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Review of *Religion in Modern New Mexico*, Ferenc M. Szasz and Richard W. Etulain, eds.

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Religion in Modern New Mexico. Edited by Ferenc M. Szasz and Richard W. Etulain. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997. Introduction, tables, charts, annotated bibliography, index. ix + 220 pp. \$60.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

Ferenc Szasz and Richard Etulain begin their book by remarking that the history of the American West has mostly been studied and told without reference to the religious lives of the people who lived and settled there, and that this omission necessarily reduces our understanding of the region. To remedy the omission, the editors have gathered a group of fellow professors and graduate students to contribute essays on the especially rich variety of religious faiths and institutions of the people of New Mexico over 450 years. Various authors write of the several strains of Catholicism found here (Northern European, Hispanic, and Native American), of a Jewish history going back nearly to the first settlement of "Easterners" in the state, and of the difficulties Native Americans have had and are still having in securing religious freedoms other Americans take for granted. The experience and contributions of several denominations of Protestants are discussed, and some of the Eastern, mystical, and pagan faiths represented in the state are well-covered under the somewhat misleading heading of "Boomer Darhma."

Szasz's contribution offers a particularly interesting contrast between the religious history of New Mexico and that of the eastern

parts of the nation. During the years in which most Eastern public institutions were *de facto* Protestant establishments in need of a wall of separation, in New Mexico it was Catholicism that reigned and had to be separated from the secular state.

Scattered throughout the book are clues to one of New Mexico's greatest charms: persons of three cultures and many faiths not only coexist but seem to have genuine respect for one another. The diversity of peoples here from the very beginning, the isolation of all but the Native Americans from their respective religious hierarchies, the inversion of the American norm of Protestant power, and the need here—as in any basically rural place—for people to work together for common needs while leaving each other's private lives alone seem to have helped make New Mexico a more open and tolerant community than many. In this sense, particularly, Szasz and Etulain prove their point that communities and histories are best understood with reference to the religious lives and beliefs of the people involved.

The essays are clearly written, if sometimes excessively detailed. They are filled with local and historical color and accessible not only to scholars but to New Mexico readers who have an interest in the history of their state and the religious experience of their neighbors.

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