Northern civilians over the course of the war for no crime whatsoever. The few who were given the chance at a trial found themselves before military kangaroo courts, again a breach of law that mandates civilians must be tried before civil courts.

The profile of a dictator

Every law Lincoln broke he did on the slippery-slope of “necessity.” Newspapers were shut down, journalists were arrested and in many places martial law was declared. Lincoln would tell a city or state official one thing and then do another, such as when he promised the Mayor of Boston that no troops would pass through his city and, then, proceeded to bring in federal troops, place the city under martial law and search all houses to confiscate any armaments held by the population.



Confederate sympathizers rebelled against forced conscription by Northern troops - Baltimore, 1861

The State of Maryland had much sympathy for the South, so to ensure state ‘loyalty’ Lincoln ordered the arrest of the Mayor and Police Marshall of Baltimore, over 30 Maryland state legislators and a Maryland congressman. In New York the “Union Vigilance Committee” was established, which set up a system of citizen-spies and secret police that targeted anybody holding even vaguely anti-Federalist or anti-Lincoln opinions.

In the re-election campaign of 1864, Lincoln even dispatched troops and cannons to New York to prevent “secessionist elements” from having the chance to vote against him. In the contested State of Missouri whole counties that harbored any secessionist sympathies were literally expelled from their homes, which were then burned, leading many Missourians to cast their lot in with the Confederacy.

Even the most prominent members of the government were not exempt, as seen when Lincoln’s most outspoken critic, Ohio representative Clement Vallandigham, was arrested by soldiers in his own home in the middle of the night. He was deported to Confederate territory and later fled to Canada.

Violences of every kind

While Lincoln was strangling dissent in the North, the orders given to his generals for their invasion of the South leave absolutely no doubt as to the despotic and inhumane nature of his administration. In order to more quickly crush the outnumbered South and force subservience to his government, Lincoln ordered a scorched earth policy, destroying huge swaths of Southern land and property. Some towns were so thoroughly destroyed that they were literally wiped off the map, remaining uninhabited wildernesses to this day.

As the Northern generals fought their way through the South many of them received direct orders to make the countryside uninhabitable, not excluding the great cultural centers of the South. Alexandria, a Louisiana city captured by the North, for example, was burned without notice to the resident population. Civilian hostages were routinely held and executed for any military reaction against Northern soldiers. The number of civilian lives lost to starvation and exposure resulting from the devastation remain incalculable to this day.

Lincoln was aware of the barbarism but did not care about it. He reinstated and even promoted some generals who had been court-martialed for many criminal atrocities against civilians. Other generals received telegrams from Lincoln or his government applauding them for the damage they inflicted on the beleaguered Southern people.

Participation of communists

It is of historical interest, particularly to us Catholics, to note that many of the soldiers and officers who perpetrated these war-time atrocities had a special ideological background. Lincoln's army and officer corps had, in fact, a large quantity of communist revolutionaries, who had fled to America following their failed European uprisings of 1848.

These men, hateful towards the Catholic Religion and Christian Civilization, saw the war as an opportunity to implement their Marxist ideals via a totalitarian government overcoming the organic local rule of the Southern States. As many as one-fourth of the officers, and nearly as many rank-and-file soldiers, fit this criterion and, Miller notes, numerous were also members of Freemasonry. Many of these officers were responsible for situations where soldiers committed atrocities against Southerners, showing the true colors of those who espouse the ideals of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*.

The degree to which Lincoln's government and military were permeated with early communist partisans is significant but is beyond the scope of this review to fully document. Suffice it to say that Marx and Engels looked to the Northern cause with great interest. The North in large part



Remains of Richmond after Lincoln's brutal scorched earth policies; below Sherman burning the South



was implementing the Marxist ideals of an industry-based economy, a strong central government and the repression of local and organic rule.

It is noteworthy that Karl Marx himself signed a letter from the First International Communist – The International Workingmen Association – congratulating Lincoln on his reelection in 1864. This Northern association with Communism is interestingly neglected from most conventional history books.

A war of staggering impact

Miller's book achieves its goal of exposing the iniquitous conduct of Lincoln and the North. Such a record of infamy has been suppressed to paint the victors in the most positive light possible. Unfortunately, historians who try to bring up these points are labeled “neo-confederates,” a term carrying strongly negative connotations in academia and the media.

Murder, rape and destruction fell upon the South's population per Lincoln's orders. His flagrant and illegal usurpation of constitutional authority, the corruption of his administration and his brutal repression of any sign of opposition are too vast to be fully documented in Miller's book, let alone in this article.

Despite this, *The North, The South and Lincoln's War Policies* offers a condensed delivery of factual information showing the truth behind the diplomatic dishonesty, repression of civil liberties and war-time crimes against humanity that were both instigated and approved by Lincoln and those under him.

With the evidence presented in this book one cannot assent to see Lincoln as the great humanitarian that so many history books depict him to be. Taken as a whole, this series of small books by Miller offers a much needed scrutiny of the War for Southern Independence. I highly recommend my readers to study the series.

It is my hope that it will open the door to a more frank and honest discussion of this crucial conflict in our American History and that we, as a people, will not shy away from the infamous facts surrounding one of our most wrongly beloved historical figures.



After burning the American Constitution, States' rights, *habeas corpus*, etc., Lincoln as a phoenix was reborn from their ashes

Marx & Lenin Praise Lincoln

Phillip Mericle

In the mid 19th century America heaved under the weight of a conflict that cost hundreds of thousands of lives. This war, the American Civil War, was not only significant for its impact on the Americans of those times, but also for the mark it left as one of most influential conflicts of modern history. Not only did Lincoln lead the North in a war to crush the South and its way of life, but his leadership became the American expression of a conflict that had been on-going in Europe since the 13th century.

The legacy of the Legists

In the 13th century the University of Bologna's School of Law had become the principal center for studies in civil and canon law and attracted students from all over Europe. Bologna's thought was based on ancient Roman Law and struggled to apply it to the nations of Christendom. This school, the Legists, believed that the outlying regions of a country or kingdom should be brought under the control of a powerful central government.

Under this principle the medieval mosaic of thousands of independent European political units began to be consolidated under the rule of absolute monarchs. It was the beginning of centralism, which would tragically lead to the republicanism of revolutionary France, evolve into the dictatorship of Napoleon and warp into the Socialism and Communism of the 19th and 20th centuries.

French historian Alexis de Toqueville commented on the sad state of affairs when he said:

“The old localized authorities disappear without either revival or replacement and everywhere the central government succeeds them in the direction of affairs. The whole of Germany, even the whole of Europe, presents in this respect the same picture. Everywhere men are leaving behind the liberty of the Middle Ages, not to enter into a modern brand of liberty, but to return to the ancient despotism.” (1)

This effort of centralism against the medieval Catholic principle of subsidiarity (that the smallest capable political unit should be, as much as it can, responsible for its own affairs) is a



In the University of Bologna, *above*, the Legists aimed to destroy regional autonomy

fundamental element in much of European history. It saw its expression also in the early days of the United States.

Initially, America attempted to construct a system in which regional authority was retained as much as possible, but this process slowly gave way to a more centralist system. Two distinct regions of the United States came to embody these conflicting systems; the centralized North and the decentralized South.

Lincoln: centralist & socialist

Lincoln's war against Southern independence came to represent the centuries-old conflict of central authority vs. subsidiarity. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, who also advocated the supremacy of a powerful central government, recognized the significance of Lincoln's war for their own cause and wholeheartedly threw their support behind the North. They closely followed the events of the war, commenting on it in letters and newspapers of the times.

Marx, indeed, [affirmed](#): "The workingmen of Europe feel sure that, as the American War of Independence initiated a new era of ascendancy for the middle class, so the American anti-slavery war will do for the working classes. They consider it an earnest of the epoch to come that it fell to the lot of Abraham Lincoln, the single-minded son of the working class, to lead the country through the matchless struggle for the rescue of an enchained race and the reconstruction of a social world." (2)

Under Lincoln, legitimate regional authority was crushed. Northern civilians and politicians who opposed his actions – or often even just questioned them – were imprisoned without trial. Beginning with the Legal Tender Act of 1862, Lincoln spearheaded the circulation of government printed greenbacks that were the ancestors of our modern currency. When in need of money, Lincoln's government could simply print it.

His policies essentially became a prototype of the Socialist States of the following hundred years; bloating the federal government to monstrous proportions, drafting citizens to fight for the purposes of the State, printing currency to substitute real wealth, denying the constitutionally guaranteed rights of local governments and private citizens, and ignoring or imprisoning fellow politicians who questioned or opposed his actions.

Socialists see their hero

At the outbreak of war, organized labor declared itself for the North. The unabashedly socialist labor unions urged its members to sign up *en masse* to fight for the Northern cause that they believed would lead to the empowerment of labor.

Foreign socialists also flocked to enlist, with huge numbers of communist German immigrants, men who had fled Europe following their failed revolutions of 1848, signing up to fight with Lincoln's armies. Following their centralist ideals, the socialists of the world, thus, took common cause to protect Lincoln and the North.

Following Lincoln's re-election in 1864, Karl Marx wrote him a letter, signed by the leaders of the First International Workingman's Association, congratulating Lincoln on his political victory and urging him to crush the 'Slave Power' of the South. Its first lines read:

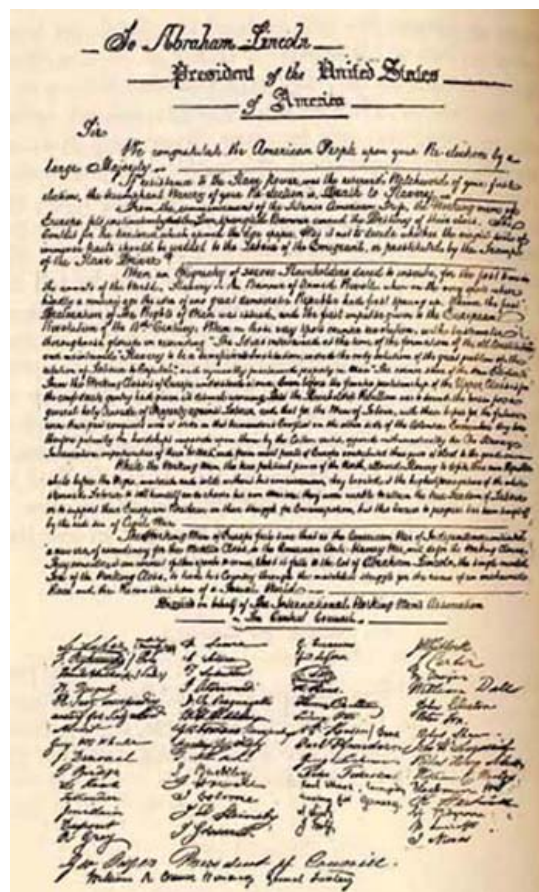
"Sir, we congratulate the American people upon your re-election by a large majority. If resistance to the Slave Power was the reserved watchword of your first election, the triumphant war cry of your re-election is Death to Slavery. From the commencement of the titanic American strife, the workingmen of Europe felt instinctively that the star-spangled banner carried the destiny of their class."

Communist praise

Lincoln's legacy as a centralizer and enemy of regional independence would attract the praise of socialists and communists for over a century.

Lenin cited the Civil War as a landmark in American history, writing to American workers to tell them that their country had a history of liberating wars that set the precedence to wage armed revolution against the propertied class.

Gorbachev, when trying to retain the Soviet Union, was also compared to Lincoln by many supporters of the communist cause. In China, Lincoln has been invoked as a model to impose Chinese control of Tibet. Lincoln's centralist policies even attracted the admiration of the national socialist Hitler, who praised the Northern War effort as an assertion of strong central government.



The letter to Lincoln signed by Karl Marx and other lead socialists

Conclusion

Lincoln's war for the subjection of the South constitutes the American expression of the centuries-old conflict between organic government and central government. With the victory of the North, so applauded by Marx and other communists, one more remnant of medieval Catholic society was defeated.

The Northern victory guaranteed the dominance of industry and central government over the traditions of the past, and it was Lincoln who installed the central government as an entity that would grow to consume all authority and define the limits of its own power.

In turn, this conquest was a landmark in the slow but steady degeneration of humanity that would culminate in the atheist and communist uprisings of the 20th century, paving the way for the culturally bankrupt and politically subjugated 21st century. Lincoln's war was an indispensable step in the march of the [Revolution](#).



Lincoln idolized by the American Communist party, 1939

1. Apud Bertrand de Jouvenel, *On Power*, Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1993, p. 285.
2. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19 (New York: International Publishers, 2009) 281

Hidalgo Raises the Standard of Revolt

Luiz S. Campos

The *Cristiada* and the *Cristeros* ... these epic names belong already to the domain of legend. I refer, of course, to the glorious Catholic counter-revolutionary uprising against the anti-clerical Mexican government in the years 1926 to 1929.

Many studies today try to explain the reason for that explosion of hatred and violence by the Mexican government against Catholics in the bosom of an apparently homogeneous nation. I believe that the revolutionary propaganda presenting the military resistance of the *Cristeros* against the Mexican government as a revolt of the poor against the rich, of the Indians against the colonizer, of America against Europe is contrary to the truth. The reality is different and tragic: the people were defending the traditional values and the legitimate monarchy, while the “enlightened” elites promoted the revolution and persecution.

The movement of the *Cristeros* came from a healthy reaction of the Catholic people who wanted to preserve the Catholic Faith and traditions of Christian Civilization.

Foreign influences over Mexico

The French Revolution had overthrown the Monarchy in France and Napoleon was toppling all the monarchies of Europe to transform them into egalitarian republics. In many cases, he actually succeeded in this. To this strong revolutionary wind blowing from Europe was added the influence over Mexico of the newborn United States of America, molded by the same “enlightened” principles.

In 1808 the French revolutionary armies entered Spain and took the city of Madrid. As this country was being invaded, the first call for revolution was smoldering in Mexico. Several years later, Napoleon and the French troops were expelled from the Iberian Peninsula, but he left the bad fruits of the French Revolution incorporated into the liberal Spanish Constitution of 1812.

The invasion shook the old social order in Spain and opened an era of turbulence, political instability, and economic stagnation. The Spanish revolutionaries would take advantage of that situation. A devastating civil war between liberal and absolutist factions broke out and persisted in the Iberian Peninsula until 1850.



Madrid surrenders to Napoleon in 1808

That political turmoil in the mother land would encourage revolts in the Spanish colonies of Latin America. Almost all of its colonies took up the revolutionary banner and claimed their independence.

The birth of the liberal revolution

Part of the Mexican Catholic clergy was deeply influenced by the Enlightenment. The seminary of St. Nicholas College in Valladolid was one of the centers cultivating these liberal ideas. As a consequence of that influence, the first call for independence in Mexico was made shortly before dawn on September 16, 1810 by a revolutionary and adulterous priest, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla.

Hidalgo was a liberal priest from St. Nicholas College who championed the new “democratic” ideas and wanted to do away with monarchy in Mexico. This priest nicknamed “The Fox” lived a scandalous and sacrilegious life. Among other things, he openly opposed the absolute power of the Pope, the perpetual virginity of Our Lady and clerical celibacy. In spite of having been investigated by the Inquisition, he was given the parish of small town of Dolores, near the city of Guanajuato. From there he gave the famous “Grito de Dolores,” or Shout of Dolores. Under the hypocritical pretense of preserving the country for Ferdinand VII, the Spanish and rightful King, he proclaimed the independence of Mexico.



Holding the torch of Enlightenment and under the banner of the Virgin, Hidalgo begins his march to Mexico City

Hidalgo was quite aware that his revolutionary ideas would not hold together the insurgency. So, to bring people to his cause the priest adopted the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe as his banner. On his troops’ standards he inscribed the words: “Long live religion! Long live our most Holy Mother of Guadalupe! Long live King Ferdinand VII! Long live America and death to bad government!”

From Dolores, encouraged by liberal intellectuals and priests, a mob of ranch hands opened the prisons to increase the numbers of partisans of the Revolution. With these unruly troops, Hidalgo started his march toward the Capital, murdering, looting and stealing along its way. Only in Guanajuato, more than 500 were killed in a wild and bloody massacre. A red terror swept through other towns and villages.

By the time the mob reached Guadalajara, Hidalgo had accumulated 100,000 men and 95 pieces of artillery. His company, however, was completely disorganized and lacking in military

discipline. When he entered into battle with the royalist General Calleja - who had only 6,000 men - Hidalgo suffered a complete defeat. With his lieutenants and 1500 of his mob, he tried to reach the Rio Grande to flee to the United States. But before that he was caught in the desert. In July 1811, less than a year after his Shout of Dolores, he stood before a firing squad, and paid the price of his own blood for the blood of so many innocents that he had shed.

Nonetheless, Hidalgo's "grito de Dolores" had planted the seeds of a Mexican revolution that would precipitate New Spain into unceasing unrest and troubles for more than a century. It would lead to the implantation of a Masonic Republic that would initiate one of the most atrocious persecutions made directly against the Holy Church. In this persecution the Cristeros would play their unforgettable role.



A mural in Guanajuato celebrates the revolutionary priest Miguel Hidalgo as the father of the Revolution in Mexico

José Sánchez del Río, Martyr for Christ the King

For Greater Glory reviewed by Margaret Galitzin

One of the best consequences of the movie *For Greater Glory* about the Cristeros is the story of their young martyr José Sánchez del Río that has come to the fore. The film follows the characters of Gen. Enrique Gorostieta (Andy Garcia), an atheist who is asked by the Cristeros to organize them and lead their army, and Blessed José Sanchez del Río (Mauricio Kuri), a Mexican boy who was martyred during the civil war.

The story of this 14-year old youth is moving and well presented although, in some points, historically inaccurate. For example, José never met General Gorostieta – he actually fought under the command of local General Rubén Guízar Morfin. I believe many readers would like to know the facts of José’s story to have the “real picture” of the life of this valiant youth so they can compare them to the movie’s presentation. His history follows.



Jose at right, was a Cristero flagbearer - but not for Gen. Gorostieta

“I want to be a Cristero”

José Luis was born on March 28, 1913, in the town of Sahuayo, Michoacan, the third of the four children of the cattle ranchers Señor Macario Sánchez and Señora Maria del Río. The Sanchez family was one of the leading families of the area, known to be virtuous and strong Catholics. José was a good boy with a natural piety, an obedient and loving son. At his First Communion at age 9, José received a special grace and began to be more serious about his religion. He had a strong devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe and said his daily rosary with care.

This was the time of the fierce persecution of the liberal Calles government against the Catholic Church. Jose was 12 when the Cristero War broke out, the peasant uprising that fought in defense of the Catholic Faith. The region where Jose lived was a stronghold of the Cristeros from the beginning of that counter-revolutionary movement. Idealism and zeal for the fight were in the very air they breathed.

Jose's two older brothers, Macario and Miguel, had left in 1926 to join the Cristeros forces under the command of General Ignacio Sánchez Ramírez, and their younger brother longed to join them.

At first his parents would not give permission for him to go. But José persisted, "*Quiero ser Cristero!*" [I want to be a Cristero!] To his mother's protest that he was only 13 and too young, he answered, "Mamá, it has never been easier to earn Heaven as now."

In the end, she could argue no more, but the Cristero commander in their town, Sahuayo, refused the boy's appeal to enlist. So, he made his way some 20 miles to the next town, Cotija, where he presented himself to the Cristero commander, Prudencio Mendoza.

"What contribution can so small a boy make to our army?"

"I ride well. I know how to tend horses, clean weapons and spurs, and how to cook and fry beans."

Mendoza was inspired by the boy's resolution, and placed him under the local commander General Rubén Guízar Morfin. From the beginning, José showed himself ready to serve willingly and readily, earning the respect and admiration of his fellow Cristeros.

Impressed by José's religious fervor and intrepid spirit, Morfin made him bugler and flagbearer of the troop. His job was to ride alongside the general in combat, carrying his battle standard and delivering the general's orders with his horn.

'My general, here is my horse'

On February 6, 1928, Morfín Guizar's Cristeros engaged in a fierce battle with the federal forces in the vicinity of Cotija. The Cristeros were outnumbered ten to one, and had run out of ammunition for their rifles. The Cristeros were in retreat – a rare thing for these valiant forces – when the horse of General Morfin Guizar was shot dead.

Seeing this, José jumped from his own mount and offered it to his chief, saying these words, "My general, here is my horse. Save yourself. If they kill me, I am not needed, but you are."

Helping Morfin up into the saddle, José delivered a hard swat across the backside of the horse and sent it galloping away. José, however, was captured along with other Cristeros, including a friend Lazarus, a few years older than he.



An authentic photo of Jose Luis Sanchez del Rio

Normally, the federal soldiers shot all the Cristeros they captured alive or hung them from trees in the square or on telegraph poles. But this was not the fate of José and Lazarus. Because of their youth, they hoped to frighten and intimidate the youths into abandoning the Cristero fight.

The soldiers took the boys and marched them, their hands tied behind them, to Cotija. Along the way they ridiculed and gave them blows, saying, “Let’s see what kind of men you are.”

‘I believe I will die soon’

In Cotija, they were taken before the Federal General Callista Guerrero, who told the boys they were too young to know what they were doing: “Who told you to fight the government? Don’t you know that is a crime paid for with death?”

He ordered a firing squad be drawn up, and then offered the youths an escape: their freedom if they would enlist with the government troops.

José quickly responded, “Death before that! I am your enemy. Shoot me!”

The General ordered the boys to be locked in a jail in Cotija. In that dark and stinking dungeon, Jose asked for paper and ink to write his mother, a letter that somehow managed to reach its destination. It reads:

“Cotija, Mich., Monday, February 6. 1928.
“My dear mother:

“I was taken prisoner in combat today. I believe that I am going to die very shortly, but it does not matter, mamá. Resign yourself to the will of God. I die happy, because I die in the ranks of Our Lord.

"Do not be distressed about my death, which is my only worry. Tell my brothers to follow the example of their younger brother and do the will of God. Have courage and send me your blessing and my father’s.

"Give my greetings to all for the last time and receive the heart of your son who loves you and wanted to see you before dying.

“José Sánchez del Río.”



Cristero banner - Long live Christ the King and the Virgin of Guadalupe

‘I am ready for everything’

The next day, February 7, the two youths were transferred to Sahuayo, their native village, and came before the federal deputy, Rafael Picazo Sánchez, who was the boy’s godfather. He presented José several opportunities to flee, first offering him money to go abroad, then proposing to send him to military school to pursue a government career. He need only reject the Cristero cause. José unhesitatingly refused.

The two boys were assigned to be jailed in St. James Church, a makeshift prison where horses were stabled and the deputy kept his fighting cocks. José was indignant at this outrage to the house of God. That night he managed to untie his hands, and he spent part of the night wringing the necks of Picazo’s roosters. Then he lay down in a corner and fell asleep.

The next day, February 8, when the deputy heard of the slaughter of his cocks, he became furious and confronted José angrily. The boy responded, “The house of God is for prayer, not to shelter animals.”

Picazo threatened him, asking him if he was ready for what was to come.

Jose answered without hesitation: “Since I took up arms, I have been ready for everything. Shoot me! For then I will be before Our Lord and I will ask him to chastise you.”

Hearing this response, one of Picazo’s aides gave José a blow to the face that knocked out several teeth. Without a doubt, the fate of José and Lazarus was now sealed.

On that morning, Wednesday February 8, Jose’s Aunt María brought the boys lunch, but the anguished Lazarus had no appetite. Jose, however, was not disheartened and encouraged his friend, “Courage, Lazarus, let us eat well. They will give us time for everything and then shoot us. Don’t give up. Our sufferings will last just a blink of eyes.”

At 5:30 p.m., they took Lazarus to be hanged in the main square and obliged Jose to witness the execution. They let his body hang a few minutes then cut him down, thinking him dead, and dragged him to the nearby cemetery where they left the body. But Lazarus was not dead. Lazarus – truly aptly named – revived and escaped with



The Federal soldiers hung the martyrs from telegraph poles, *above*, or from trees in villages squares, *below*



the help of a sympathetic guard. A few days later, he rejoined the Cristeros.

The federal officials had hoped to frighten José so that he would reject the Cristero cause. But he faced the butchers courageously and told them to kill him also. Still hoping to change his resolve, they returned him to the church-prison and locked him in the baptistery. From its small grilled window, which still can be seen today, some of the people of the village spoke with the boy. They reported he was composed and spent his time praying the rosary and singing hymns.

Meanwhile, José's father was desperately trying to raise the ransom put on the head of his son by General Calles Guerrero. The amount was \$5,000, a fortune at that time. The grieving father could not raise such a sum, and instead offered his house, furniture, and everything he owned. He realized the futility of his efforts when Deputy Picazo sent him away, shouting: "Get out of here. With or without the money, I'll send him to be killed under your very nose."

When José heard about his family's efforts to free him, he asked that they not pay a single penny of ransom. He had already offered his life to God and was resigned to death. By this time, all the people of Sahuayo knew what was happening and were praying for José and his family. Tension over his fate was rising by the hour.

'The moment I have so greatly desired has come'

On Friday, February 10, around 6 p.m., they took José from the parish church to the makeshift barracks across the street and announced his death sentence. The boy immediately asked for paper and ink to write his Aunt María to thank her for her unconditional support and to ask her to have his Aunt Magdalena bring him the Viaticum that evening before he would be executed. He wrote:

"Sahuayo, February 10, 1928.

"Mrs. María Sánchez de Olmedo

"Dearest Aunt,

"I am sentenced to die. At half past eight tonight the moment I have so greatly desired will come. I thank you and (Aunt) Magdalena for all your kindnesses to me. I am unable to write mamá: I ask you the favor to write to her. Tell Aunt Magdalena that I managed to arrange that they permit me to see her for the last time and I believe that she will not refuse to come (to bring Holy Communion) before the martyrdom.

"Give my greetings to all. Receive as always and for the last time the heart of your nephew who loves you dearly ...

"Cristo vive, Cristo reina, Cristo impera y Santa María de Guadalupe.

"José Sánchez del Río, who dies in defense of the Faith"

‘Viva Cristo Rey! ; Viva Santa María de Guadalupe!’

At 11 p.m., the hour of martyrdom arrived. Believing that torture would change the mind of the boy, the government soldiers flayed the skin from the soles of his feet, thinking that José would weaken and cry out for mercy. But they were wrong. As the sharp pain seared through his body, José thought of Christ on the Cross and offered him everything, all the while shouting ‘*Viva Cristo Rey!*’

Then the soldiers, hurling insults at him and giving him blows forced him to walk barefoot with his injured feet through the cobblestone streets toward the cemetery. Along the way, some of the soldiers cut his body with a machete until he was bleeding from several wounds.

At times they stopped him and said, “If you shout, ‘Death to Christ the King’ we will spare your life.” Jose would only shout, “I will never give in. *Viva Cristo Rey! Viva la Virgen de Guadalupe!*”

When they reached the cemetery, the soldiers stood the boy before a newly dug hole, his grave. The executioners riddled his battered body with bayonet stabs. At each stab, the boy cried out louder, “*Viva Cristo Rey!*”



Whole families - like Jose's - were dedicated to the Cristero cause

Then the commander of the guard addressed the youth, cruelly asking if he wanted to send a message to his father. To this José replied without yielding, “That we will see each other in Heaven. *Viva Cristo Rey! ; Viva Santa María de Guadalupe!*” These were his last words.

The captain drew his pistol and shot him in the head. José fell into the pit. It was half past eleven on Friday, February 10, 1928. He was 14-years-old.

A rich and long lasting legacy

The spectators stood in shock and silence. The only sound was the soft sobbing of Jose’s mother, who had accompanied him to the last moment, praying for courage for her son to die well. The villagers had never seen anything like this. Even the federal soldiers, some who were reluctantly obeying the orders, were amazed at such courage.



Many boys like Jose took up arms in the Cristero ranks - prepared to give their lives for Christ

The guard hastily covered the boy's body, burying him there like an animal without a coffin or shroud. The life was extinguished in the body of José Luís Sánchez del Río, but his soul had entered into eternal glory.

In his short life, he left an immense legacy. He had given his countrymen and fellow Cristeros a shining example of courage and fidelity to their holy cause. He had shown so great a courage that those who witnessed it believed that only Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself could have given a mere boy the strength to endure such suffering.

Some years later, his remains were exhumed and were laid in the Crypt of the Martyrs in the Church of the Sacred Heart in the town where he was born. In 1996 they were transferred to the Parish of St. James, where he had been detained the day preceding his martyrdom. The day of his beatification, along with 11 other Cristero martyrs, was November 20, 2005.

The major flaw of the movie *For Greater Glory*

We should not imagine that the case of José del Sánchez was an isolated one. Many youths, like José, were eager to take up arms as Cristeros and to give their lives for Christ the King. One old Mexican man, recalling those days, tells how his mother Mrs. Petra Rivas, who risked death herself to take clothes and food to the soldiers regularly, actually instructed him to join the Cristero cause.

“But what if I die and never see you again?” he asked. “Then you will be a martyr for Christ and I will see you in Heaven, where you will be waiting for me,” she replied.

These soldiers for Christ – young and old – had a clear idea of what they were fighting for: the restoration of the rights of the Catholic Religion and the reinstatement of Christ as King of society. They would be confused, I am sure, by the notion of revolutionary religious liberty being touted as their aim, which is the most serious flaw of the movie *For Greater Glory*.



The Cristeros were fighting for the one true Faith, not for revolutionary "religious liberty"

Freedom of religion for all, including Protestants and pagans, and separation of Church and State – these were the revolutionary ideas the counter-revolutionary Mexican Catholics had resisted since the bloody Masonic-inspired revolution had established the first Constitution in 1910. The “religious freedom” they were defending

was not the revolutionary brand being promoted today, but freedom of religion for the one and only true Faith and the restoration of Christ as King of society.

This is affirmed in the last letter of José to his aunt, when he wrote that he was happy to give his life - not for religious freedom - but “for Christ the King and the Faith.”



Relics and a wax figure of José Sánchez del Río in St. James Church in Sahuayo

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The Six Martyrs of Leon

Hugh O'Reilly

Many persons who saw the movie [For Greater Glory](#) understandably marveled at the courage of the young martyr [José Sánchez del Río](#), age 13. There were hundreds of similar episodes, however, in the eposée of *La Cristiada* in Mexico from 1926 to 1929, which records the names of many Cristeros who died crying out "Viva Cristo Rey!"

One of those episodes took place in the city of Leon in the State of Guanajuato, one of the most Catholic regions of Mexico and an early Cristero stronghold. It is the story of the six martyrs of Leon, who died together on the same day. Their names are José Valencia Gallardo, Salvador Vargas, Ezequiel Gomez, Nicolas Navarro, José Agustín Ríos and José Gasca.

The youths were members of the ACJM - Catholic Association of Mexican Youth, a national organization that sought to defend the rights of the Catholic Faith. José Valencia Gallardo, the leader of the group, had founded a newspaper in Leon that they called *The Voice of the People*, which denounced the many atrocities committed against the Church by the Masonic and anti-clerical Calles government.

Enforcing the violently anti-clerical 1917 Constitution, President Plutarco Elias Calles launched an open persecution against the Church and Catholics in 1926. Foreign priests were expelled, Catholic churches and institutions were closed, convents and monasteries were banned.

In *The Voice of the People* Valencia Gallardo spoke out fearlessly against these atrocities and made calls to rally faithful Catholics to action. He wrote:

"It is time that Mexican Catholics wake from that shameful lethargy into which we have fallen. It is time for us to throw off the ignominious yoke imposed on us by a group of unscrupulous persons who have taken advantage of our cowardice. They have taken advantage of our passivity, but the fault is ours for sitting idly by instead of defending our most sacred rights."



JOSE VALENCIA GALLARDO



NICOLAS NAVARRO



EZEQUIEL GOMEZ



SALVADOR VARGAS

Not pictured are Agustin Rio and Jose Gasca

Passive resistance changes into fight

At first, the ACJM and other clergy-led Catholic organizations in the cities reacted peacefully to the persecution: They organized a boycott against state-owned enterprises to put financial pressure on the government and to make it bend and allow the free practice of the Catholic Religion. They also circulated a protest petition against these unjust laws signed by 2 million Catholics (out of a population of 15 million).

By November 1926, Valencia Gallardo could clearly see that the boycott had not produced the desired effect. To the contrary, the efforts of the peaceful resistance had served to increase the fury of the government's persecution. Some groups of Catholics, mostly peasants, had already taken up arms in various parts of the country to defend the Church and their families against the oppressive tyrant. Valencia Gallardo and five of his ACJM companions also decided to follow their example and join the Cristeros who had organized along the outskirts of Leon.

Thus the six young men, José Valencia Gallardo, Salvador Vargas, Nicolás Navarro, Ezequiel Gómez, Antonio Romero and Agustín Ríos, all in their 20s, prepared to take up arms in defense of the cause of Christ.

When Nicolás Navarro, age 21, the only one of the group who was married, took leave of his young wife who held their small son in her arms, she said to him, "How can you have the heart to leave me and your son?" The future martyr answered, "When my son grows up, tell him, 'Your father died for his Religion! I must go even if I leave my son an orphan. What matters to me is to defend the cause of Jesus Christ!'"

Saying goodbye to his mother, Ezequiel Gomez, age 24, told her, "I am ready to die if Our Lord wants my blood to save our country."

The group is betrayed

In early 1927, the resistance was especially strong in the Catholic northeast region where there were mass uprisings. For the federal army, this seemed to offer an advantage – the possibility of concentrating their strengths in one region. But the generals soon realized that any victories were short-lived. What they conquered one day was recovered by the Cristeros later when the army marched on.

In Guanajuato, a series of uprising took place linked to those of the neighboring State of Jalisco. On December 27, the delegates of diverse places met secretly in Leon and decided on the date of January 3 for the uprising in that city and surrounding villages, and not January 1 as previously planned.

However, due to the lack of centralized command and organization, not all the towns could be advised of the change. So the Cristeros entered and successfully took the towns of Jalpa de Cánavas and San Diego de Alejandria on January 1, and then proceeded on to enter triumphantly into San Francisco del Rincón, an important village of the State. However, the federal government was now forewarned and alert to new attacks in the area.



The Cristero War started with the peasants, who fought under the banner of the Christ the King and the Virgin of Guadalupe

In León, seven young Cristeros led by journalist José Valencia Gallardo tried to convince Domitilo Flores, the police chief of the region of Coecillo, to join the Cristero cause, toward which he appeared to be favorable. But at the last moment, Flores betrayed them and delivered them to General J. Trinidad López.

On the night of January 2, they were imprisoned and sentenced without a trial to die the next morning. At first light, they were taken from the prison to be tortured and executed by gunfire.

Nicolas Navarro, who cried out "Courage, my brothers, remember the cause we stand for!" was beaten in the face to break his teeth. After mangling his body with sword cuts, the federals shot him. He died, crying out, "Yes, I die for Christ, who never dies! Viva Cristo Rey!"



Seeing this, the youngest of the group, 20-year-old Agustín Rios, began to sob. José Gallardo strongly rebuked the executioners, and then exhorted his companion to die bravely for Christ and the Virgin of Guadalupe. Gallardo was beaten in order to silence him. When he responded with the cry of Viva Cristo Rey, they cut out his tongue, and sarcastically said, "Now speak." Gallardo, who had freed one hand from the ropes that bound him to a stake, raised it and pointed his finger to Heaven as a confession of his Faith. The infuriated federal soldiers cut the hand off, and then split open his skull with their rifle butts.

Then they shot Jose Vazquez, Agustin Rios, Salvador Vargas and Ezequiel Gomez. Only one of the seven survived, Juarez Isabel.

A lesson that backfires

The executioners hoped to make a lesson of these six martyrs and took the corpses of the six martyrs to the main square of Leon across from the Government Palace to expose them to the eyes of the people.

When Doña Martina Gallardo the mother of José Valencia Gallardo demanded that the executioners give her the remains of her son, they refused. She responded, “It does not matter if you refuse to hand over the body of my son to me, for this morning (January 3, 1927) I offered his soul to the Sacred Heart.” When they finally agreed to hand over his remains, she kissed his mutilated feet and exclaimed, “A martyr! Thank you, my Mother, for he was yours!”

Standing before the body of her son, the mother of Ezequiel Gómez said these words, “O my son, pray for your mother and your brothers and sisters so that we can follow your example. You are certainly in Heaven!”

Hours later, 200 Cristeros entered the city. With nothing more than some rifles, the Cristeros rushed to the barracks, attacked the government soldiers with strong fire and disbanded them. The city of Leon held grand funerals for the six who were killed. Today they are commemorated as the Six Martyrs of Leon. A new group of martyrs of Christ the King! Young, generous, authentic heroes of the Mexican nation, who died defending a noble ideal, giving their lives for the cause of the Kingdom of Christ in society and to protect the Church from a Masonic persecution.

“Better to die than to stand by impassively before the evils taking place in our Country,” José Valencia Gallardo and his companions said when they took up the Cristero cause. The six martyrs of Leon joined hundreds of other Mexicans who preferred to give their lives than see the Catholic Faith compromised.



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The *Cabalgata* of Christ the King

Hugh O'Reilly

In 1927 the Cristeros war started with the armed confrontation between the soldiers belonging to the Freemason government of President Elias Calles and the faithful Catholics who opposed it. Calles had outlawed the Catholic Church, rxiled the Bishops and clergy, and closed churches, schools and seminaries. He also had issued laws against landowners and peasants to claim rights to their properties.

The whole country was in religious and social turmoil: battles, skirmishes and guerilla warfare were daily fare throughout Mexico. As the number of enlisted volunteers for the Cristeros grew and their support and power increased, the government retaliated however it could.



The Cathedral of Guanajuato in the old city is a gem in colonial style

At that time Guanajuato was already one of the most beautiful and richest cities in central Mexico, due to its wealthy silver mines. A grandiose monument in honor of Christ the King had been built in bygone times to honor the main devotion of that Catholic State, also named Guanajuato. This area was an important center of Cristero resistance. The government ordered an air raid to target the monument dedicated to *Cristo Rey* and it was bombed. The statue of Christ the King was destroyed, but its heart and head were miraculously preserved.

The heart and head of Catholic Mexicans was also preserved. The war ended, but their devotion was not destroyed. A shrine and another statue of *Cristo Rey* were built.

The new statue, like the old one, crowns Cubilete Mountain (8,500 feet), the symbolic heart and geographical center of Mexico. In front of the art deco shrine is a large plaza lined by columns that was erected in 1944 to replace the ormer smaller one that used to be there. Atop the globe-shaped cupola is a majestic statue of Our Lord with his arms opened in a gesture of affection and hospitality. Soon after its completion, pilgrimages again began to that place so rich in symbolism and history.

As one recalls, the devotion to *Cristo Rey* was the primary devotion of the Cristeros, along with that of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Their rally cry was *Viva Cristo Rey!* Their special hymn repeated this salute several times. No wonder Calles wanted to destroy the symbol of that devotion. No wonder that the shrine honoring Christ the King continued to attract the multitudes, even after the war.

Indeed, from all over the State of Guanajuato, the survivors of the Cristeros epopee and their sons and grandsons mounted horses and rode to the shrine of Cristo Rey in Guanajuato to adore Our Lord, ask for special graces and etch more firmly in their souls memories of that glorious past.

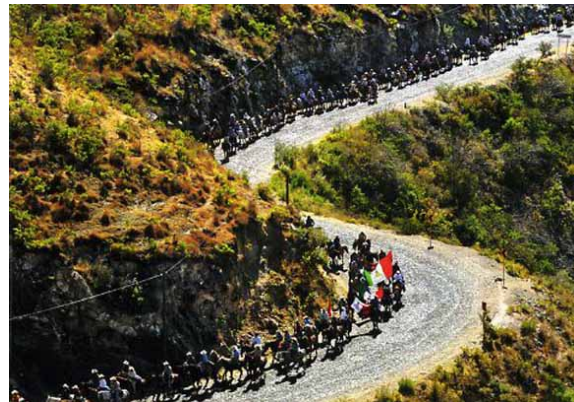
They chose the date of Epiphany to make their pilgrimage to pay that homage. Nothing could be more appropriate, since this is this day the Catholic Church commemorates the Three Kings who traveled to Bethlehem to acknowledge the Kingship of the Divine Infant in the Manger. In this respect, the journey of the pilgrim riders marks another feast of Christ the King.



At the geographic heart of Mexico a monumental statue of Cristo Rey dominates Cubilete Mount

This movement of Mexican men riding their horses to the shrine of Cristo Rey is called the *cabalgata* of Guanajuato. It is a mixture of a pilgrimage and a procession on horseback that ends at the foothill of the Cubilete. There, in a solemn ceremony, the riders receive a special blessing during an outdoor Mass. After the Mass, the pilgrim riders rest, don clean clothes, and then ride up the mountain individually or in small groups to venerate the famous statue of Christ the King.

The photos *below* were taken from the 52nd and 53rd annual *cabalgatas* in 2007 and 2008.



From throughout the State of Guanajuato - as well as many other states of Mexico and the U.S. - the pilgrims meet two days before Epiphany to ride together on pilgrimage to honor Christ the King

A Prayer of the Cristeros of Jalisco

Elaine M. Jordan

The *Cristeros* movement was a counter-revolutionary reaction of the Mexican Catholic people to the severe anticlerical laws emanating from the Constitution of 1917 under President Calles. It sought to secularize the country and remove the influence of the Catholic Church. Laws were enacted that severely restricted the clergy's political activities, expelled foreign priests, closed the Catholic schools and seized Church properties. Later, churches were closed and the Mass forbidden.

The popular uprising against the Calles government began in Jalisco in the city of Guadalajara, on August 3, 1926, when some 400 armed Catholics shut themselves up in the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe. They were involved in a shootout with federal troops and surrendered only when they ran out of ammunition. Jalisco became a focal point of the Cristeros counter-revolution. The Cristeros' battle cry was *¡Viva Cristo Rey! ¡Viva la Virgen de Guadalupe!* ("Long live Christ the King! Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe!").

The prayer below was said by the Cristeros of Jalisco at the end of the Rosary.

“My Jesus Mercy! My sins are more numerous than the drops of blood that Thou did shed for me. I do not deserve to belong to the army that defends the rights of Thy Church and that fights for her. I desire never to sin again so that my life might be an offering pleasing to Thy eyes. Wash away my iniquities and cleanse me of my sins. By Thy Holy Cross, by my Holy Mother of Guadalupe, pardon me.

Since I do not know how to make penance for my sins, I desire to receive death as a chastisement merited by them. I do not wish to fight, live or die except for Thee and for Thy Church. Blessed Mother of Guadalupe, be at my side in the agony of this poor sinner. Grant that my last shout on earth and my first canticle in Heaven should be *Viva Cristo Rey!* Amen”



Cristeros present arms to Our Lord at a Mass said in southern Jalisco

U.S. Diplomatic Relations with the Vatican: Only under Pius IX & John Paul II

Patrick Odou

Concerning [the discussion](#) as to whether or not Cardinal Mastai-Ferretti, later Pope Pius IX had been a Mason in his early years, please allow me “to throw into the pot” something that I recently found.

Perhaps many American Catholics are unaware of this fact but, for most of the History of the United States, diplomatic relations with the Holy See did not exist. This fact is an unfortunate consequence of the anti-Catholicism that was largely promoted by Masonic and Protestant forces in this country. Today, this notorious stain on our nation’s history has become common knowledge.

But, in 1984, in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, the Holy See and the United States established diplomatic relations. John Paul II was, then, leading the “Conciliar Revolution,” which was destroying Church defenses against her enemies such as Freemasonry. “Positive” diplomatic relations between the two States have continued to this day under Pope Francis, according to the Fact Sheet of October 17, 2016, posted on the U.S. Department of State website, which [reads](#):



Francis & Obama, perfect agreement on their socialist goals

“The United States and the Holy See consult and cooperate on international issues of mutual interest, including human rights, peace and conflict prevention, poverty eradication and development, environmental protection and inter-religious understanding.

"Since his inauguration, Pope Francis has acted as a global advocate of human dignity and justice, specifically in his emphasis on the moral imperative of ending trafficking in persons and caring for the poor and marginalized. The United States and the Holy See enjoy a positive relationship that serves to amplify a global message of peace, hope and justice.”

Pius IX established diplomatic relations with U.S.

There was only one other time in American History where relations rose to diplomatic status between the United States and the Vatican: It was from 1848 to 1868, in the early part of the long reign of Pius IX (1846-1878). As we read, again, from the Fact Sheet of the State Department:



Pope Pius IX, a liberal in the first part of his pontificate

“The United States maintained consular relations with the Papal States from 1797 to 1870 and diplomatic relations with the Pope, in his capacity as head of the Papal States, from 1848 to 1868. ... These relations lapsed in 1870 and with the loss of all papal territories during the unification of Italy. From 1870 to 1984, the United States did not have diplomatic relations with the Holy See.”

In other words, “consular relations” were established in 1797 (10 years after the signing of the U.S. Constitution in 1787); these were elevated to “diplomatic relations” from 1848 to 1868. But by 1870, both relations broke down for 114 years until 1984 in the pontificate of John Paul II.

The Fact Sheet of the State Department implies that diplomatic relations were established and dependent on the existence of papal territories. But this is not true since, by 1848, the U.S. was over 60 years old and the Papal States had been around for over a thousand years. Why weren't diplomatic relations established during the previous pontificates of Pius VI, Pius VII, Leo XII, Pius VIII or Gregory XVI? Why were they established – and for just 20 years – only in the early pontificate of Pius IX.

Also, why were diplomatic relations ended in 1868, as the Fact Sheet states, if the Papal States were not lost until 1870? Below, I list more serious reasons for the ending of the short-lived diplomatic relations in 1868:

- **Conversion of Pius IX:** It is widely known that Giovanni Maria Mastai-Ferretti was liberal prior to being elected Pope and that these sad inclinations accompanied him into the early years of his papacy. But, with his correspondence to divine grace and increasing confrontations with Freemasonry, Pius IX eventually became the great man admired today by faithful Catholics. I believe the conversion of Pius IX and the attacks of Masonry are major causes of the end of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and the Holy See.
- **American Civil War:** From 1861 to 1865, America was in a bloody Civil War and, during this conflict, Pope Pius IX was, to my knowledge, the only Head of State in the world who recognized the Southern Confederacy. In a letter responding to Jefferson Davis, Pius IX addressed the Confederate President as “Honorable President of the Confederate States of America” and included an autographed picture. In the meantime, [Karl Marx](#) and Fredrick Engels sent letters of support to Lincoln in the North. Such a situation, followed by the victory of Lincoln and the brutal “reconstruction” of the South, would also contribute to ending diplomatic relations by 1868.

- **Garibaldi and the invasion of the Papal States:** Shortly before 1868 (October 1867), there was a failed attempt by the Masonic forces of Garibaldi to take Rome and the Papal States and revolutions fomented inside Rome were unsuccessful. With the help of known Mason Otto von Bismarck, Chancellor of the Prussian Empire, Garibaldi eventually succeed in taking Rome in 1870. This is another reason why diplomatic relations ended in 1868 and all relations ended in 1870.



Garibaldi's troops attacking Rome

- **The declaration of Papal Infallibility:** The last straw for Masonry was the declaration of papal infallibility, as Prof. Plinio Correa de Oliveira explains in his article, [The Grandeur of Pius IX in the Fight for the Papal States](#). Bismarck of Prussia warned Pius IX not to declare that dogma during the First Vatican Council. Should he do so, Prussia would declare war on France, and France would be forced to recall its troops protecting the Papal States, thus leaving the Pope vulnerable to the advances of Garibaldi.

Historically, that is exactly what happened. On July 18, 1870, the dogma of Papal Infallibility was declared; the day after, on July 19, 1870, Bismarck declared the Franco-Prussian war and Napoleon III recalled to France his troops that were defending Rome. On September 11 of that same year, the forces of Garibaldi advanced toward the city of Rome. They entered Rome on September 20 and annexed it to the Masonic Kingdom of Italy. One month later, on October 20, Pius IX suspended Vatican Council I, to be continued at a later date. By June 1871, the capital of the Kingdom of Italy was officially moved from Florence to Rome.

Final proposition

Today we know that the Freemasonry is quite pleased with the Conciliar Popes. The Masons themselves have signified it many times either by public declarations or symbolic gestures in support of these Popes. It is understandable, therefore, that our country, being a strong adept of Freemason ideals, would establish diplomatic relations with them. So, the same logic leads me to suppose that in the first part of his pontificate Pius IX raised analogous sympathies from our governors. This would explain why the U.S. had diplomatic relations with the Vatican at that time.

If Vatican II opened the windows of the Church to the world, what was opened to the world with the election of Pius IX to the papacy? It seems to me that everything speaks in favor of some opening existing, which attracted forces that are opposed to the Catholic Church. Was it because Freemasonry saw Pius IX as one of their own? Or were his early liberal positions sufficient to increase those liaisons with anti-Catholic forces?

I believe that it is safe to say that Masonry clearly saw a great asset in the elevation of Card. Mastai-Ferretti to the Papacy. But, fortunately, their cause for celebration was short-lived with the gradual but profound conversion of Pius IX into one of the greatest Popes of modern times.