

historical memory fails or is intentionally clouded. Like a skilled physician, however, the objective historian can restore a healthy perception of the past. In March, at the Society's joint session with the Texas State Historical Association, our commentator, Sherwood O. Jones, reminded us of the insight and depth of Pope Pius XII, a figure about whom much has been "forgotten." During recent years, however, writers such as Fulbright Scholar Sister Margherita Marchione with her 1997 book, *Years Is a Precious Witness: Memoirs of Jews and Catholics in Wartime Italy*, (Paulist Press), have begun to restore to historical memory that which the World War II generation actually knew about Pope Pius XII. Scholars like Sister Marchione, dauntless in the face of controversy, illustrate once again that in the study of Church history the light of objectivity reveals that even in the most troubled times, there are always those who are brilliantly faithful to their Christian calling.

Father James T. Moore
President

Virtue and Transgression: The Certification of Authentic Mysticism in the Mexican Inquisition

Nora Jaffary*

Of the many prophecies that have been made over the past twenty years, this is the final one. Notice is given to all faithful Christians of the news that the staff of God's divine Justice is raised and that he is poised to obliterate this kingdom with bolts of fire.¹

So begins a letter composed by Getrudis Rosa Ortiz, a poor mestiza woman, which she then posted up around several Mexico City churches and convents in early March, 1723.² Ortiz was convicted two years later for the crime of being an "ihsua" and of faking revelations and divinations.³ Her inquisition trial is a fascinating source of information on a whole range of issues in colonial Mexican history, including class, gender, and race relations, medicine, and social criticism. This article will concentrate, however, on the reasons behind the Mexican inquisitorial court's judgment that Ortiz was a "false" mystic. By examining inquisition trials and spiritual guides, this paper will attempt to unearth the criteria used by the Mexican inquisitorial court to distinguish what it defined as two types of "false" mystics—*ihsuas* and *alumbrados*—from those women and men the Church revered as

*The author is a doctoral student at Columbia University, and thanks Antonio R. García, Elizabeth Norville, Ed Osowski, and Nancy van Deusen for reading drafts of this article. She would like to acknowledge support for research and writing from the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada.

¹Mexico, Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter cited as AGN), Inquisición 805, exp. 1 f. 3.

²Including the churches of San Bernardino, San Gerónimo, and the convents of the Encarnación and of San José de Gracia.

³AGN, Inquisición 805, exp. 2 f. 229.

bonafide visionaries. It will be argued that the court's judgements had very little to do with evaluations of mystical phenomena themselves, and much more to do with assessments of the nature and character of the people who claimed to experience them. As will be shown, the Mexican tribunal was predisposed to the condemnation of the behavior and beliefs of certain types of women and men who claimed to have been blessed with mystical gifts. The discussion will focus principally on the question of how violations of gendered codes of behavior influenced the inquisition's decisions to convict particular individuals.⁴

Before proceeding, it will be useful to recall some background information on "bonafide" and "deviant" mysticism. The objective of the entire mystical enterprise in Christianity is the achievement of a state of intensive spiritual bonding, literally referred to as *matrimonio espiritual* (spiritual marriage), between the mystic's soul and God. In order for this to be accomplished, the mystic must totally surrender her will to God. Progress along the journey towards mystical union is usually marked by the reception of any number of God's 'gifts.' Carolyn Bynum has pointed out that reception of these, which included "trances, levitations, catatonic seizures, or other forms of bodily rigidity, miraculous elongation or enlargement of parts of the body, swellings of wet mucus in the throat . . . and ecstatic nosebleeds," have a historical association with women in the European tradition.⁵ Indeed, the religious expressions of both John of the Cross and Ignatius Loyola, two of the most celebrated male mystics in the history of Catholicism, are notable for their de-emphasis of "paramystical" experiences.⁶

As well as being an almost exclusively female practice, experience of "the paramystical" was also one of the few areas in which women were occasionally able to claim spiritual authority within Catholicism. But the Church has always been wary of mystics, because in claiming the ability to directly communicate with God, they pose grave threats to the very necessity of the Church's existence. Even Saint Teresa, who

⁴This study is based upon the analysis of ninety-five Inquisition trials found in the AGN. The cases are composed roughly equally of men and women, (forty-nine men, forty-six women). In over ninety percent of them, the accused party is Spanish.

⁵Carolyn Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 186.

⁶See Alastor Hamilton, *Heresy and Mysticism in Sixteenth-Century Spain: The Alumbrados* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

after her death in 1582 became the most revered visionary seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Spain and its colonies, was investigated by the Spanish Inquisition for the crime of *alumbrados* during her lifetime.⁷

Mystical experiences, which had formed an important element of Christianity since its inception, proliferated in post-Tridentine sixteenth and seventeenth-century Spain and its colonies.⁸ This growth was accompanied by an increased persecution of those groups, like the *alumbrados*, who the Church perceived were practicing "false mysticism." The *alumbrados* were a religious sect first detected in Toledo in 1570, which experienced many individual and regional developments over the next century of Spain's history.⁹ Three of its characteristic elements remained fairly constant throughout the course of its development: an endorsement of a doctrine of internalized religion; contempt for the ceremonial aspects of worship; and a belief that adherents to the sect upon reaching a certain high degree of spiritual union with God, were released from any possible sinful ramifications of their bodily particularly their sexual—practices.¹⁰ Several historians have demonstrated that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Spanish Inquisition viewed the beliefs and practices of *alumbrados* as particularly threatening because the court saw them through the guise of the dominant religious crimes investigated during each century—in 1

⁷Regarding Teresa's life and religiosity, see Jodi Bilinkoff *The Azule of Saint Teresa: Religious Reform in a Sixteenth-Century City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989) and Alison Weber, *Teresa of Avila and Rhetoric of Femininity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). Gillian Ahlgren's *Teresa of Avila and Politics of Sanctity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996) is a useful discussion of the debates surrounding Teresa's canonization and the eventual endorsement of her writings.

⁸For relevant discussions of mysticism, see Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell, *Saints and Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000-1700* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Michael Certeau, *The Mystic Fable Vol. I: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Electa Arenal and Stacy Schlau, *Unholy Sisters: Hispanic Nuns in their Own Words* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989); and Luis Weckmann, *The Medieval Heritage of Mexico* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992).

⁹See Antonio Márquez, *Los Alumbrados: orígenes y filosofía (1525-1559)* (Madrid: Taurus, 1972). Hamilton, *Heresy and Mysticism*.

¹⁰For further readings, see Andrés Martín Melquiades *El Misterio de los Alumbrados de Toledo* (Madrid: Burgos, 1976); Alvaro Huerga *Historia de los Alumbrados (1570-1630)* 4 vols. (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1978-1988); Julio Jiménez Rueda, *Heréticas y supersticiones en la Nueva España: Alumbrosos en México* (Mexico City: Imprenta Universitaria, 1946); and María Agueda Méndez, "Los alumbrados: discurso místico o erótico?" *C.M.H.L.B. Caravilla* 52 (1989): 5-15.

sixteenth, crypto-Judaism, and in the seventeenth, the rising specter of Protestantism.¹¹

The first accusations of *alumbradismo* in Mexico occurred in 1598, and continued until the Inquisition was disbanded with independence. The charge was used fairly interchangeably in Mexico with accusations of being an *iluso* or an *embustero* (a tricker or faker) and in the later eighteenth century, with accusations of *Molinismo*.¹² Unlike in Spain, and contrary to earlier historians' findings regarding these crimes, however, the numbers of those accused of being *alumbrados* or *ilusos* in Mexico experienced no decline during the course of the eighteenth-century.¹³ Indeed, if considered in terms of the Inquisition's purported eighteenth-century contraction,¹⁴ it is apparent that there is actually a proportional increase in the numbers of those accused of *alumbradismo* and *iluminismo* in the later colonial period.

The term *iluso* simultaneously connotes enlightenment and delusion. It does not have as historically specific an etymology as does *alumbrado*, although many authors and inquisitors use the term *iluminismo* interchangeably with *alumbradismo*. In the context of Mexico, *iluso* is most accurately understood as designating a person who the Church believed to be practicing a type of false mysticism free of any formalized doctrine. Inquisitors believed false visions could originate either in demonic *ilusiones* (delusions) or else from strictly internal inspiration. The term was also used to refer to people who had succeeded in

¹¹See Hamilton, *Heresy and Mysticism*, and Andrés Martín Melquiades, "Alumbrados, Erasmiáns, Lutheráns, and Mystics: The Risk of a More 'Intimate' Spirituality," in *The Spanish Inquisition and the Inquisitorial Mind*, ed. Angel Alcalá (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 1987), 457-494. In another work, I will discuss how the accusations of *Alumbradismo* and *iluminismo* were distorted by the different prevalent preoccupations of inquisitors in the New World.

¹²Charges against supporters of seventeenth-century spiritual writer Miguel de Molinos, whose *Guía Espiritual* was condemned by the Spanish Inquisition in 1687.

¹³Many historians have relied on the statistics of José Toribio Medina as presented in his *Historia del Tribunal del Santo Oficio de la Inquisición* (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Elzeviriana, 1905). Medina based these, however, on the *Relaciones* (reports) of cases found in the National Archives of Madrid. These holdings provide useful, but by no means complete information on all the cases held in the colonies. Lewis Tambe, basing his analysis on Medina's numbers, wrote in 1965 that only one charge of *alumbradismo* was brought to trial in the eighteenth century. See "The Inquisition in Eighteenth Century Mexico," *The Americas: A Quarterly Review of Inter-American Colonial History* 22 (1965): 167-181. However, out of the total ninety-five cases of *alumbradismo* or *iluminismo* discussed in this article, forty-seven occurred in the eighteenth century.

¹⁴Solange Alberro, *Inquisición y Sociedad en México, 1571-1700* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988), 9.

"deluding" others into believing they were experiencing "real" mysticism.¹⁵

The need to search for "extra-mystical" explanations behind distinctions the Church drew between bonafide mystics and *ilusos* *alumbrados* is demonstrated by the fact that this classification was based on objective evaluations of actual mystical experiences. Comparisons between the religious experiences of *alumbrados* and *ilusos* or those of revered mystics, reveal that a high degree of similarity exists in the religiosity practiced by both condemned and condoned groups. Accounts of ecstatic raptures, visions, locutions, illness, stigmata, episodes of demonic possession contained in biographies of visionaries endorsed by the Church greatly resemble testimonies of these same experiences contained in *iluso* and *alumbrado* Inquisition trials. They are illustrated in the following two examples.

Antonia de Ochoa was a Spanish *beata* convicted in the late 16th century for *alumbradismo*. She was the central figure in a religious community of women and men, clergy and laity located in Mexico City.¹⁶ In denunciation of de Ochoa to the Inquisition, Doctor Antonico Córdoba described one rapture which he had witnessed at table, in the house of Joseph de Villa Alta, a merchant. Córdoba explained that as the first dish was being served, Ochoa appeared "as if absent outside herself, letting her head fall back and fixing her feet upon the ledge across from the table." A slave held her from behind, Córdoba continued, while Antonia proceeded to "sob as if demonstrating great pain in her heart."¹⁷

Doña María Moreno, the wife of Francisco Carrasco, another merchant at whose house Ochoa had also habitually eaten and undergone mystical raptures, testified to the court that during one she had given Ochoa some bread and wine as she had requested. Ochoa had then retreated into a corner and began "speaking without bread and wine, and then on one side of her chest this witness noticed she had a red wound and that on the palms of her hands she had a little red or purple marks."¹⁸

¹⁵This distinction is outlined by Jiménez Rueda, *Heréticas y Supersticiosas*, 161.

¹⁶AGN, Inquisición 539, exp. 25 fs. 326-340 and 538 exp. 1 fs. 1-308.

¹⁷AGN, Inquisición 538, exp. 1 f. 5.

¹⁸AGN, Inquisición 539, exp. 25 f. 377.

These descriptions of Ochoa's raptures are very similar to those contained in trials of other women accused of being *ilusas* or *alumbradas*. But neither do they differ markedly from the fits that "bonafide" mystics, either in the European or colonial traditions, are described as experiencing. Francisco Pardo, for example, in his 1676 biography of Madre María de Jesús, a mystical *poblana* nun of the convent of Immaculate Conception, described the frequent ecstasies she experienced in her adolescence. He wrote that on one occasion, while contemplating Jesus Christ's stigmata in a rapture, María had felt "on the bottoms of her feet two wounds so penetrating that they passed from the upper parts of her insteps to the lower parts of her soles."¹⁹

If differences are hard to detect between accounts of bonafide mystical ecstasies and those of condemned *ilusas* and *alumbradas*, the same can also be said of the fits they experienced when undergoing demonic possession, which in some cases were seen as further manifestations of God's love for authentic visionaries. In her testimony to the inquisitorial court, María Lucía Celis, who would be condemned in an *auto de fe* in 1803 for her illusions, described how Lucifer, leading legions of demons, repeatedly appeared to her to torment and tempt her sexually:

Grasping her by the hair, he whipped her, while pinning her shoulders against the wall, and he pulled her head from side to side with her hair, while whipping her, saying "I'm not letting you go, you lousy dog, until I have ripped you to pieces." And other demons did not stop shouting oaths and saying impure and dishonest things, at the same time as displaying their private parts.²⁰

Let us compare this description of demonic tormenting with similar episodes described in the biography of a nun whose mystical experiences were endorsed by the Church. Madre Sor Sebastiana Josepha de

la Santísima Trinidad was a Clarisa nun of the Convent of San Juan la Penitencia. Her biography, written by Joseph Eugenio Valdés, was published in Mexico City in 1765. In one passage in the *Vida admirable y penitente de la venerable Sor Sebastiana Josepha*, the devil is described ripping into the nun's body with his hand, and tearing out her intestines.²¹ Later, the devil is depicted returning to torture Sebastiana day and night with horrible faces, and sometimes he appeared in human form to tempt her to "illicit acts because he then came in her vision in unspeakable dishonesty, and sickening illicitness, moving her imagination with horrible suggestions and sending her burning messages of sensual fire."²²

The similarity of these passages gives us some indication of how difficult it would have been for inquisitors to evaluate the veracity of the substance of "paramystical" phenomena, not to mention the theological problems such evaluations would present. That such evaluations did not lie at the core of the court's determination of "false" mystics is already illustrated by statistical evidence from a body of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *iluso* and *alumbrado* Inquisition trials.²³ Nearly every *iluso* or *alumbrado* trial contains a denunciation of at least one type of paramystical experience with ecstatic visions being the most common occurrence,²⁴ but it is difficult to detect differences in the nature of the mystical experiences between the slightly greater than fifty per cent of the cases which led to guilty convictions, and the slightly less than fifty per cent which did not.²⁵ If evaluations of "authentic" mystical experiences were not based on examinations of these in themselves upon what, then, were they based?²⁶

²¹Joseph Eugenio Valdés, *Vida admirable y penitente de la venerable Sor Sebastiana Josepha de la Santísima Trinidad, Religiosa de Coro y Velo negro en el monasterio de San Juan de la Penitencia de esta ciudad de México* (Mexico City: Imp. de la Biblioteca Mexicana, 1765), 286.

²²Valdés, *Vida Admirable*, 286.

²³The following comments are largely confined to eighty-six out of the total body of cases—those in which the inquisitors' determination of the guilt or innocence (or harmlessness) of the parties involved made completely clear.

²⁴The exceptions are cases in which men are denounced for being *ilusos* merely for supporting a *ferril*.

²⁵Thirty-nine out of eighty-six cases (45%) were dismissed by the court, while forty-seven (55%) resulted in guilty convictions.

²⁶This is a question also raised by Grace M. Jantzen in her study of the gender politics of conferring of sanctity upon mystics in medieval Europe. See *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁹Francisco Pardo, *Vida y virtudes heroicas de la Madre María de Jesús, religiosa profesa en el convento de la Limpia Concepción de la Virgen María en la ciudad de los Angeles* (Mexico City: Imp. de la Viuda de Bernardo Calderón, 1676), 14.

²⁰This citation comes from a reproduction of a trial, transcribed by Edelmir Ramirez Leyva, *María Rita Vargas, María Lucía Celis, Beatas embustadoras de la colonia* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1988), 146.

One type of source that can provide us with useful information regarding this question is contemporary inquisitors' manuals and spiritual guides. Miguel de Godínez was one of the most widely studied writers on mystical theology in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Mexico, as is evidenced by the frequent references in Inquisition cases to his 1682 *Práctica de la Theología Mystica*.²⁷ A second popular author cited in the Inquisition cases is Antonio de Arbiol, who was known in particular for his *Desengaños Mysticos—á las almas detenidas, o engañadas en el camino de la Perfección*, written in 1705.²⁸

Godínez, Arbiol, and others do devote some discussion in their tracts to the problem of assessing the veracity of actual mystical experiences. But these guidelines are largely confined to two questions.²⁹ The first issue concerned the state in which a soul was left after a mystical experience. If after having had an ecstasy, vision, or locution, a person's soul was left in a state of agitation or disobedience, rather than one of docile tranquillity, it was automatic grounds for assuming it was either faked, or originated in a devilish ruse.³⁰ The second test dealt with the content of mystical experiences. These were always to be held in extreme suspicion if they diverged in any way from accepted Church doctrine, or contradicted the contemporary religious wisdom of the recipients' judges or spiritual advisors. As Godínez explains, one should be very wary of a person who receives many revelations, or whose revelations "contradict anything in Scripture, the traditions, and uses of the Church, [or] the moral doctrine of the Church Fathers" which he says, proves they are those of *ilusos* or *alumbrados*.³¹

²⁷See, for example, AGN Inquisición 793, exp. 1 f. 145; 743, exp. 1 f. 7; 748, exp. 1. 36. Godínez is the Hispanicized name of an Irish Jesuit, Michael Wadding who taught theology in the college of San Pedro and San Pablo in Mexico City.

²⁸See references to his work in AGN Inquisición 867, exp. 1, fs. 287, 479; 816, f. 299. For other contemporary guides dealing with these issues, see Don Luis de la Peña's preface to Fray Sebastián de Santander y Torres' *Vida de la Venerable Madre María de San José, Religiosa Agustina Rosálida*. (Sevilla, 1725); Fray Francisco de la Anunciación, *Indicatio de la Virtud y Exorcismo de Virruosas, en las públicas castigas de las Hipocritas, dado por el Tribunal del Santo-Oficio* (segundo impresio: Madrid: Imprenta del Mercurio, 1754); and Joseph de Bayarri's "Práctica de las tres vias másticas," 1751, Mexico City, Fondo Reservado de la Biblioteca Nacional, MS 399 [666].

²⁹This is an interesting contrast to the attempts at minute, scientific testing that spiritual doctors claim they are able to perform with regard to demonic possession; the classification of these experiences dates back to the notorious late fifteenth century *Malleus Maleficarum* or "Hammer of Witches."

³⁰See Godínez, *Práctica*, 380, 431. See also De la Peña, *Vida de la Venerable*, 7.

³¹Godínez, *Práctica*, 383–384. See also De la Peña, *Vida de la Venerable*, 7.

The issue of the state in which a person's soul is left from a mystical experience was not a standard frequently invoked by inquisitors or *calificadores* (theological evaluators). Discussion of the possible revolutionary or non-conformist content of mystical experiences was much more common in the trials. Let us return, for example, to the story of Getrudis Rosa Ortíz, the case referred to in this paper's opening. In an initial evaluation of her prophecies, Licenciado Pedro Navarro de Islas *Inquisitor Fiscal*, wrote that he did not object to Ortíz' statements about sinful Mexico's imminent destruction at the hands of a wrathful God—an apocalyptic warning about the need for moral reform for which he would have found much resonance both in scripture and in the writings of many theological authorities. He did object, however, to Ortíz' beliefs about the types of morally offensive behavior Mexican audiences before the tribunal, Ortíz summarized these as entailing the fact that Christians had been entering Church to worship in inappropriate attire—men appeared unshaven and with long hair, while women presented themselves to worship in "dishonest outfits," not to mention the fact that, because of the way they dressed, "one could not distinguish the men from the women."³² While concurring with Ortíz' admonitions regarding the scandalous nature of women's dishonest outfits, Navarro de Islas found Ortíz' preoccupations with these matters of dress "ridiculous and impertinent" and, as such, demonstrated that her visions could not possibly have originated with God.³³

As this, and other examples in *ilusos* and *alumbrado* trials illustrate some discussion was devoted, to the question of the degree to which their content conformed to accepted doctrinal traditions.³⁴ However several other issues were made much more prominent in theological experts' assessments of "bonafide" visionaries. Both spiritual tracts and Inquisition trials demonstrate that inquisitors based their condemnation of false mystics on assessments of women's practice of virtue rather than on the precise nature of their mystical experiences. They convicted women whom they believed had not adhered to the four conventual

³²AGN, Inquisición 805, exp. 1 f. 14.

³³AGN, Inquisición 805, exp. 1 f. 17.

³⁴Another instance of the Court evaluating the content of the theology of a mystical experience contained in the trial of Doña Ana de Zayas, a lay woman convicted of *alumbradismo* in 1694. See AGN, Inquisición 692, exp. 2, fs. 171–176.

vows of obedience, poverty, chastity, and confinement. And they censured those who failed to embody the "heroic virtues"—the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, and the four cardinal ones of prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude.

Miguel Godínez, Antonio de Arbiol, and other contemporaries were in agreement that the most important sign of a true visionary was her devotion to practicing these virtues and upholding these vows.³⁵ Godínez repeatedly referred to this idea in his *Práctica*. He wrote, for instance, that one must always be suspicious of a "person who has many revelations, visions, raptures, and other favors, without sufficient penitence, humility and obedience," which people, he said, demonstrate more "of a deceiving spirit than a true one, because it does not pertain to God, but rather to the Devil, to build golden spires of visions without first constructing the solid foundation of the moral virtues."³⁶ Application of this standard is evidenced in every single Inquisition trial studied here. Returning to the case of Getrudis Rosa Ortíz, with which this paper opened, for instance, *calificador* Domingo de Quiroga's opening statement indicates that her visions could not possibly have come from God because authentic visions are meant to "cause the moral virtues of obedience, humility, and patience to appear in the soul, and to cast the opposite vices away from it."³⁷

It may seem somewhat curious that inquisitors and theologians were so set on enforcing these strict monastic virtues and vows in the cases of religious lay women and *beatas*.³⁸ This can be explained by the very fact that *beatas* were a particularly threatening category of women to colonial ecclesiastical officials. Unlike nuns, *beatas* lived outside the supervision of the convent's cloistered walls. Unlike most lay women, they did not live within the confines of the institution of marriage. They were single women who were exposed on a daily basis to the many temptations presented by the world beyond the cloister. Some of

³⁵Bell and Weinstein point out the Church has always been more concerned with the appraisal of these virtues than in other indications of sanctity in its evaluations of candidates for sainthood, *Saints and Society*, 141–143.

³⁶Godínez, *Práctica*, 382. See also pgs. 385, 389. Similar views are expressed by Arbiol, *Desengaños*, 77; Bayarza, *Práctica*, 208, and by De la Peña, *Vida de la Venerable*, 5.

³⁷AGN, Inquisición 805, exp. 2 f. 19.

³⁸*Beatas* were religious women who lived communally or individually outside of convents, often because they had been unable to afford conventional dowries. Although professing many of the same vows as nuns, *beata* experienced little or no formal supervision by a religious order.

them created associations between themselves and established religious orders by donning the habit worn by its members. *Beatas'* exposure to the world, especially in the context of association with a religious order, made it imperative that these women uphold the Christian virtues, perhaps even more rigorously than cloistered women, who were safely isolated from public scrutiny and earthly temptation.

Church officials' paranoia about the possible harm these uncloistered religious women could inflict upon both their communities and themselves is expressed in a number of seventeenth and eighteenth century sources. Their greatest concern was directed at women who were lone *beatas*, as opposed to those who lived in communal *beaterios*, or who were members of the third religious orders.³⁹ A late seventeenth-century Spanish religious tract which also circulated in Mexico during the colonial period, *Aviso de gente recogida en especial al servicio de Dios* by Diego Pérez, aimed to provide *beatas* with a set of moral directives.⁴⁰ The tract began by noting that "the *Beatas* who now are found in our Spain, who are not nuns, nor regular *Beatas* [i.e. living communally] must also maintain the state of virginity."⁴¹ Pérez later went on to discourage *beatas* from forming any close personal connections to other secular people. He also warned his readers about the deceitfulness of *beatas* who had adopted spiritual lives in order to avoid performing physical labor. The existence of particularly strong mistrust of lone *beatas* is also reflected in the conviction percentages of the Mexican *alumbrado* and *iluso* trials. Lone *beatas* were convicted more than twice as frequently as *terceristas* (members of the third orders).

As far as male *ilusos* or *alumbrados* were concerned, court officials invoked notably different standards when evaluating the likelihood of their being "bonafide" mystics. Partially, this is due to the fact that men charged with these crimes, for the most part, participated in quite

³⁹See Nancy van Deusen's forthcoming article in the *Colonial Latin American History Review* regarding the perception of these two types of *beatas* in colonial Peru.

⁴⁰For other contemporary literature containing strict proscriptions on the potential moral dangers embodied by uncloistered *beatas*, see the measures supported by the 1771 meeting of the *Comisión Provincial Mexicana IV* (Querétaro, 1898) Libro 3, Tit. XVI, "De las Regulares y Monjas." See also late sixteenth-century tract published by the Spanish Inquisition against *beata* and *alumbrada* who were failing to demonstrate the "service and obedience" they owed to their parents and husbands by adopting religious lifestyles. Quoted in Fernando Iwasaki Cauti, "Mujeres al borde de la perfección," in *Una Particula del Cielo*, ed. Luis Millones (Lima: 1973), 75.

⁴¹Doctor Diego Pérez, *Aviso de gente recogida y en especial al servicio de Dios*, (Madrid, 1678), 2.

different kinds of activities from women. Priests and friars composed the largest group of men accused of being *alumbrados* or *ilusos*.⁴² The majority of this group was suspected because of the support—financial or spiritual—that they had given to female *ilusas*. The other activity for which they were most frequently accused was the solicitation of these women. Apparently, they often prefaced their propositions with the alumbradista tenant that they had achieved God-given dispensation from any sinful ramifications of their bodily activities.

The religiosity of male *ilusos* and *alumbrados* which most closely resembles that of their female counterparts is expressed by the five *beatos* and *ermitaños* who appear before the court between the mid-seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Some of these men expressed their religiosity by writing spiritual tracts, claiming that these were based on divine inspiration. Some wandered about in the streets of Puebla and Mexico City, espousing criticism of the Mexican clergy. They are the only group of men accused of being false mystics in whose religious expressions the paramystical phenomena (visions, trances, raptures, and supernatural illness), so predominant among women *alumbradas* and *ilusas*, played a significant role.⁴³ Female *alumbradas* and *ilusas* were castigated for not upholding the virtues of humility and obedience, but concern over the failure to uphold a slightly different code of moral virtues is discernible in the cases of these *beatos* and *ermitaños*. In these men's trials, the inquisitors turned their attention, instead, to the virtue of honesty.⁴⁴

The inquisitors' preoccupation with honesty in the male subjects who appeared before them is evident in the case of the *ermitaño* Fray Sebastián Victoria, condemned for being an *alumbrado* for his "false" visions in 1659. In their accusation of Fray Sebastián, the inquisitors wrote that they knew his visions must be false because "revelations and favors from God do not fall on deceitful and lying subjects." Fray Sebastián, they determined, was just such a subject. The inquisitors first

⁴²Priests and friars make up sixty percent of the total men accused of being *ilusos* or *alumbrados*.

⁴³The only other cases of priests expressing fits or visions surround the late seventeenth-century trial of Antonia de Ochoa.

⁴⁴Ramón A. Gutiérrez explores many of the roots and ramifications of the differing concepts of male and female honor in the context of colonial New Mexico in *When Jews Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 176-240.

pointed out that while claiming to be a native of Victoria, Fray Sebastián had, in fact, been born in Marina. His judges were also perturbed that he had denied to the court that he was a member of any religious order and they had uncovered that he had actually belonged to a Capuchin friary when he had been living in Spain.⁴⁵

Theologians' guides concerning the assessment of "bonafide" visionaries, we have seen, are concerned with the issue of the practice of virtue among people claiming to be mystics. A second notable feature of these guides is the commentary they make on woman's nature and its relationship to mystical experiences. Many of them state that women's emotional natures predispose them to the receipt of mystical gifts. But they also claim that women's fickleness and deviousness, coupled with the fact that they are deprived of access to channels of power normally reserved for men, mean that women are likely to fake the experience of receiving these gifts. In his treatise, Antonio de Arbiol reported a conversation that he had had with a learned woman, calling attention to her ideas about the need to be suspicious of poor women, because women who

are born rich and noble, since they already have established positions and estimation in the world, do not look for estimation with invention; but as regards poor, ordinary, and common women, as you will note, in being taken for virtuous and saintly, they gain public praise and are given enough for the convenience of their lives. They are easily tricked in this way by the devil, and for this reason, there are so many more *ilusas* and *embusteras* who are common women than there are rich and noble ones.⁴⁶

Godínez expressed similar views and stated that while one should not be alarmed if men of good position within the Church experience mystical visions, one should always regard with suspicion claims to these made by any "melancholic *beatas* in ecstasy in churches, as well as by any young nuns of little understanding" and also by "disheveled, idiotic,

⁴⁵AGN, Inquisición 445, exp. 1, f. 165. See also f. 168. For another example of the court's fixation on male honesty, see AGN Inquisición 743, exp. 1, fs. 78, 296.

⁴⁶Arbiol, *Discrepancias*, 78. See also Godínez, *Prácticas*, 118-119.

dealing with the disruptive behavior of these overly curious women, commenting that,

The discreet and prudent woman, says Saint Ambrose, should only ever be inside her house, and should never be proud, not even during communal visiting; because any person of good judgment recognizes that women must be laborers. A woman, through the work of her hands is good, and maintains her Christian modesty with less difficulty the busier she is; because the more she attends to her work, the less modesty she loses looking to other things.⁵²

Application of this idea is again clearly evidenced in *iluso* and *alumbrado* Inquisition trials. In his evaluation of Getrudis Rosa Ortíz' religiosity, for instance, *Licenciado* Pedro Navarro, Inquisitor Fiscal, wrote that the most damning aspects of her writings was not their content, but rather her claim to interpretive powers over them and her penchant for displaying them in written form. He stated that the dubious nature of her visions was revealed by the fact that she had never experienced any uncertainty about either their origins or their meanings even though God had always seemingly expressed himself in very indirect ways to her. He elaborated, writing that the manner in which she claimed to receive her visions was highly suspect, especially the fact that she had stated, "that it seemed to her, that God gave her to understand that he wanted to punish Mexico and would begin with the clergy because if it was a real vision, it wouldn't have been revealed to her with such uncertainty, letting her arbitrarily conjecture what it signified without instructing her in a revelation."⁵³ He did not think Getrudis Rosa Ortíz could be a true mystic because she grafted her own precise interpretations on to visions that came to her very obliquely. He condemned her for stating that "God gave her to understand that which she knew of on her own." Words, he elaborated, which "indicate these ideas are her own discourse, her own conjectures and imagination."⁵⁴

⁵² Arbiol, *Desengaños*, 81.

⁵³ AGN, Inquisición 805, exp. 1, f. 17.

⁵⁴ AGN, Inquisición 805, exp. 1, f. 17.

popular hermits who are friends of stupidity, applause, praise, and gifts.³³⁻³⁷

The fact that inquisitors dealt especially harshly with people accused of being *ilusos* or *alumbrados* who originated from these strata of the population is well documented in this body of Inquisition trials in which a clear correlation exists between the frequency of convictions of guilt and the accused party's status in relation to the Church. People within the Church hierarchy—priests, friars, and nuns—form the largest body of those accused of *alumbradismo* and *iluminismo*, accounting for nearly forty percent of the total accusations studied here. *Beatos*, *beatos*, and *ermitaños* compose just over one third of the cases. The laity follow with the smallest representation, at just over one quarter.⁴⁸

The telling statistic here, however, concerns the frequency with which each of these groups was convicted. Both the "institutionalized" religious population and the lay population have rates of conviction at slightly under fifty percent for each group.⁴⁹ In contrast, the *beata*, *beato*, and *ermitaño* category has a much higher rate of conviction, at almost seventy-five percent,⁵⁰ demonstrating that the inquisitors may well have heeded the warnings made by the theological writers noted above regarding the need to be doubly suspicious of mystics who originated from this sector of the populace.

In addition to cautioning inquisitors against the mystical experiences of women who did not embody the heroic virtues, as well as against melancholy *beatas* and disheveled hermits, mystical authorities inform their readers they must guard themselves against the ruses of another group of suspect women—those who demonstrate that they possess curious natures, over-active imaginations, creative impulses, or intellectual yearnings. As de Arbiol expressed in his *Desengaños místicos*, "is there nobody to tell curious women, that they sin mortally, wanting to know by Divine revelation that which it is not important for them to know?"⁵¹ Fortunately, Arbiol provided his readers with a solution for

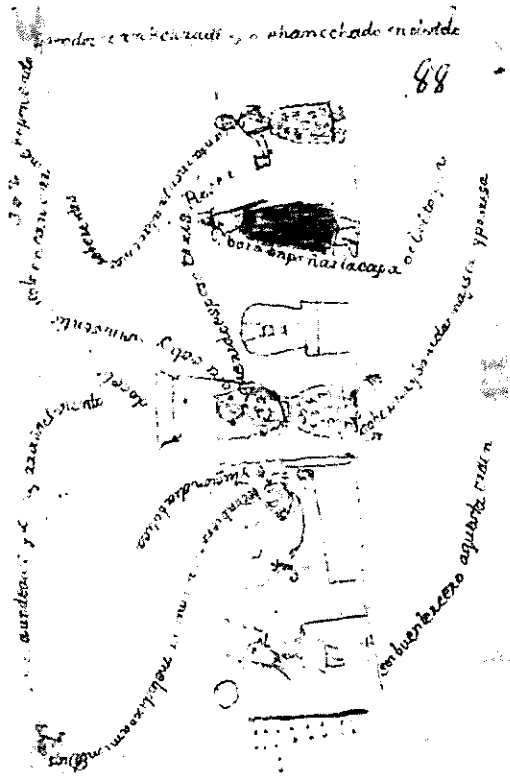
³⁷ Godínez, *Prácticas*, 436. See also p. 389, and De la Peña, *Vida de la Venerable*, p. 7.

⁴⁸ There are thirty-three cases against members of the "institutionalized" Church, twenty-nine against *beatas*, *beatos*, or *ermitaños*, and twenty-four against lay people.

⁴⁹ Fifteen convicted out of thirty-three accused and eleven convicted out of twenty-four accused, respectively.

⁵⁰ Twenty-one convicted out of twenty-nine accused.

⁵¹ Arbiol, *Desengaños*, 78.



This anonymous drawing, from the Inquisition records of the Archivo General de la Nación, had been affixed to the door of the late-eighteenth century *ilustre* Ana de Aramburu's house, and was submitted to the Inquisition by one of her former supporters during her trial. It is illustrative of some of the ways Aramburu was perceived by her peers, and perhaps by her inquisitors as well. *Courtesy the author.*

The inquisitors, in their final judgment of the religious behavior of Ana de Zayas, a lay woman convicted of *alumbrañismo* in 1694 for writing spiritual tracts, wrote that the most disturbing aspect of her mystical experiences concerned her attitude towards the revelations she received. Principally, her judges were bothered by her overly confident nature and her failure to consider the possibility that the visions and revelations she experienced might have been sent to her from the devil.⁵⁵ In her confidences and self-reliance in making her own assessment of her visions' origins, Doña Ana, they stated, was placing herself on the same level as a priest. In a recommendation reminiscent of Antonio de Arbiol's views on the destructive reason (an overly active imagination) for women's participation in the objectionable practice of writing about spiritual matters, the court suggested that Ana de Zayas' time would most profitably be spent if she could be dissuaded from

⁵⁵AGN, Inquisición 692, exp. 2, fs. 117-118.

continuing her writing practices, and instead concentrate only on praying through recitation of the rosary. They also recommended that she be forbidden from leaving her house except to go to mass, and that she "only apply herself to the work of sewing cushions, to suffering, and obeying her husband, and to complying with what a Christian must."⁵⁶

Most often, rates of conviction can be correlated to particular characteristics of the accused as *alumbrañados* and *ilusos*. But there is one instance in which a correlation does exist between a high rate of conviction and the expression of a certain type of religiosity, rather than a certain type of visionary. These involve cases in which women's religious behavior moved away from the traditional (female) mystical sphere, and into the realm of the traditionally masculine domains of theological writing and public declarations of a doctrinal nature—i.e. the writing of spiritual tracts, or the priestly functions of preaching and performing the sacraments. Women were convicted every time, with one exception, in which they were denounced for this type of activity—about twice as often as men denounced for similar activities. This high frequency of conviction was also the case in instances of the participation of the *beata*, *beato*, and *ermitaño* sector in these practices.

One fascinating case study which illustrates this type of behavior is presented by the trials of the Romeros, four *beata* sisters, accused of *alumbrañismo* in 1649, when all four, along with various supporters and their confessor, Diego José Bruñon de Vertiz, were denounced for having staged ecstasies, prophecies, demonic possession, and divine and demonic illnesses.⁵⁷ In the court prosecutor's evaluation of the nature of the ecstatic raptures of one sister, Josepha de San Luis Beltrán, in which she had made a variety of verbal and written pronouncements, ranging from denunciations of the heresies of Jews and Muslims,⁵⁸ to demands for hot chocolate or cigarettes for the guardian angel who from time to time possessed her body,⁵⁹ to meditations on the passion of Jesus Christ,⁶⁰ Licenciado Andrés de Zabalea, stated that her ecstasies

⁵⁴AGN, Inquisición 692, exp. 2, f. 195.

⁵⁵Solange Alberro analyzes the trial of one of the sisters in "La licencia vestidada de santidad: Teresa de Jesús, falsa beata del siglo XVII" in *De la unidad a la pervisión—o de porqué no se cumplió la ley de Dios en la sociedad novohispana*, ed. Sergio Ortega (Mexico City: Grijalbo, 1985), 219-237.

⁵⁶AGN, Inquisición 432, exp. 8 f. 107.

⁵⁷AGN, Inquisición 432, exp. 8, fs. 148-157, 213.

⁵⁸Mexico, Biblioteca del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. Colección Antigua, Inquisición T. 2-29, f. 14. Joseph de Bruñon Vertiz recorded the visions experienced by Josepha in forty-five

were suspicious because they were vocal rather than silent. In real ecstasies, he commented, "the person who suffers them is impeded from using their external senses."⁶¹ He added that her raptures were further suspicious because she had had them in front of audiences rather than in seclusion, where God would usually choose to communicate such gifts.

This commentary is especially interesting if seen in the context of a comment about the similarly vocal raptures of one of Josepha's sisters, María de la Encarnación, by her confessor, Bruñon de Vertiz. When questioned about the verbal nature of María's fits, Bruñon de Vertiz had explained to another priest that "there were two types of raptures—one for men and another for women and that those of men were in the interior, without speaking, and those of women, so that they would be credible, our Lord had wanted to make vocal."⁶² Presumably, the Romero sisters, then, were aware that they were acting against accepted notions of women's prescribed behavior during mystical experiences—to passively and silently accept overpowerment by the divine spirit—and had adopted a clever and divinely endorsed justification for their subversive behavior.

Earlier, a brief examination was made of the differently coded gender norms by which male and female mystics were evaluated with regards to the question of virtue. A further comparison can be made at this point concerning the reasons for the court's condemnation of men who were involved in particular religious activities. The emphasis in the court's condemnation of male *beatos* and *ermitaños* who either wrote mystical tracts, or made public pronouncements of a doctrinal nature, is quite distinct from its emphasis in cases of females engaged in such practices. Instead of condemning *beatos* and *ermitaños* for producing such material because to do so was to violate their gendered essences, the court condemned them for stepping outside of class and educational barriers.

Juan Bautista de Cárdenas, for example, was a Spanish hermit convicted in 1677 for being an *iluso* and *alumbrado* because of objection-

raptures—see AGN, Inquisición 1503, exps. 2, 3.

⁶¹AGN Inquisición 443, exp. 2 f. 95.

⁶²AGN Inquisición 503, exp. 58 f. 361. This information was communicated to the court by Br. Diego Benegas, Presbitero, who overheard the conversation between them and appeared to give evidence in court in September of 1649.

able spiritual messages he had broadcasted. Roaming about the streets of Puebla, Cárdenas had informed anyone within earshot that it was unnecessary for him to confess with a confessor, because he had been given God's sanction to confess directly to Him. The court also condemned Cárdenas for his supposedly feigned public ecstasies, and fits of demonic possession. In the opening lines of their accusation against him, rather than condemning him for transgressing his gendered position, as in the cases of Getrudis Rosa Ortíz and Doña Ana de Zayas, his inquisitors decried the fact that he was an ignorant man who had attempted to speak of spiritual matters. They described him as "a complete idiot of a man, without any education whatsoever, not even of grammar, as an arrogant person, he interfered, and began to speak about parts of scripture."⁶³ Juan Bautista de Cárdenas' transgression, in other words, was one of social status and education, rather than one of gender per se.⁶⁴

In the court's condemnation of Juan Bautista de Cárdenas, as well as in its judgment against María de la Encarnación, convicted in an *auto de fe* in 1659, we are left with a clear indication of the principal standards used by Mexican Inquisitors and *calificadores* to distinguish "true" mystics from *alumbrados* and *ilusos*: María de la Encarnación, along with Getrudis Rosa Ortíz, Ana de Zayas, and the many other women convicted for being false mystics in seventeenth and eighteenth century Mexico did not fault in having participated in traditionally feminized "paramystical" phenomena—in receiving visions, locutions and prophecies from God, or in claiming the ability to perform minor miracles, to levitate, or to have experienced divine or demonic sicknesses. Rather, they were held under suspicion because they were *beatas*, and because they were women who the court believed had shunned the Christian virtues, particularly those of obedience and humility. Men were also convicted for having failed to uphold the moral virtues, but in their case, the Court was more pre-occupied that they embody truthfulness, rather than obedience. Male *beatos* and *ermitaños* who had violated class and educational barriers were condemned by the court, while women were convicted because they were overtly curious, dangerously intellectual, or threateningly

⁶³AGN, Inquisición 445, exp. 1 f. 89.

⁶⁴Outrage at class and education violations is evident in the Court's evaluation of every *beato* and *ermitaño* studied here. See AGN, Inquisición 623, exp. 1 f. 208; 445, exp. 1 f. 224; 1501, exp. 1, f. 379.

confidant. By embracing these traits, they had challenged the Mexican inquisitorial court's notions of the acceptable behavior of virtuous women on a broad scale. And perhaps more disturbingly, they had dared to abandon the feminized confines of traditional mysticism by claiming interpretive or intellectual power over the meaning of their mystical experiences. In doing so, they had attempted to enter the masculine and clerical domain of the production of theological doctrine.

Religion and Ethnicity in San Antonio: Germans and Tejanos in the Wake of United States Annexation

Timothy M. Matovina*

When Frederick Law Olmsted visited San Antonio in the mid-1850s, he noted that the most striking characteristic of the city was its "jumble of races, costumes, languages and buildings." He also observed that this ethnic pluralism was evident in the distinct German, Tejano (Texans of Mexican or Spanish descent), and Anglo-American neighborhoods through which the traveler passed on entering the city and the mix of architectural styles from various nationalities around the central plaza. Native San Antonian José María Rodríguez concurred with Olmsted, recalling years later that, after United States annexation of Texas in 1845, San Antonio "began to assume a more cosmopolitan appearance."¹

These shifts in the physical appearance of San Antonio reflect the city's changing demographic composition from annexation until the onset of the Civil War. The free-population schedule for the 1850 census showed that 42 percent of San Antonio's 3,268 free residents had Spanish surnames, 25 percent were Anglo American, and 10 percent were of German birth or parentage. Census figures for 1860 revealed that these three groups continued to predominate and that the city's population was 7,643 free residents, more than a twofold increase

*Timothy Matovina is a faculty member in the Department of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California, and the author, with Virgilio P. Elizondo, of *San Fernando Cathedral: Soul of the City* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998).

¹Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey through Texas; or, A Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier: With Statistical Appendix* (New York: Dix, Edwards & Co., 1857), 149, 150 (quotation); José María Rodríguez Rodríguez, *Memoirs of Early Texas* (San Antonio: Passing Show Printing, 1913; reprint, San Antonio: Standard, 1961), 34.