

**Direction des bibliothèques**

**AVIS**

Ce document a été numérisé par la Division de la gestion des documents et des archives de l'Université de Montréal.

L'auteur a autorisé l'Université de Montréal à reproduire et diffuser, en totalité ou en partie, par quelque moyen que ce soit et sur quelque support que ce soit, et exclusivement à des fins non lucratives d'enseignement et de recherche, des copies de ce mémoire ou de cette thèse.

L'auteur et les coauteurs le cas échéant conservent la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent ce document. Ni la thèse ou le mémoire, ni des extraits substantiels de ce document, ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans l'autorisation de l'auteur.

Afin de se conformer à la Loi canadienne sur la protection des renseignements personnels, quelques formulaires secondaires, coordonnées ou signatures intégrées au texte ont pu être enlevés de ce document. Bien que cela ait pu affecter la pagination, il n'y a aucun contenu manquant.

**NOTICE**

This document was digitized by the Records Management & Archives Division of Université de Montréal.

The author of this thesis or dissertation has granted a nonexclusive license allowing Université de Montréal to reproduce and publish the document, in part or in whole, and in any format, solely for noncommercial educational and research purposes.

The author and co-authors if applicable retain copyright ownership and moral rights in this document. Neither the whole thesis or dissertation, nor substantial extracts from it, may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms, contact information or signatures may have been removed from the document. While this may affect the document page count, it does not represent any loss of content from the document.

Université de Montréal

Our Lady of Ocotlán and Our Lady of Guadalupe:  
Investigation Into the Origins of Parallel Virgins

par  
Stéphanie Rendino

Faculté de Théologie

Thèse présentée à la Faculté des études supérieures  
en vue de l'obtention du grade de Doctorat Canonique en théologie

août 2007

©Stéphanie Rendino, 2007



Université de Montréal  
Faculté des études supérieures

Ce thèse intitulée:

**Our Lady of Ocotlán and Our Lady of Guadalupe:  
Investigation Into the Origins of Parallel Virgins**

présentée par:

**Stéphanie Rendino**

a été évaluée par un jury composé des personnes suivantes:

..... Jean-François Roussel.....  
**président-rapporteur**

..... Denise Couture.....  
**directeur de recherche**

..... Claude Morin.....  
**codirecteur**

..... Jean-Claude Breton.....  
**membre du jury**

..... Louise Melançon.....  
**examineur externe**

..... Jean-François Roussel.....  
**représentant du doyen de la FES**

## Résumé en français avec mots clés

Cette thèse traite de deux cultes de la Vierge Marie au Mexique: la Vierge de Guadalupe et la Vierge d'Ocotlán. Les deux cultes honorent des images de Marie qui, selon les légendes, sont des cadeaux de la Vierge.

Guadalupe est localisée dans la ville de Mexico et Ocotlán dans l'état de Tlaxcala, mais les deux légendes comportent des éléments extraordinairement similaires. Je présente l'hypothèse que les similarités relèvent de la réponse de la Vierge aux besoins du peuple. Guadalupe est la sainte-patronne nationale mexicaine; Ocotlán sert une fonction identique à Tlaxcala, mais les deux représentent le divin féminin d'une façon qui est pleine de sens pour les Mexicains et Mexicaines quelque soit leur race.

Dans le chapitre un, je présente un état de la question. Je donne une définition du divin féminin et j'explique pourquoi on a besoin de Marie pour bien le comprendre. Je discute aussi de l'importance de la Vierge Marie pour les Catholiques latino-américain(e)s .

Dans le chapitre deux, puisque les deux Vierges ont fait leur apparition tôt après la conquête du Mexique par les Espagnols, je présente une brève histoire de la conquête et montre ses répercussions. Je montre aussi comment les Espagnols de naissance européenne, les Espagnols de naissance mexicaine (*los criollos*) et les Autochtones mexicains ont honoré la Vierge Marie.

Les chapitres trois et quatre traitent de la Vierge d'Ocotlán et de la Vierge de Guadalupe, respectivement. Je décris les légendes, les images sacrées au centre des cultes, et les significations qu'ils ont encore dans le Mexique moderne.

Le chapitre cinq compare et différencie les cultes et les images et montre que, même s'ils ont commencé comme des outils évangéliques, ils sont devenus des symboles d'identité mexicaine. Dans le chapitre six, j'expose les conclusions et fait ressortir la signification des Vierges, non seulement dans l'Église et au Mexique mais aussi pour les femmes mexicaines et mexicaines-américaines. J'aborde alors la théologie féministe latino-américaine (*mujerista*).

Les mots clés sont:    apparitions  
                              féminisme  
                              Juan Diego  
                              Mexique  
                              théologie  
                              théologie *mujerista*  
                              Tlaxcala  
                              Vierge Marie

## **Résumé in English with English key words**

This dissertation discusses two cults of the Virgin Mary in Mexico: the Virgin of Guadalupe and the Virgin of Ocotlán. Both are centred around images of Mary which, according to legend, were given as gifts by the Virgin.

What is striking about these legends is that while Guadalupe is local to Mexico City, and Ocotlán is local to the state of Tlaxcala, their legends are remarkably similar. I hypothesize that this is because both Virgins respond to similar needs in the people. Guadalupe is the Mexican Patron Saint, Ocotlán is the patron of Tlaxcala and Puebla, but both represent the divine feminine in ways meaningful to Mexicans. They allow Mary to show herself as mother of all Mexicans, of all races.

In chapter one I discuss what I mean by the divine feminine, and how Mary is necessary for understanding it. I also discuss the importance of the Virgin Mary to Latin American Catholics.

Since both Virgins are said to have appeared soon after the Spanish conquest of Mexico, I give a history of the conquest, how it still has repercussions and how later the European-born Spanish, the Mexican-born Spanish (*los criollos*) and the Mexican native people honoured the Virgin Mary.

Chapters three and four are about the Virgin of Ocotlán and the Virgin of Guadalupe respectively. I describe the legends and the historical problems they present, the sacred images that are at the centre of the two cults and the meaning these cults and images still have in modern Mexico.

Chapter five compares and contrasts the cults and images, and how these tools of evangelization became symbols of Mexican identity. I also discuss how they

embody Mary as expression of divine feminine and Mother of the Church while being Mother of the Mexican people. In chapter six I draw my conclusions, with emphasis on what the Virgins mean not only to the Church and to Mexico, but to Mexican and Mexican-American women and in Latina feminist (*mujerista*) theology.

Key words are:        apparitions  
                              feminism  
                              Juan Diego  
                              Mexico  
                              mujerista theology  
                              theology  
                              Tlaxcala  
                              Virgin Mary  
                              virgins

## Table of Contents

<i>Résumé en français avec mots clés</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>Résumé in English with English key words</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Table of Contents</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Dedication</i>	<i>viii</i>
<i>Remerciements</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
<b>Definition of Terms</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>The Apparitionist Position</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Anti-Apparitionist</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Review of the Literature</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>1 Mariology in Latin American Context</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>1.1 Mariology: State of the question</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>1.2 Mary in a Latin American context</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>1.3 A question of method: historicity challenged</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>2 Historical Context: The Military and Religious Conquest</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>2.1 Military Conquest of Mexico</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>2.2 Religious Conquest of Mexico</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>2.2.1 The Clergy</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>2.3 16<sup>th</sup> Century Mariology</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>2.3.1 Mary to the Spanish</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>2.3.2 Mary to the Native People</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>2.3.3 Rivalries between city Virgins</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>3 The Ocotlán Shrine</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>3.1 Christianization of Tlaxcala</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>3.2 The Appearance of the Ocotlán Legend</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>3.2.1 The Ocotlán Legend</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>3.2.2 Historical realities of the Ocotlán shrine</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>3.3 State of the Devotion</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>3.4 Mariological significance of Our Lady of Ocotlán</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>4 The Guadalupe Shrine</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>4.1 Pre-conquest History of Tepeyac</b>	<b>116</b>



4.2	Early history of the shrine	118
4.3	The appearance of the Guadalupe image	120
4.3.1	The legend	120
4.3.2	The image	123
4.4	Appropriation of the image to the Mexican consciousness	126
4.4.1	The Bustamante Controversy	127
4.4.2	Native Writings	129
4.4.3	Spanish Writings	136
4.5	State of present day devotion	141
5	<i>Comparing and Contrasting Guadalupe and Ocotlán</i>	147
5.1	As tools of proselytization	151
5.2	As symbols of identity	157
5.3	As centre of the Church	172
5.4	Official Church approach to Mexican marian devotions	179
6	<i>Mariological Conclusions</i>	190
6.1	Validation of Mexican Identity	191
6.2	Mary As Mother Who Heals and Cares	199
6.3	Mary and Her People's Struggle for Justice	203
6.4	Conclusions: Clarifying a new mariology	207
	<i>Bibliography</i>	218
	Our Lady of Ocotlán	218
	Our Lady of Guadalupe	218
	Mariology	221
	Mexican History	222
	Other Sources	223
	<i>Appendix</i>	x
	<i>Curriculum Vitæ</i>	xii

## List of Figures

<i>Figure 1</i>	<i>Our Lady of Ocotlán on her litter at the Bajada.</i>	102
<i>Figure 2</i>	<i>Throwing confetti and flower petals down onto Our Lady of Ocotlán.</i>	103
<i>Figure 3</i>	<i>A path of coloured sawdust for the Subida of Our Lady of Ocotlán.</i>	104
<i>Figure 4</i>	<i>Another path for Our Lady of Ocotlán with the procession approaching.</i>	104
<i>Figure 5</i>	<i>An offering of rythme for Our Lady of Ocotlan.</i>	105
<i>Figure 6</i>	<i>The Virgin of Guadalupe.</i>	124
<i>Figure 7</i>	<i>A chapel to Guadalupe in the Piño Suarez Metro station, installed by Metro workers.</i>	142
<i>Figure 8</i>	<i>Pilgrims in native garb.</i>	143
<i>Figure 9</i>	<i>More native pilgrims.</i>	144
<i>Figure 10</i>	<i>The outdoor votive chapel.</i>	145
<i>Figure 11</i>	<i>Newspaper announcement for the "National Night of Prayer."</i>	x

## **Dedication**

In memory of my grandparents, Giovanni (Jimmy) and Margarita (Margaret) Rendino.

And for Steve, my husband . . .

## Remerciements

I would like to thank Madame Denise Couture and Doctor Claude Morin for patient assistance over these (far too) many years.

The Matus family of Puebla gave me lodging for two months and although I bought groceries, I can never repay them enough.

Monsieur Réal de l'Étoile gave advice on the French language sections and allowed me to stay at his flat near U de M when I was in Montréal.

Lil Moir provided proofreading services and critiques on readability, and was my tireless runner to the photocopy store. Her constant reminders that I needed to get this thing done . . . got it done.

Specialist Nathan "Shadow" McWaters field-tested the Virgin of Ocotlán's protective abilities by carrying her image in his body armour while in Baghdad, Iraq. You keep her image there during this second time too, you hear? *Hooah!*

For Steph Jurs, for always being there

And, most of all, thanks to my husband Steven Marczeski, for seeing me through yet another academic degree and never letting me give up.

## **Introduction**

Patron saints have always been a colourful part of the Catholic religious landscape. Professions, conditions such as joblessness and pregnancy, cities and countries often have specific holy figures as their protectors: a saint or an angel who can be invoked in times of difficulty. National patrons are often an aspect of the Virgin Mary, frequently one who has appeared in that country. Portugal has the Virgin of Fatima, Cuba the Virgin of El Cobre, and Poland the Virgin of Czestochowa.

The patron of Mexico is Our Lady of Guadalupe, and one can identify a Mexican-owned business or home by the presence of her image. Within Mexico, Guadalupe's image dominates in churches and on home altars, but one finds regional Virgins there as well. The Virgin of San Juan de los Lagos from Jalisco is popular, as is the Virgin of Zapopan from Guadalajara.

Our Lady of Ocotlán is the patron of the Puebla-Tlaxcala area. Her image is found on the highway approaching the city of Tlaxcala, in the Tlaxcala bus station, in the cathedral of Puebla, in businesses and in homes. Although she is not well known outside of the region, her legend is striking for its close parallels with that of the national patron, Guadalupe.

This dissertation explores these parallels. If two devotions to the Virgin Mary have similar origin stories and elicit similar responses from people, it is possible to conclude that these similarities tell us something about what needs the devotions fulfill. Devotions that no longer fulfill needs lose popularity, so the continued strength of devotions to Guadalupe and Ocotlán show that they are still relevant.

I have chosen these Virgins because of their uniquely Mexican identities, which are entwined with the birth of Mexico as a country. Although other Virgins such as Our Lady of Lourdes and Our Lady of Fatima have become international, the sight of Guadalupe in a business, a home, or even on a wall or the back window of a pickup truck almost always means that the owner of the building or vehicle is Mexican.<sup>1</sup> Faith and national identity are connected here in a way they are not in other countries.

I have also chosen them because they are based on apparitions and thus an irruption of the divine into our material world. This has had implications for not only Mexican religious belief and practice but for a way of looking at Mexican history. Other Mexican marian devotions do not have these same implications because they are statues made by human hands that later manifested divine power. Furthermore, these apparitions are ones in which Mary clearly shows her concern for and solidarity with the conquered native people of the land.

In this work I will examine the origins of the devotions, how they have remained popular over the centuries, and what they signify today in personal faith, in

---

1. It is true that some non-Latinos have appropriated the Virgin of Guadalupe for their own uses. Since she has also been declared patroness of the Americas, some white Catholics, particularly in the anti-abortion movement, feel it is right for them to use Guadalupe for their cause. The reasons are usually racist and non-historical in nature.

mariology and in theology as a whole. The Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán arose initially out of religious needs brought on by the colonization of Mexico by the Spanish. They maintained popularity where other Virgins did not because of the way they were seen and are still seen as part of the community, almost like celestial neighbours.

My objective in this work is thus to show that the Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán are themselves *Mexicans*. Mexico is said to have been born with the first *mestizo* (person of mixed Spanish and indigenous race), as illustrated in a mural by Diego Rivera of Cortés and Doña Marina as Adam and Eve. The Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán, legends say, made their appearances as this birth was taking place. Guadalupe actually appears as a mixed-race woman and both she and Ocotlán speak in a language their native visionaries can understand. Because of this, they are signs of identity for Mexicans and present an image of the divine that is intimate, maternal and feminine. Modern mariology suggests Mary as mother and central member of the Church, and these Virgins give a visible symbol of these roles.

It should be noted that my purpose is not to add anything to the history of the devotions, as I did not find anything new. Instead, I attempt to show history as the place where the legends originated. Both Virgins emerged from ethnic and political tension and plurality. It is their role in the drama of Mexican history that has made them so beloved and important to their people.

## **Definition of Terms**

This work discusses the indigenous peoples of Mexico, their Spanish conquerors and the offspring of the two groups. This includes their descendants currently living in the United States. It is necessary to explain my choice of terms used in this work, seeing as it is being written in the United States about Mexicans and submitted to a francophone Canadian university.

In English, there are several words for indigenous Americans. In the United States, the word “Indian” is used, to the extent that even the newest museum in Washington, D.C. is named the “National Museum of the American Indian.” In contrast, this word has begun to fall out of use in Canada.

An on-line document, published by the Canadian Government states that “the term ‘Indian’ is considered outdated by many people, and there is much debate over whether to continue using this term.”<sup>2</sup> The Canadian government defaults to “First Nations” except in very specific circumstances, although “Indian” is still used to define status of First Nations people who are not Inuit or Métis.<sup>3</sup> Obviously this does not work in a Mexican context.

Although use of the word “Indian” is acceptable in the United States, I am personally very uncomfortable with it. Indigenous Americans are by nature not from India as the European “discoverers” of the Americas believed, so I have chosen not to

---

2. Words First: An Evolving Terminology Relating to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, (Gatineau, Québec: Communications Branch, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, September 2004), n.p. [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/wf/index\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/wf/index_e.html) Also available as a PDF download, October 2002.

3. Ibid.



use this word except for when it appears in quotations. Furthermore, in Latin America the word *indio* (Indian) is seen as pejorative.

Canadian French uses the word *autochtone*, which I prefer but which has no analog in English. It is similar in usage to the Spanish *indígena* which also does not parse in English and is used in Canada to refer to aboriginal people in any country.

Another commonly used word, “native,” is considered to be outdated as well in Canada and is being phased out in favour of “First Nations.” Mexican aboriginals however, are not First Nations as seen by the Canadian government, and the word “native” is as close as I can come in usage to the word “indigenous.” I have thus decided to use “native” or “native people” to refer to the indigenous peoples of Mexico.

The Spanish word for people of mixed native and European race is *mestizo/a*. This word is familiar to English speakers. The state of being *mestizo*, or the process of engendering such a group of people, is *mestizaje*.

In the United States, a controversy exists on whether to use “Latino” or “Hispanic” for the Spanish-speaking peoples of the Americas. The Catholic theologian Ada María Isasi-Díaz who lives and works in the United States says that the women she works with do not usually use either term, preferring instead to identify themselves by their country of origin. Since she writes about women from many Spanish-speaking countries, she opts to alternate between the two words. She emphasizes that this is important because of the power of naming oneself.<sup>4</sup>

---

4. Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *En La Lucha: In The Struggle, Elaborating a “Mujerista” Theology* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1993), 2-3.

I have chosen to use the word “Latino” instead of “Hispanic.” My reason is that “Hispanic” implies an origin in Spain whereas “Latino” implies origin in Latin America. As most people of Spanish-speaking origin are not from Spain, “Latino” is thus a more accurate description, one that defines them as coming from a non-European background. In my mind, this non-European background is the defining factor.

### **Methodology**

My topic surrounds a point where history and theology meet. As we shall see, when the subject turns to the Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán, writers often discuss their roles in Mexican history in such a way that this often turbulent history takes on an aura of sanctity. More importantly, this dissertation is intended to be a theological work, so my approach towards the historical aspects must still be informed by theology. To this end I refer to mariologist René Laurentin, philosopher Hans Georg Gadamer and historian Pierre Riché for my methodology.

One of the issues that will recur in this work is of how much of the legends and beliefs surrounding the images and their shrines is “true.” One encounters numerous difficulties when investigating their backgrounds. There was no written history of the Ocotlán legend until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which dates the origin of the image and shrine to 1541. The first mention of a two dimensional image in the Guadalupe shrine dates to 1556 when it is traditionally said to have appeared in 1531. A secular historian can present these facts without rationalizing them. A religious historian or theologian must take religious faith into account.

Hans Georg Gadamer writes that an essential part of understanding an event in the past is “horizon.” To Gadamer, horizon means the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from one vantage point.<sup>5</sup> Temporal distance, to his way of thinking, actually “lets the true meaning of the object emerge fully.”<sup>6</sup> This is because temporal distance is not a “closed dimension, but undergoes movement and extension. It is, thus, part of the horizon.” We are always affected by what is nearest to us, and approach the past under its influence. Gadamer suggests that we not immediately “assimilate the past” to our own explanations of meaning. The past must let its own meaning be heard.<sup>7</sup>

Gadamer is writing about art, and how to understand a piece of art from the past, that is now severed from its context. It can be argued that the images of Guadalupe and Ocotlán have not been severed from their context in that they are devotional images and have always been treated as such. I feel however that the lack of direct knowledge about how and when and why they appeared shows them to be pieces of art severed from their context from the very beginning. This way of thinking reveals my own horizon, reflecting the history I have read and the analyses of this history that I have encountered in the course of my research.

Gadamer, however, has more to say on the matter of comprehending art: religious art, specifically. In *Truth and Method* he describes the interplay between a “picture” (*Bild* in the original German) and the viewer who is trying to comprehend

---

5. Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York, N.Y.: Crossroad Publishing, 1975), 269.

6. *Ibid.*, 265.

7. *Ibid.*, 272.

it. The art exists to represent something ontologically and the viewer brings his or her horizon to this game (*Spiel*). He says of religious art:

Only the religious picture shows the full ontological power of the picture. For it is really true of the appearance of the divine that it acquires the pictorial quality only through the word and the picture. Thus the meaning of the religious picture is an exemplary one [...] in the ontological communion with what is copied.<sup>8</sup>

This “game” is most clear in the religious play and procession because the interplay with the sacred art encompasses the whole community. The viewers are absorbed in the event, and their participation completes the spectacle.<sup>9</sup> The way Bolivian native sculptor Tito Yupanqui’s neighbours assisted him in finding a model for his statue of the Virgin can be seen as an example of the participation of a community as part of the comprehension of the work of sacred art. This statue became known as Our Lady of Copacabana and was later acclaimed as a hierophany of the Virgin. Community participation is a pattern that repeats itself over and over in legends about miraculous images of Mary, including those of Guadalupe and Ocotlán.

René Laurentin comments that the religious researcher, even a Catholic one, risks forgetting that his or her work emerges from the Word of God. The guardians of a shrine may have excessive zeal, but it is not pointless. Their aim is to protect living faith against scientific curiosity.<sup>10</sup> He concludes that study of a shrine’s history is an act that requires the pastor and the historical researcher to work together. This is where Gadamer’s “horizon” comes into play. It is necessary to combine the horizons

---

8. Ibid., 126.

9. Ibid., 98.

10. René Laurentin, *Lourdes: histoire authentique des apparitions, vol. 1: Structure des témoignages/état de la question* (Paris: P. Lethielleux; Lourdes, France: Œuvre de la Grotte; Rome, Italy: Academia mariana, 1961), 17.

of both the researcher and the shrine guardians into order to examine the meaning of a piece of religious art.

In my own situation my horizon includes my own personal faith, and this influences my approach to the legends and images I am studying. Although my dissertation is theological in nature, as Fr. Laurentin writes, a religious movement should never be based on untruth. The Church is satisfied as to the veracity of the legends of both Ocotlán and Guadalupe, but there is room for a great deal of scepticism from an outsider who does not have anything invested in the shrines. Still, the fact is that I do believe, and want to believe, but not at the price of ignoring glaring inconsistencies in the historical record or in beliefs surrounding the images. For example, both Virgins are said to be unscathed by time, although the Virgin of Ocotlán has clear insect damage and the Virgin of Guadalupe has many details that are painted on. These things cannot be dismissed by a believer who is honest to what she discovers.

Pierre Riché, writing in a collection edited by Jean Delumeau, discusses the role of the personal faith of the researcher who is studying religious history. He warns of two types of extremists in the field of religious history. The first is the apologist, for whom a hagiography is all one needs to know about “virtue and miracles.” The second is the sceptic who dismisses all hagiography as fiction. The apologist is too credulous, while the sceptic lacks sympathy and simple historical understanding that hagiographies are first and foremost witnesses to medieval ideas, beliefs and mentalities.<sup>11</sup>

---

11. Pierre Riché, “L’historien du Moyen Âge et la foi chrétienne,” in *L’historien et la foi*, ed. Jean Delumeau (France: Fayard, 1996), 301.

While the danger for the believer is in becoming an apologist,<sup>12</sup> Riché feels it can be an asset not shared by the sceptic. The risk in studying spirituality and sanctity is to see only the exterior of things, not grasping these ideas and beliefs held by the people of the past. Religious faith, shared but not identical, allows one to come closer to the subject. He gives the example of Bernard of Clairvaux, asking if he is to be understood as a hero, an “original” or a madman, subjected to psychoanalytical explanations or seen as merely politically ambitious. Riché explains that none of these are appropriate, and that to understand Bernard one must read his religious work and through it penetrate his mysticism and universe of contemplation.<sup>13</sup>

Literature on the Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán tends to fall into one of the two extremes mentioned by Riché. It is somewhat difficult not to take a stand, since on one hand historical documentation is weak while on the other, a people’s passion for its patron Virgins runs high. The two opposing stances are referred to, particularly in the Guadalupan literature, as *apparitionist* and *anti-apparitionist*. “Apparitionist” refers to those who believe in the apparition of the Virgin Mary to Juan Diego as it appears in the *Nican Mopohua* and the Ocotlán legend. “Anti-apparitionist” refers to those who wish to demonstrate that the legends are in no way historic and the images human-made. Both positions often hold racial, class or other political agenda.

---

12. It should be noted that René Laurentin, who wrote the article on methodology cited earlier in this section, has since become an apologist for the Medjugorge movement despite the overwhelming evidence for it being a hoax. I was very distressed to find him as keynote speaker at a conference on Medjugorge after his spending years trying to bring mariology away from the maximalist extremes in which it had been languishing. Compare his writings from the 1970s, particularly “La Vierge Marie dans l’Eglise catholique après le Concile” and his book *Is the Virgin Mary Appearing at Medjugorge?*

13. Riché, 300.

## **The Apparitionist Position**

Most literature on Ocotlán and a great deal of literature on Guadalupe falls into this category. Except for one book by Rodrigo Martínez Baracs, all the literature I have found so far on Ocotlán has been apparitionist and hagiographical. That is, it is written to promote the shrine and devotion to the Virgin. Even the book by Luis Nava Rodríguez, a respected author of Tlaxcalan history, takes the legend of Ocotlán as “gospel” and waxes apologetic about the lack of historical evidence for it.

Anthropologist Hugo Nutini comes close to being apparitionist in his approach, concentrating instead on the devotion being an example of early syncretic worship. He draws this conclusion from a document allegedly written by the bishop of Tlaxcala at the time the apparition is said to have occurred. His article raises different questions about the appearance of the Virgin as we shall see in chapter three. It seems that Ocotlán is still too little-known to raise controversy.

The Virgin of Guadalupe, however, is famous and her supporters are quick to respond to perceived attacks on her. Performance artist Guillermo Gomez-Peña describes an incident that occurred in Tijuana in 1983. His troupe was rehearsing a play wherein a slide of Guadalupe was projected onto the white habit of a nun, who then begins to do a strip-tease. A group of middle-aged women watched this rehearsal, then left. Gomez-Peña and the other actors came in the next day to find that the theatre had been sacked, stage blood poured around the set and religious

slogans painted on the walls. “The message was clear: You simply don’t mess around with the Great Mother of Mexico.”<sup>14</sup>

“There is no doubt about the existence of Juan Diego. The debate has been resolved,” said Fr. Eduardo Chávez Sánchez, postulator for the cause of Juan Diego.<sup>15</sup> While evidence for Juan Diego being an actual person may be shaky, faith in Guadalupe is not, and the two are seen as intertwined. This raises the question of why belief in Guadalupe remains so secure.

“It’s a powerful take, in part because it exalts the peasant over the Old World potentate. For this reason, Our Lady of Guadalupe has been embraced by a wide range of indigenous movements,” writes John Allen in the same article as the Chávez quotation.<sup>16</sup> Guadalupe is strong because of the way Mexicans, especially the less prosperous, can identify with her.

For this reason, accusations of racism often are aimed at those who express scepticism about Guadalupe. Humberto Ramos, associate director of the Hispanic Ministry for the diocese of Los Angeles, expressed a belief in the *Los Angeles Times* that such anti-apparitionists as Guillermo Schulemberg, of whom more will be said below, want to make it more difficult for a “poor Mexican Indian” to become a saint.<sup>17</sup>

Seeing God as being on the side of the poor and oppressed is the key belief of liberation theology, and intellectual apparitionists usually take this stance. Fr. Virgil

---

14. Guillermo Gomez-Peña, “The Two Guadalupes,” in *Goddess of the Americas = La diosa de las Américas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe*, ed. Ana Castillo (New York, N.Y.: Riverhead Books, 1996), 179.

15. *Ibid.*, 1.

16. *Ibid.*

17. James F. Smith and Margaret Ramirez, “Challenge to Sainthood Evokes Charges of Racism,” *Los Angeles Times Online*, 12 December 1999.



Elizondo explains it this way. Juan Diego is a man whose dignity has been stripped from him. Even his name has been imposed by the oppressors. As such a “scorned Indian,” he is addressed in “a most dignified, personal, and tender way by the mother of our Creator and Savior.” She returns his dignity to him.<sup>18</sup>

Guadalupe affirms Mexican identity, particularly amidst community dispersion, as found in the United States among Mexican-Americans. She is an ally in the battle for acceptance, as well as the battles of everyday life. Elizondo again sees Guadalupe as a sign of the intervention of God:

God will not allow us to be ashamed of the *rostro y corazón* [face and heart] of our Indian mothers. God will intervene in our history through Our Lady of Guadalupe, who converts our shame into pride, our curse into blessing, our violation into virginity, our obscurity into radiance, our dying into life.

Our Lady of Guadalupe thus shows to us the face and heart of God.<sup>19</sup>

There is not as much analysis of Our Lady of Ocotlán’s role in maintaining the dignity of an oppressed people, but as will be discussed in chapter three, she has maintained a maternal, edifying presence in Tlaxcala for centuries. The historical reality of Ocotlán’s Juan Diego is more poorly documented than Guadalupe’s Juan Diego, but other evidence points to the devotion dating back to the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century at least.

---

18. Peter Hebblethwaite, “Beatification of Juan Diego Affirms Liberation Theology,” *National Catholic Reporter*, 11 May 1990.

19. Jeannette Rodriguez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment Among Mexican-American Women*, (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1995), xiii-iv.

## **Anti-Apparitionist**

In August of 2002, John Paul II canonized Juan Diego, the native visionary in the Guadalupe legend. While this action was immensely popular in Mexico, there was a storm of controversy beforehand which focused on objections from the anti-apparitionist camp. Most surprisingly, one of the loudest voices protesting the canonization was none other than the abbot of the shrine, Guillermo Schulemberg. Schulemberg and two other prelates, Monsignor Carlos Wornholtz and Fr. Esteban Martínez, wrote a letter to the Pope in which they challenged the existence of Juan Diego and thus his beatification. This charge, a strange one coming from the active abbot of a major shrine, was immediately met with outcry. The dominating criticism was that as Mexicans of European descent (Schulemberg's father was German) they were racists who could not tolerate the thought of a native being canonized. Schulemberg was forced by the Archbishop of Mexico City to resign his post.<sup>20</sup>

Challenges to the truth about the origins of Our Lady of Guadalupe are almost as old as the image itself. As early as 1556, serious controversy had erupted between the clergy in Mexico City. The second bishop of Mexico City, Alonso de Montúfar, was a Dominican with a strong devotion to the Guadalupe shrine, although in his writings he never makes reference to the Juan Diego apparition story.<sup>21</sup>

On 8 September 1556, the friar Francisco de Bustamante preached a sermon against Montúfar's support of the shrine. Bustamante was the provincial of the

---

20. Smith and Ramirez.

21. Stafford Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol, 1531-1797*, (Tucson, Ariz.: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 58.

Franciscans, and thus a rival to the bishop. Briefly put, he claimed that the devotions at the shrine were detrimental to the faith of the natives because they believed that the image there was miraculous and were disappointed when it did not deliver promised miracles; that it was a new devotion that had not been given the proper ecclesiastical study; and that the image “had been painted by an Indian.”<sup>22</sup> This sermon outraged its hearers and the next day Montúfar ordered the first investigations into the origins and validity of the shrine and image.

The Guadalupe supporters won out, and over the next hundred years, hagiographies written for indigenous and native-born Spanish audiences as well as politically motivated cult use of the image would see the Virgin of Tepeyac rise to prominence. (This will be discussed in chapter two.) Nevertheless, doubts continued, based largely on a lack of contemporary evidence for the apparition. While Montúfar’s words prove that in the 1550s there was a shrine and an image believed to be miraculous, it does nothing to support the allegations of an apparition to a native in 1531 that left behind a mysterious imprint on the man’s cloak.

The two most noteworthy writers from the anti-apparitionist school are David Brading of Cambridge University and the Vincentian priest Stafford Poole, who is a Nahuatl scholar and student of the *tilma* (maguey cloak). Brading is author of *Mexican Phoenix*, a study of the development of devotion across the centuries. He is often quoted in articles leading up to the canonization of Juan Diego and spoke on Mexican television the night before it.<sup>23</sup> His stance is that while it is possible that

---

22. Ibid., 60.

23 Unfortunately, I was unable to get the interview on tape. Mexican stations are not listed in television schedules on the American side of the border, and I stumbled upon the interview while channel surfing.

there was a native man named Juan Diego, there is no evidence for the story as it is traditionally told and that history cannot prove a negative.<sup>24</sup>

Stafford Poole's book *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol, 1531-1797* is a testament to the lack of contemporary witness for the Juan Diego legend. While he does not discuss the nature of the tilma or the devotion, he demonstrates how the oft-cited proofs for the historicity of the apparition are shaky, with the best-documented inquiry taking place over a century later in 1665.

His stubborn quest for the truth continues as he critiques documents referred to by the Vatican in favour of the canonization of Juan Diego. One such document is the *Escalada Codex*, described by Poole as a "crude forgery" which purports to contain the death certificate of Juan Diego,<sup>25</sup> signed by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún and Antonio Valeriano.<sup>26</sup> Poole points out that the signature of Antonio Valeriano uses the title *juez* (judge) which he was not given until 1573. The codex is dated 1548. More importantly, Sahagún was a strong opponent of the Guadalupe shrine

---

24. John L. Allen, "Maybe He Isn't Real, But He's Almost a Saint," *National Catholic Register*, online ed., 25 January 2002.

25. I am indebted to Fr. Poole for sending me a copy of his unpublished article on this document. I wrote to him on reading about the Escalada Codex in *Osservatore Romano*. The document appeared in 1995, just when controversy over the reality of Juan Diego was peaking around his beatification. I felt that the codex sounded "too good to be true" and said so in an e-mail. Fr. Poole responded by sending me a copy of his article, which is cited in this thesis and which can be found in the bibliography.

26. "Our Lady of Guadalupe," *Osservatore Romano*, weekly ed., N. 4-23, January 2002.

and devotion, so his signature on the supposed death certificate is suspect to say the least.<sup>27</sup>

As a priest, Poole has a grim theological concern. “I have no doubt that Juan Diego did not exist,” he says, whereas Brading admits it is possible. Poole reminds readers that Zumárraga, the first bishop of Mexico before whom Juan Diego presented the tilma imprinted with the image of Guadalupe, made no provision for the shrine in his will, even though he supposedly founded it. Nor is there any mention of the occurrence in his correspondence. Poole says that the Congregation for Saints responded to his critiques and that he believes his experience “shows the bankruptcy of the procedures of canonization.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Review of the Literature**

For the researcher, Ocotlán and Guadalupe differ from the apparition at Lourdes studied by René Laurentin in that for these Mexican apparitions contemporary accounts of neither exist. Researchers must rely on references in other histories and the most commonly circulated versions of the stories. The official account of the Guadalupe story is the 1649 Nahuatl-language *Nican Mopohua*. As I do not read Nahuatl, I relied on the translation with linguistic commentary published by Lisa Sousa and Stafford Poole *The Story of Guadalupe: Luis Laso de la Vega's "Huei Tlamahuicoltica of 1649* (1998). For Ocotlán the official version is *Historia de la Milagrossima imagen de Nra Sra de Occotlan* [sic] by Manuel de Loayzaga

---

27. Stafford Poole, “The Códice 1548,” unpublished article (S.l.: s.n., n.d.), n.p.

28. Allen, “Maybe He Isn’t Real,” 2-3.

(1750). As both books were published more than a century after the apparitions they describe, it was necessary to research the sources upon which each drew.

It is also important to realize that understanding Mary's role in Mexico, especially in the case of Guadalupe, is necessary for understanding that country and its people. Again, this is not the case with the patron Virgin of any other country. Books on Guadalupe and Ocotlán often discuss how these Virgins reinforce identity, and the history of how they have played this role.

The very title of Stafford Poole's book *Our Lady of Guadalupe: the Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol 1531-1797* (1995) makes this identification of Guadalupe with Mexico very clear. Poole lays out the Guadalupe devotion from its earliest and most vague mentions through it being adopted as the national Virgin of Mexico. He calls into question the accuracy of the legend as traditionally presented, building his case on the lack of historical evidence and the polemical motives of those promoting the devotion, showing how a movement of Mexicans of European descent supported it.

Other surveys of the writings about Guadalupe and what they signify for the veracity of the apparition and history of the devotion include Jacques LaFaye's *Quetzalcoatl et Guadalupe: la formation de la conscience nationale au Mexique (1531-1813)* (1974) and Richard Nebel's *Santa María Tonantzín, Virgen de Guadalupe* (1995). Xavier Noguez's *Documentos Guadalupanos* (1993) also falls into this category.

I consulted a number of books on what Guadalupe means in the personal faith of Mexican and Mexican-American believers. Ana Castillo's anthology of essays *Goddess of the Americas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe* (1996) presents a

wide variety of views from the historic to the Catholic to the pagan, and from the viewpoint of artists to that of activists.

*Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment Among Mexican-American Women* (1994) by Jeannette Rodriguez is a well known and respected study of Guadalupe as she figures in the faith lives of Mexican-American women. Castillo says in her introduction that religion and culture are inseparable in the lives of Mexican-Americans, and that Guadalupe helps Mexican-American women understand themselves. Again, it is unusual for an image of the Virgin Mary to be so crucial to the understanding of a people.

There is far less material on the Virgin of Ocotlán. Tlaxcalan historian Luis Nava Rodriguez wrote his book *Historia de Nuestra Señora de Ocotlán* in 1972 with a revised version in 1983 to commemorate a visit by the late John Paul II. Angel T. Santamaría wrote *Nuestra Señora de Ocotlán: Su Historia, Su Arte, Su Mensaje* (1990) as a highly-illustrated souvenir of the shrine.

These books are derived from *Historia de la Milagrossima imagen de Nra Sra de Occotlan*, the first book published by the shrine's third custodian, Miguel de Loayzaga. Prayers and hymns found in his book and the one by Nava Rodriguez indicate how the Virgin of Ocotlán is the spiritual heart of Tlaxcala as well as symbol for that region.

I was able to find only one non-devotional book on the Virgin of Ocotlán: *La secuencia tlaxcalteca: Orígenes del culto a Nuestra Señora de Ocotlán* (2000), by Historian Rodrigo Martínez Baracs, which examines the history of the shrine based on references made in native annals and other histories of the city.

Anthropologist Hugo G. Nutini wrote an article in 1976 entitled “Syncretism and Acculturation: The Historical Development of the Cult of the Patron Saint in Tlaxcala” about the cult of Our Lady of Ocotlán and how it was part of the Franciscan program of syncretism in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. However it is largely based on a letter allegedly written by the second bishop of Tlaxcala that only Nutini appears to have read and which seems to have vanished since. This means that one must regard the article with some scepticism, although it still provides some useful information.

I was also able to make use of material in the cathedral archives in Puebla, Mexico, which included the diocese of Tlaxcala for the better part of 500 years. These documents were interesting for what they did not say. While the cathedral chapter of Puebla had control over the shrine of Ocotlán, it does not seem to have shown much interest in it as evidenced by regular but infrequent references to same. I approached these chronicles hoping that I could make some historic discovery related to the origins of the statue, but all references pertained to the annual feast of the Virgin with little reference to the image itself.

I have distinct goals for my own work in the body of mariological literature. I first became curious about the Virgin of Ocotlán when I noticed how closely her legend resembled that of the more famous Virgin of Guadalupe. As I continued to research, I discovered that there were almost no sources in English about the Tlaxcalan apparition and statue, even though the shrine’s architecture alone is deserving of its own book .

There is interest in the Virgin of Ocotlán in the United States, even despite this lack of information about it. The shrine is a goal of Catholic pilgrimages, normally as a side-trip from Mexico City. However, I have only found one or two



books in English that describe the Virgin of Ocotlán, and the descriptions have been brief and uncritical. Joan Carroll Cruz dedicates five pages of text to Ocotlán in her book *Miraculous Images of our Lady*. She presents the legend accurately enough, but as the book is devotional, she does not investigate the history behind it or any of the factual problems it presents.

The purpose of this dissertation is not devotional. Therefore it will describe the marian spirituality surrounding Ocotlán and its meaning in Tlaxcala throughout the centuries. It will likewise not omit historical problems presented by the legend, nor myths about the statue that are often accepted uncritically in a religious setting (e.g. the myth that the statue is miraculously preserved; see chapter three).

Even in the Spanish literature that exists, there are no detailed comparisons between the Mexico City and Tlaxcala Virgins. The similarities are frequently noted: specifically how the Virgins chose to appear to two native men who coincidentally had the same name; but I have never seen them directly commented upon. This seems to me to be a great oversight in the existing literature, which I will attempt to address.

The *deroulement* of the dissertation will be in five chapters plus a chapter of conclusions. In the first, I discuss some modern mariologies in order to show which ones have influenced this work. I then discuss some aspects of mariology that are specific to Latin America: how marian devotion there emerged out of the collision of the European and native American cultures, and the prevalence of popular religion as the norm.

I have already mentioned the elements of *mestizaje* in the appearances of Virgins of Ocotlán and Guadalupe. Chapter two gives the historical background for

this. It discusses the religious influences the Spanish brought to Mexico that merged with native Mexican religious tastes and preferences. The marian devotions that resulted, including Guadalupe and Ocotlán, still show the influence of the years after the Conquest.

Chapters three and four deal with Ocotlán and Guadalupe themselves. I describe what is known of the history of the sites before and after the Spanish came, the legends of both Virgins and the state of their devotions today. Chapter five compares and contrasts Ocotlán and Guadalupe. Finally, chapter six provides mariological conclusions, including what these two specifically Mexican Virgins signify in the greater scheme of mariology. The first step in the work is thus to discuss the significance of the Virgin Mary in Mexico.

## **1 Mariology in Latin American Context**

### **1.1 Mariology: State of the question**

Living in southern California, it is impossible to escape one persistent image; a dark skinned woman, dressed in a rose-coloured dress and a blue mantle decorated with stars. She is the Virgin of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico. More than simply a religious symbol, like the pale Virgins of Lourdes seen in many non-Latino homes, the Virgin of Guadalupe is a national symbol in Mexico whose role is more analogous to a flag than to a mere religious icon. Her image appears on automobile bumper stickers, t-shirts, wall hangings, and the tattoos of Chicano gang members. “To be Mexican is to be Guadalupan,” is a popular sentiment.

Mexico has hundreds of regional Virgins, and all of them are closely identified with their areas and receive strong local devotion. Among them are the Virgin of San Juan de los Lagos, several Virgins of Remedios, the Virgen de la Soledad of Oaxaca, and another Soledad in Ahuehuetzingo in Puebla.

The Virgin Mary, devotions to her, and what these devotions mean have always been of interest to me. I earned my L.Th. from the Université de Montréal with a thesis on French Black Virgins and how they could be used as imagery for Mary as model of the Church. Although my work was on statues of the Virgin Mary in Europe, my persistent interest was in Marys from my own Latino background.

While reading a tourist guidebook to Mexico, I came across a mention of the Virgin of Ocotlán and her shrine in Tlaxcala. The entry had several errors about the shrine and legend behind it, but it gave enough information to cause me to start asking questions. The native man who saw this apparition was named Juan Diego, sharing the same name as the one connected to Our Lady of Guadalupe. There was a theme of disease and cure in the face of ecclesiastical scepticism. Most importantly, both apparitions featured an image of divine origin, left behind by the Virgin as evidence of her continued presence.

The hypothesis presented in this work is that the legends of the Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán are similar because they respond to similar needs of the people. One is a local Virgin, the other is national, but they both express something about God and the Christian faith that is of particular use to each group. I believe that what they express about God is that the Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán are symbolic representations of the divine feminine, a subject that is all too often neglected in mainstream Christianity. At the same time, their ongoing presence in Tlaxcala and Mexico are affirmations of God's love for the people of these lands, especially when being outside of Mexico makes it difficult to maintain identity.

The Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán allow Mary to physically present herself as the mother of the Mexican family. Through the origin stories of the images, we see that not only does she have her place at the centre of this family, she is the one who brought the family to life. Both apparitions are said to have occurred at the beginning of the Mexican nation, based as it is on *mestizaje*. As the Virgin of Ocotlán, Mary became mother of the Tlaxcalan family. As the Virgin of Guadalupe,

she is mother of all Mexico. Both of these are microcosmic visions of Mary at the heart of the human family as found in *Lumen Gentium*.

Mary's presence in Tlaxcala and Tepeyac is ongoing. She came into the beginning of modern Mexican history herself to deliver her messages. She left behind miraculously made images rather than favouring images that had already been created by human hands. These images, one a statue and the other the famous tilma portrait, provide a *physical connection* between eternity and history, just as Mary herself has always been the link between humanity and the divine.

Despite her apparitions and miracles, one must never lose sight of the fact that this is still Mary, the scriptural mother of Jesus, who walked the earth as a lower-class woman 2,000 years ago. This fact makes her more sympathetic to her devotees. Even though her life in the ancient Middle East was hard, Mary still chooses to come to her people and remain there through her miraculous images. Authors Virgilio Elizondo and Jeannette Rodriguez describe how the Virgin gives dignity and shows God's favour to the Mexican people when she appears to natives and asks them to build or establish places where people can come to interact with these images.

As will be discussed further on, when Mary asks for a temple to be built, it signifies more than just a new church. To the Aztecs, to build a temple was to build a society and to destroy a temple was to show the ruination of a people. As mentioned in the first paragraph, Mary brings the Mexican family and nation to life, and is there at its creation. She, the first saint of the conqueror, calls upon native men to carry out her mission, choosing the oppressed and not the oppressor. She then joins the Spanish and the natives in prayer at the shrines that she and her representatives have established.

Mary's choice of natives as her representatives is conducive to seeing her as an ally in the daily struggle for justice, particularly as it impacts Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. In the Bible, Mary's Magnificat is an affirmation of God's great love for justice and for raising up the poor and lowly. Particularly as Guadalupe, Mary has historically stood with the ones who fight against the European oppressor, against the atheistic government of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and for the farm workers led by César Chavez in 1970s California.

As mother of the family, Mary cares for and loves her children, At the Ocotlán shrine she is particularly known for cures, having left behind a sacred well whose waters are believed to have healing powers. Guadalupe also effects cures, but she is also known particularly for protecting family members who are far away or in danger: in war zones or in prison, for example. As mother of the great Mexican family, she will not allow one of her children to be lost.

Elizabeth Johnson says that Mary's symbolic power is that she *is* female, and thus able to "bear images of the divine otherwise excluded from the mainline Christian perception of God as Father, Son, and Spirit."<sup>29</sup> One of these images of the divine is mother, and the fact that these images are invoked as mother of Mexicans and mother of Tlaxcala cannot be overlooked.

Jeannette Rodriguez states clearly that Guadalupe images God for Latina women. "The truth revealed to me by the Mexican-American women of my study is that Guadalupe tells them something [...] about who God is. Despite being taught that God or the Divinity is beyond male or female, the habit of referring to God as

---

29. Elizabeth Johnson, "Mary and the Female Face of God," *Theological Studies* 50 (1989): 500.

‘He’ and ‘Him’ often creates the belief that God is male [...] Guadalupe is a metaphor for God in popular religious form.”<sup>30</sup> She goes on to clarify, however, that there is an awareness that while Our Lady of Guadalupe is of God, she is herself not God.

What, then, do these two Mexican Virgins say about God? The answer varies. Dutch theologian Edward Schillebeeckx originally believed that Mary manifested the “maternal quality of mildness, this particularly feminine tenderness, this *quid nesciam* which is the special mark of the mother,” and said that “God chose Mary so that this maternal aspect of his love might be represented in her person.”<sup>31</sup>

Schillebeeckx recanted this position some years later “in light of ecumenical and feminist analysis.” Steering away from Mary as revelation of God, he suggests her as a sister, whose sisterhood brings freedom, rather than being a mother who binds the child.<sup>32</sup> This, to me, does not seem to be much of an improvement, seeing as he has moved from an unrealistically high characterization of motherhood to a very negative one: that of a mother restricting a child, rather than guiding it to adulthood. It is up to Elizabeth Johnson to examine the image of Mary as sister as well as an active and inspiring mother in her 2003 book *Truly Our Sister*.

Leonardo Boff holds a third position, that the Holy Spirit is the eternal feminine and that it has been united to the created, human feminine as an eschatological realization of the feminine in all its dimensions (virgin and mother).

---

30. Rodriguez, xiv.

31. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Mary, Mother of the Redemption*, trans. N. D. Smith (New York, N.Y.: Sheed & Ward, 1964), 109-10, quoted in Leonardo Boff, *The Maternal Face of God* (London: Collins Religious Publications, 1979), 78.

32. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Mary: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (New York, N.Y.: Crossroad, 1993), 21-22.

Elizabeth Johnson's critique of this position is that Boff limits women to the roles of virgin and mother, which is far from the "totality" needed for self-realization.<sup>33</sup>

Catholic philosophy professor Charlene Spretnak disagrees with conflating Mary with the Holy Spirit. In her 2004 book *Missing Mary*, she also objects to the images of the Virgin as "woman of Nazareth" taking over from the Queen of Heaven she describes as "big Mary."<sup>34</sup> She describes her approach as "biblical*plus*" [sic] and puts forth the theory that the "biblical*only*" Mary is included in the "big Mary" who emerges from the "biblical*plus*" approach. She explains that the woman of Nazareth was *ontologically changed* from having grown the very Son of God from her own flesh.<sup>35</sup>

Spretnak does not espouse foisting off God's feminine characteristics onto Mary, but she disagrees with Johnson's position that Mary take her new place as "friend of God and prophet" and "always our sister." "It seems to me a tragic and unnecessary reduction, one that blocks perception of the lived richness of the fuller sense of Mary," she writes, continuing, "I welcome the attention to Mary's life as a village woman, but I prefer the inclusive view of her that also acknowledges her traditionally perceived cosmological dimensions."<sup>36</sup> She believes that the Latino community has the right balance of keeping Mary both as heart of the human family and Queen of Heaven and writes about attending the all-night Guadalupe vigil in Los Angeles in such terms.<sup>37</sup>

---

33. Johnson, "Female Face of God," 52.

34. Charlene Spretnak, *Missing Mary: The Queen of Heaven and Her Re-emergence in the Modern Church* (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994), 6.

35. *Ibid.*, 4.

36. *Ibid.*, 79.

37. *Ibid.*, 117-19.



This dissertation, like my master's thesis before it, is an attempt to locate Mary within Catholicism. In her effort to do the same, Elizabeth Johnson puts Mary in the greater community of believers. She advocates returning to God the divine images that have become attached to Mary as a kindness to Mary, after which she will be "relieved of bearing their burden" and freed to "rejoin us in the graced community of struggle in history."<sup>38</sup>

The strength of this approach is that it turns Mary into a believable person and makes some of her more obscure moments in the Bible sympathetic. Johnson gives the example of Mark 3:31-35 wherein Mary and her family try to convince Jesus to come home with them. Johnson, pointing to Mary as female head of the family, explains that this was not disbelief or incomprehension on Mary's part. Jesus was disturbing the authorities and thus endangering the family, which Mary was doing her best to protect.<sup>39</sup>

While I have a strong appreciation for Elizabeth Johnson's very human and biblically-based Mary, I want Mary to be more than just a brave peasant housewife with an unusually successful son. Charlene Spretnak agrees, and also shares my discomfort about attempts by theologians such as Boff who wish to conflate Mary and the Holy Spirit. Spretnak describes her shock when she was given a Jubilee Year rosary and found that the central medallion, which usually has an image of Mary, had the dove of the Holy Spirit instead. "Banishing Mary even from the rosary? Could

---

38. Elizabeth Johnson, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York, N.Y.: Continuum, 2003), 73.

39. *Ibid.*, 220.

this be? Using the Holy Spirit to replace her? Could the ‘modernizers’ actually have gone that far?”<sup>40</sup>

Spretnak does not want to forget Mary’s simple origins, but she also wants to preserve and celebrate the powerful female image of the Queen of Heaven, believing as I do that to banish it is to create an all-male divine cosmos. Spretnak points out correctly that many Catholics feel the same way, and cites the sheer numbers of pilgrims who go every year to marian shrines as evidence. In 1999, 14.8 million people visited the shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe alone.<sup>41</sup>

However, Spretnak’s theory as to Mary’s glory originating an ontological change made in Mary by having been pregnant with Jesus strikes me as bizarre. In the last chapter of her book, Spretnak talks about how 21<sup>st</sup> century medicine has discovered that a mother’s body receives some of her foetus’s cells and DNA, so that Mary would have been physically changed through the cells and DNA of her divine Son.<sup>42</sup>

While I believe that Mary was placed in a unique position by having been Mother of God, I find talk of divine DNA to be a bit much. For me, it is enough that Mary has preceded us all into heaven, with her glorified body and full participation in the work of God. In my thesis about Black Virgins I showed how the Black Virgins allowed Mary to participate in the life of a religious community without turning her into a mere “fellow traveller.” Likewise, I found in my dissertation research that while Mexicans see Mary as part of the family and community, she is nonetheless always *Nuestra Señora* (Our Lady). The two positions are not mutually exclusive. I

---

40. Spretnak, 57.

41. Ibid., 61.

42. Ibid., 208.

do not believe that the “woman of Nazareth” alone is satisfying to the human spirit, nor do I believe that the Queen of Heaven, if she remains connected to her biblical origins, ceases to be one of us.

My hypothesis about Mary revealing God is that while Mary does show forth stereotypically “feminine” characteristics not usually attributed to God, such as tenderness, mercy and loving concern, she also and equally manifests action and justice. As will be shown, in the Mexican context, Mary has always been seen as a queen, a warrior and a prophet, as well as the tender and affectionate mother who is at the heart of the Mexican family. It is precisely this seemingly divergent collection of traits that makes the Mexican Virgins into such powerful symbols, commanding such intense love and devotion from their followers.

The Virgins also reveal something about God that is particular to Mexicans, although Latin Americans in general often draw comfort from it. This is the idea that despite all the hardships they have faced, including invasion, racism, poverty and whole structures of oppression, that God has never abandoned the people. In fact, God has rewarded them for their faith and continues to give them dignity through the ongoing presence and actions of the Virgin Mary.

Mexican-American priest Virgil Elizondo is a strong proponent of this view, which he presents in his books *The Future is Mestizo* (1988) and *Guadalupe: Mother of the New Creation* (1997). He writes of how the Virgin Mary appeared at Tepeyac to Juan Diego to show him the respect, and give him the dignity, denied him by the Spanish. He goes on to say that the Virgin of Guadalupe is the woman who stands between the natives and the Spanish and brings them together into one family of faith.

While a similar interpretation is not given to the Virgin of Ocotlán in any source that I found, it can be shown that she serves a similar function in the state of Tlaxcala. The Tlaxcalan people are historically significant because of their participation in the conquest of Mexico, and later they made noteworthy contribution to the history of Christianity there. As Tlaxcala gradually lost status and became merely the smallest state in the United States of Mexico, the Virgin of Ocotlán stands as a reminder of what can be described as heaven's gratitude towards its people. Likewise she is a symbol of the union of native and Spanish with herself at the centre of this Christian family. She represents on a local level what Guadalupe does on a national one.

## **1.2 Mary in a Latin American context**

In the thesis for my L.Th. I wrote: "Mary appears (in French medieval miracle stories) as an agent of God's mercy, saving people from damnation, rescuing them from their sins, healing their physical and emotional ills, and protecting the rights of the weak."<sup>43</sup>

This is still the case in Latin American miracle stories, including those about the apparitions behind the images and shrines. Indeed, many Latin American stories look almost identical to their European counterparts. Any variation comes from the audience, a cross-section of races, classes and occupations which were wildly different from those found across the Atlantic.

---

43. Stephanie Rendino, "Mary as Model of the Church and the Tradition of the Black Virgins" (Master's thesis, Université de Montréal, 2000), 120.

The Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán are the products of colliding cultures: that of the Spanish, and that of the Mexican natives they conquered. While the European Virgins evolved along with Christianity, they too were the result of cultural cross-pollination. They had their origins in the eastern Church and came west with pilgrims returning from the Holy Land in the early Middle Ages. Stories of miraculous images often have the theme of their being carved or painted by a biblical figure, usually St. Luke, and carried to their current shrine in Europe by an apostle.<sup>44</sup> In contrast, legends about the Virgin in Mexico are more often than not tied to the Conquest or its immediate aftermath. The images are sometimes carried to Mexico by the conquistadors and then lost only to be found later by natives. Guadalupe and Ocotlán are unusual in that they were left in Mexico by the Virgin herself as a sign to be taken to the Spanish by the natives.

The valley of Mexico was the first part of the North American continent taken by the conquistadors, who rapidly moved through what is now Central and South America. The people of the area soon faced the same loss of their religious culture as Mexico did. Still, elements of pre-Christian Mexican worship persisted, continuing into the present day.

Perhaps the key concept necessary for the study of Latin American mariology is “popular religion” a term which is often misunderstood and disparaged. Jeannette Rodriguez defines popular religion using the definition put forth by William James in 1958: “The feelings, acts, experiences of individuals [...] so far as they understand themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider divine [...] one’s total

---

44. Ibid., 74-75.

reaction upon life.”<sup>45</sup> James defines popular religion as “how religion is lived and experienced by a majority of people.”<sup>46</sup> Since the Virgin of Guadalupe is often prayed to in the context of popular religion, Rodriguez chooses this definition because of its emphasis on the individual.

One aspect of Mexican popular religion that will be part of this dissertation is how it was born from the fusion of Spanish and native beliefs. This fusion has been termed *syncretism*. It is a critical concept to understanding the role of the Virgin in Latin America. As defined by anthropologist Hugo Nutini, syncretism is:

the fusion of religious as well as non-religious traits, or institutions of two cultural traditions in face-to-face interaction. In this concept of syncretism, the reinterpretation of elements from the interacting cultural traditions gives ultimate rise to new entities.<sup>47</sup>

Augustinian priest Aldo Cáceres suggests the cross-cultural and emotional power of popular religion when he describes it as presenting itself as a multifaceted body that deceptively suggests a serene fusion of *anthropological, religious, psychological and socio-cultural dimensions*. He also refers to it as having natural, supernatural, cosmic and mystic elements that surpass the merely rational.<sup>48</sup> These varied elements make themselves known at shrines that ordinarily have ties to nature (a grove, a forest, a spring of water), as well as the supernatural in the form of miracles.

---

45. Rodriguez, 50-51.

46. Ibid., 143.

47. Hugo Nutini, “Syncretism and Acculturation: The Historical Development of the Cult of the Patron Saint in Tlaxcala, Mexico (1519-1670),” *Ethnology* 15 (1976): 304.

48. Aldo Marcelo Cáceres, “El Fenómeno de la Religiosidad Popular (aproximación y diálogo),” *Religión y Cultura* 46 (2000): 434.

Because the popular religion of Mexico has many of its historic roots in pre-Christian worship, there can often be a great deal of mistrust from the official Church hierarchy. Paul Vanderwood of San Diego State University writes that Catholicism is often divided into a “two-tier” system, “primitive religion as opposed to civilized; traditional versus modern, rural compared to urban, proletarian against capitalistic, etc.”<sup>49</sup>

While this kind of description of popular religion may be very accurate in the scholastic sense, one should never lose sight of Rodriguez’s awareness of popular religion as being intensely personal. However, Guadalupe and her lesser-known counterpart Ocotlán cannot and should not be considered only in the context of private worship and paraliturgy. They stand as part of a body of tradition that has been passed down both by individuals and the Church since the 17<sup>th</sup> century at the latest.

The Virgin Mary as she appears in Latin America is experienced by millions of people every day as the otherworldly in their lives. While it can be easy to simply see marian devotion in Latin America as a set of quaint practices that are the living legacy of the Conquest, the fact remains that they are an important part of the personal faith of Latinos and a source of strength to them.

Unlike the Virgins of Guadalupe, Ocotlán and many of their European counterparts, the Virgin of Copacabana in Bolivia is acknowledged as having terrestrial origins. Veronica Salles-Reese gives the history of the statue and its cult in her book *From Viracocha to the Virgin of Copacabana: Representation of the*

---

49. Paul Vanderwood, “Religion: Official, Popular, and Otherwise,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, 16, no.2 (Summer 2001): 413.

*Sacred at Lake Titicaca*, which contains a good example of the importance and enduring power of popular religion.

The Copacabana image was carved around 1582 by a native artist named Tito Yupanqui who already had a reputation for his religious art. He had carved a statue of the Virgin 15 years before which stood in the local church until the new priest decided he didn't like it and had it removed. Nonetheless, Tito and his brother were determined to make a fine and acceptable statue of Mary.

It is significant that his native community helped him find a statue on which to model his own, because it showed their need for *involvement* in their new religion.<sup>50</sup> Together they located a statue of the Presentation (Mary holding a candle and the infant Jesus) after which Tito patterned his statue. When he did complete the statue, he showed it to the priest of St. Rita's church who loved it and had it carried triumphantly into Copacabana. Later, the priest also claimed to see rays of light emanating from the statue, which began its reputation as miraculous and started its career as a hierophany, the word Salles-Reese uses to describe a manifestation of the divine through an object.<sup>51</sup> More will be said about this concept in the next section, but the idea that the divine can manifest itself through an image is why the type of methodology used is controversial and calls for a great deal of sensitivity.

---

50. Veronica Salles-Reese, *From Viracocha to the Virgin of Copacabana: Representation of the Sacred at Lake Titicaca* (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1997), 22-23.

51. *Ibid.*, 10.



### 1.3 A question of method: historicity challenged

The main question, when deciding upon the methodology for the study, is how to balance this sensitivity with respect for the truth. Taking a religious legend at face value is bad scholarship, but to dismiss it as mere pious fiction is to miss an opportunity to understand its significance and an understanding of what gives the story its power.

In order to understand the Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán and the devotions to them, it is necessary to examine their histories and how their cults evolved parallel to one another. “Reflexive use of the past is no good. But reflective use of the past is an important method,” writes Ada María Isasi-Díaz in her book on *mujerista* (Latin American feminist) theory.<sup>52</sup> The religious beliefs and practices of today are rooted in traditions passed down from our ancestors. This theme of passing down legends and traditions is particularly prominent in the histories of the Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán.

Legends such as those surrounding marian apparitions and miracles are properly termed *hagiographies*. A hagiography, according to Michel de Certeau, is literature that privileges the acts of saints, or any literature inspired by the cult of a saint, and meant to promote it.<sup>53</sup> Hagiographies not only promote a shrine or church to the obvious benefit of same, they serve the purpose of defining and unifying a certain group of people.

---

52. Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1996), 72.

53. Michel de Certeau, *L'écriture de l'histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 274.

A hagiography is written about a holy place that already exists and solidifies the place as well as the saint associated with it as symbols of identity for the surrounding community. As we shall see, in Latin America these communities can be very large, such as the population of Mexico City or the entire country itself. In hagiography, the life of a saint is inscribed in the life of a community. Jean Delumeau and Sabine Melchior-Bonnet observe that sanctity is still part of our present day.<sup>54</sup> Even in our modern, secular world we are fascinated by saints, who they describe as “the otherworldly in our present lives.” They see the history of saints and sanctity continuing from St. Francis to Mother Teresa, from the early martyrs to Bonhoeffer and Romero.

In Certeau’s view, when a site such as a tomb, church or monastery is assigned a “producer” such as a martyr, patron saint or founder, the site becomes the product and sign of an epiphany. This leads to an image meant to protect the group against dispersion. Certeau further goes on to say that the life of a saint is the literary crystallization of the perceptions of a collective consciousness.<sup>55</sup> In Latin America, protecting against dispersion of the community took the form of entrenching the Christian identity of the newly-converted natives.

Salles-Reese uses the history and legend of the Virgin of Copacabana to demonstrate how a sacred site remains sacred despite waves of conquest by different cultures. In so doing, she provides an excellent “case study” of de Certeau’s explanation of the uses of hagiography.

---

54. Jean Delumeau and Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, *Des religions et des hommes* (Paris: Desclée, 1997), 289-303.

55. *Ibid.*, 274-75.

According to Salles-Reese, Lake Titicaca, which lies between Peru and Bolivia, has always been the site of what has already been referred to as hierophany. It is similar if not identical to the “epiphany” referenced by de Certeau. A hierophany transforms the place where it appears.<sup>56</sup> She shows how two native cultures, the Kolla and the Inca, both held Lake Titicaca as the site of a hierophany, seeing it as the sacred place of local gods. When the Spanish came, the Virgin of Copacabana became the local manifestation of the numinous, taking this role away from the Incan holy site the Temple of the Sun.<sup>57</sup>

The Virgin of Copacabana originates with the native community and continues as its religious symbol. Its accompanying hagiography shows natives as the main characters of half its miracles, showing them as “repositories of doctrine.” The Virgin intercedes for them, healing them, freeing them and bringing them back to life. She does not hesitate to revive a dead llama, which was the livelihood of an Inca family.<sup>58</sup>

The Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán likewise have shrines said to be built on the site of native Mexican temples. While the usual explanation for this is that the Spanish were emphasizing their religious dominance and trying to thwart native worship, Salles-Reese’s theory that a sacred place remains sacred over time provides one that is, in my opinion, more conducive to theological reflection. One challenge of this study is to find a method that mediates between history and mariology. We are presented with two shrines and two images of the Virgin in which the Mexican people believe fervently. As we shall see, challenging the facts surrounding

---

56. Salles-Reese, 10.

57. *Ibid.*, 17.

58. *Ibid.*, 61-63.

the legends behind these Virgins is not tolerated easily, if at all. Even so, the most commonly accepted version of the Guadalupe story, the *Nican Mopohua*, dates from a century after the apparition is supposed to have occurred, and the Ocotlán legend is from a book written 220 years after the alleged event. Not only must one mediate between history and mariology but also between respect for the truth and respect for the power of the devotions.

René Laurentin explains that it is not acceptable to allow for a religious movement to proceed from an error. Still, he admits that a false relic may be surrounded by genuine prayer and faith, “en supprimant la première, on tarira la seconde” (eliminating the former will tarish the source of the latter).<sup>59</sup> The past survives through objects that continue to exist in the present, although the objects are not in and of themselves the past.<sup>60</sup> Sanctuaries are built on historical givens, and always have documents of some sort associated with them. Examination of these documents can produce a hypothesis. Laurentin cautions that they will lead to what seem to be contradictory versions of the same story and advises that an absolute history or “photograph” of the event that originated the shrine is impossible. He uses the analogy of the Gospels, saying that even the Holy Spirit gave us four different versions of the same story.<sup>61</sup>

Aside from the possibility of variations on the legend, there is the issue of the documents themselves. In the cases of Guadalupe and Ocotlán, few if any contemporary sources exist. Even in a comparatively recent case such as Lourdes, primary documents can raise questions of what they conceal rather than reveal. It is

---

59. Laurentin, 17.

60. Ibid., 23.

61. Ibid., 20.

true that the past survives through objects that exist in the present, but Laurentin reminds the reader that they merely carry imprints that tell us much, but far from everything.

He gives the example of a testimony taken from the marian visionary Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes. The testimony takes the form of a continuous narrative and is not in question-and-answer format. Furthermore, the interview was conducted in French, not in the Pyrenees patois that was the only language Bernadette knew at the time, and it is much shorter than a real-life conversation would be. Clearly the first-person perspective has been lost to time with this interview.<sup>62</sup>

Laurentin assures the researcher that acknowledging historical relativity is not the same as professing scepticism. It is instead a way of avoiding a naïve (I would use the word credulous) view. Reality is infinite and indefinite and there is what he calls a “halo” of unknowns, uncertainties and unanswerable questions.

What I found myself doing in the course of my research was examining the history as it has been passed down to us. As was mentioned earlier, the legends of these two Virgins were written long after the events supposedly took place. Therefore, I had to read the traces of devotion, treating the history of people’s faith in these shrines as a story of faith separate from, but informed by, the legends. In the final analysis, it is irrelevant whether the images of the Virgin of Guadalupe and the Virgin of Ocotlán were miraculously created or not. What is relevant is what devotion to the Virgin Mary through these images, and what belief in them has done for Mexicans. The stories of Guadalupe and Ocotlán are the stories of the faith of the people, and thus popular religion.

---

62. *Ibid.*, 23.

As mentioned in the hypothesis, the Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán are themselves Mexican. According to their legends, they appeared soon after the conquest, at the moment when Spaniard and native Mexican began to come together (in a state of inequality to be sure) to bring forth a new mixed-race people. This *mestizo* people would in turn find an identity of their own completely separate from the one inherited from Spain, and they would turn to the Virgins who had appeared in Mexico for validation of this new identity.

In order to understand the role the Virgin Mary has played in the formation of the Mexican identity it is thus necessary to examine the historical background against which these Virgins appeared. The Spanish may have brought marian devotion with them during their invasion of Mexico, but soon the native people and the descendants of the Spanish born in the New World would make her theirs.

## **2 Historical Context: The Military and Religious Conquest**

The conquest of New Spain, now Mexico, was inspired by avarice. Spanish adventurers came to the New World seeking gold, land and titles. Soon they were enslaving the indigenous populations to work the mines and the farms, eventually importing Africans for labour when the natives proved too fragile and prone to disease.

Nonetheless, there was also a strong religious component. The Spanish had a real will to spread the Catholic faith and no hesitations about doing this by force. The monstrous sacrifices performed by the Aztecs would only convince the Spanish that these actions were perfectly justified because the Aztec religion had been instituted by Satan himself.

Consequently, the violent events of the years 1519-1521 passed into religious as well as military and political history. They would find their way into the legends about the Virgin Mary that are being examined here. It is thus necessary to discuss the military conquest of Mexico and the subsequent evangelization because marian legends from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries reference these events.

This chapter will also discuss what the Virgin Mary meant to the Spanish, what she meant to the natives, and how different marian cults represented the cities in which the cults were based and were used to express rivalries between these cities.

The cults to the Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán developed during these times and under these influences. If the Virgin Mary is mother of the Mexican people, as I will discuss in chapters five and six, it is necessary to review the events that brought Mary's Mexican family into being.

## **2.1 Military Conquest of Mexico**

The events that produced the culture that gave rise to the cults of the Virgin Mary found in Mexico began with the Spanish discovery of the New World in 1492. By the time Hernan Cortés and his crew of Spanish soldier-adventurers made landfall in Mexico on 22 April 1519, the Spanish were solidly established on the islands of Cuba and Hispaniola. It was known that there were other lands to be exploited not far from there, and tales of gold and a fantastic indigenous kingdom far inland fired the imagination of men who had come from barren Extremadura to seek their fortunes.

These conquistadors were master opportunists. In 1519 the hereditary admiral of the Indies was Diego Colón, son of Cristobal Colón (Christopher Columbus). All exploration had to be carried out under his auspices. The governor of Cuba, Diego Velázquez, wanted to conquer lands in his own right, so he hired Cortés to sail to New Spain, allegedly to search for a fleet sent there earlier which in fact was on its way back, and to free any Spanish prisoners in Yucatán. Velázquez's subterfuge was repaid in kind; Cortés promptly moved to conquer New Spain for Charles V, King of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor, without any reference back to Velázquez. When Cortés founded the town of Rica Villa de la Vera Cruz on the mainland, he had no



hesitations about installing himself as *alcalde* and Chief Justice in the name of the Emperor.<sup>63</sup>

In the meantime, the Aztec emperor Moctezuma II ruled from the city of Tenochtitlan, now Mexico City. His empire stretched from north of the capital to around what is now Oaxaca. Several nations which were vassals of the Aztecs were by no means allies, most notably the Tlaxcalans.<sup>64</sup> There had recently been a torrent of bad omens seen and heard in Tenochtitlan, and Moctezuma himself had been witness to a few. These included a comet, a two-headed man who vanished on being brought into the royal presence, a strange bird with a mirror in its head, and most troubling, a fire in the temple of Huitzilopochtli, founder-god of the Aztecs.<sup>65</sup> As a result, when the Spanish were seen off the coast of the mainland (there had been an earlier landfall on the island of Cozumel) the emperor was ready for something momentous to happen.

When a low-caste peasant reported that he had seen “a mountain range or small mountain floating in the midst of the water,”<sup>66</sup> Moctezuma sent agents to see this wonder. They came back to report they had seen the inhabitants of what turned out to be the Spanish ships and described them as having “light skin, much lighter than ours. They all have long beards, and their hair comes only to their ears.”<sup>67</sup>

---

63. Hernan Cortés, *Letters From Mexico*, ed and trans. A. R. Pagden (New York, N.Y.: Grossman Publishers, 1971), 27.

64. John Manchip White, *Cortés and the Downfall of the Aztec Empire* (New York, N.Y.: Carroll & Graf, 1989), 142.

65. Bernardino de Sahagún, *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* (Madrid, Spain: Alianza, 1988), 817-19.

66. Miguel Leon-Portilla, *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1992), 16.

67. *Ibid.*, 17.

Not only did this fit the description of the god Quetzalcoatl, who was expected to return that year, which was One Reed on the Aztec calendar,<sup>68</sup> there were other resemblances as well. One Spaniard had a helmet that resembled one worn by a statue of Huitzilopochtli. The native who saw it asked to take it to Moctezuma. “That Monarch was most particularly struck at the sight of the helmet; and it impressed strongly on his mind the idea that we were the men destined by heaven to rule these countries.”<sup>69</sup> Moctezuma sent emissaries to bring gifts to these men.<sup>70</sup> Cortés welcomed the emissaries, but could not resist frightening them with a blast from his ship’s cannon and the sight of his horses and mastiffs. After they calmed down, he fed them and sent them back to Moctezuma.<sup>71</sup>

The Spanish soon left and began marching towards the interior. They met and battled the Tlaxcalans, who quickly realized they could not win against this new enemy and decided to negotiate instead.<sup>72</sup> Another group they met were the Cempoalans, who Cortés said had been “subdued by force” by Moctezuma and who agreed to become vassals of Charles V and allies of the Spanish in exchange for protection from the Aztec monarch “who took their children to sacrifice to his idols.”<sup>73</sup> He listened to the complaints of the Tlaxcalans against the Aztecs and

---

68. David Carrasco and Scott Sessions, *Daily Life of the Aztecs, People of the Sun and Earth* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998), 256.

69. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The True History of the Conquest of Mexico*, trans. Maurice Keating (New York, N.Y.: Robert M. McBride, 1927), 83-84.

70. It is not clear what Moctezuma believed about them. Sahagún writes that Moctezuma believed Cortés to be Quetzalcoatl returned from across the sea; but neither Cortés nor his sergeant Bernal Díaz del Castillo mention that. They say instead that Moctezuma believed them to be emissaries or descendants of the god.

71. Díaz del Castillo, 26, 31.

72. Sahagún, 830.

73. Cortés, 50-51.

comments that he was “not a little pleased” because he knew a kingdom divided against itself could not stand.<sup>74</sup>

Accompanied by the Tlaxcalans and their Otomi mercenaries, the Spanish continued towards Tenochtitlan itself. Along the way, Moctezuma continued to send ambassadors, as news of defeats at the hands of the other native groups was reaching him regularly. At one point he sent some chiefs (*caciques*) with gifts of gold. A native writer records:

They gave the “gods” ensigns of gold [...] the Spaniards burst into smiles; their eyes shone with pleasure, they were delighted by them. They picked up the gold and fingered it like monkeys [...] they hungered like pigs for that gold.<sup>75</sup>

Cortés had already written to Charles V that “it cannot be doubted that there must be in this land as much as in that from which Solomon is said to have taken the gold for the temple.”<sup>76</sup>

When the Spanish entered Tenochtitlan, Moctezuma greeted them himself. Cortés was struck by the Aztec emperor’s noble and tidy appearance (he bathed twice a day) and even more so by his opulence. Moctezuma gave Cortés a house in which to stay, gold, silver, feather-work and thousands of cotton garments.<sup>77</sup> Cortés assured Moctezuma that he had nothing to fear from the Spanish, who immediately plundered the emperor’s treasury.<sup>78</sup>

Despite all this greed, Cortés himself had a genuine interest in converting the natives. There had already been a number of baptisms in Tlaxcala, of which more

---

74. *Ibid.*, 70.

75. Leon-Portilla, *Broken Spears*, 51.

76. Cortés, 29

77. *Ibid.*, 85.

78. Sahagún, 834-36.

will be said later. The ugliness of the local religion confirmed that bringing Christianity to Mexico was a good and necessary thing. Cortés wrote to the Holy Roman Emperor:

Our Lord God would be well pleased if by the hand of Your Royal Highnesses these people were initiated and instructed in our holy Catholic Faith [...] It is certain that if they were to worship the true God with such fervor, faith, and diligence, they would perform many miracles.<sup>79</sup>

Cortés had begun the practice of throwing down the statues of the native gods, having the temple cleansed, and installing crosses and statues of Mary.

Diego Velázquez had not forgotten Cortés's disloyalty and sent a fleet to Mexico to capture him and bring him back to Cuba. Cortés was called away from Tenochtitlan to fight them. After having warned Moctezuma that he was now a vassal of Charles V, Cortés left Pedro de Alvarado in charge and departed.<sup>80</sup> This proved to be a terrible mistake, as Alvarado, for reasons unknown, decided to attack unarmed Aztec warriors during a temple dance celebrating the feast of Toxcatl. "The Spanish were seized with an urge to kill the celebrants," writes a native historian of the incident.<sup>81</sup> This led to rioting, and on the third day, the Spanish sent Moctezuma to the rooftop of his palace to admonish the people. The Aztecs denounced him as a coward and a traitor, whereupon someone killed him: "It is said that an Indian killed him with a stone from his sling, but the palace servants declared that the Spaniards put him to death by stabbing him in the abdomen with their swords."<sup>82</sup>

In the resulting battle, the Spanish were routed. The night they were driven out of Tenochtitlan, 30 June 1520, has gone down in history as the *Noche Triste* or

---

79. Cortés, 36.

80. Ibid., 119.

81. Leon-Portilla, *Broken Spears*, 78.

82. Ibid., 90.

Night of Sorrows. Cortés returned from his own battle to find that the Spanish had retreated back to their allies in Tlaxcala, where they remained until 28 December. By April, they were in a position to raise the siege of Tenochtitlan, cutting off food and the flow of clean water. This last led to starvation, dysentery and a plague that is believed to have been smallpox.

It took 75 days to conquer the city *barrio* by *barrio*, but on 13 August 1521 the new king surrendered to the Spanish. Since the native groups hostile to the Aztecs were already allied with the Spanish, the military operation to conquer Mexico was complete.

## **2.2 Religious Conquest of Mexico**

The so-called “spiritual conquest” of Mexico was a subtler thing than the military one. Although there was destruction of temples, sacred art and books, the reason the new religion was able to take hold and transform itself into the Mexican Catholicism of today was because the Spanish clergy, beginning with the Franciscans, were able to adapt their religion to fill the spaces left behind by the destruction of the indigenous religion.

This adaptation was further assisted by the fact that traditional Spanish Catholicism was far closer to native Mexican religion than it was to the Catholicism being formulated at that time by the Council of Trent. The Spanish had their own system of local “deities” for whom they performed rituals and vows not unlike those of the people they had just conquered. It was thus possible for a Catholicism rich in symbol, legend and folklore to carry out what French anthropologist Serge Gruzinski

refers to in his book *The Conquest of Mexico* as the “colonisation de l’imaginaire” of the Mexican people. This term describes how the Spanish provided a religious system that filled the spiritual and psychological needs of those whose gods had just failed them.

When Cortés arrived in Cozumel, the Spanish read the Requerimiento, the statement commanding the natives to acknowledge the lordship of the Pope and the king of Spain. It also told them that they must receive preachers of the Christian faith. If these requirements were not met, the Spanish claimed the right to conquer them<sup>83</sup> As mentioned earlier, Cortés had already decided to conquer in the name of the king of Spain instead of that of the governor of Cuba. Despite this betrayal of his earlier sponsor, Cortés was sincere in his loyalty to Charles, sending him many costly presents during the course of the conquest, and he was even more sincere in his desire to see the natives converted. Although far from virtuous, Cortés possessed a lively religious faith that included a strong love of the Virgin Mary.

The memoirs of the conquistadors are obviously irenic in nature. While we probably cannot adequately judge what the natives thought of Catholicism as presented by the Spanish, these memoirs show that the conquistadors saw themselves as having the holy duty of converting the “heathens”.

On making initial contact with the natives after landfall, Cortés told them through an interpreter (a shipwrecked Spanish friar named Jerónimo de Aguilar; they would meet the formidable Doña Marina later) that he meant them no harm, but was there “to instruct them and bring them to the knowledge of our Holy Catholic

---

<sup>83</sup> George Sanderlin, “Requerimiento”, in *the Encyclopedia of latin America*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1974, p. 527.

Faith, so they might become Your Majesty's vassals and serve and obey You."<sup>84</sup>

Bernal Díaz del Castillo tells of how Cortés asked his chaplain, Bartolomé de Olmedo, to give sermons about the Cross before which the native gods fled. Díaz del Castillo also describes how Cortés described the Spanish mission as ending human sacrifice and idolatrous worship. He gave out at least one Madonna statue for native people to venerate, and urged them to raise crosses in the temples.<sup>85</sup>

In many communities, the Spanish custom of raising crosses around which they would conduct their religious activities was more interesting than threatening. Although Spanish religious aggression frightened the Aztecs in Tenochtitlan badly, Louise Burkhart speculates that the destruction of the Aztec state cult was no threat to Nahua moral orientation in general. She explains that the Aztec state cult was a religious innovation and did not impact on most native spiritualities.<sup>86</sup>

The religious conquest was thus not merely a question of the conquerors imposing their religion on the conquered. This model is too simplistic. To quote Fernando Cervantes, there is a need to "replace the conversion/resistance dichotomy by more sophisticated explanations that allow for a much higher degree of interactions between Europeans and Amerindians than previously thought."<sup>87</sup> He uses books by Nancy Farriss and Serge Gruzinski to demonstrate his meaning.

Cervantes cites Nancy Farriss in her work *Maya Society Under Colonial Rule*, where she refutes a two-tier model of Christianity and paganism as "mutually

---

84. Cortés, 10-11.

85. Díaz del Castillo, *True History*, 87.

86. Louise Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth* (Tucson, Ariz.: University of Arizona Press, 1989), 189.

87. Fernando Cervantes, "The Impact of Christianity in Latin America," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 14, no. 2, (1995): 202.

exclusive alternatives between which natives had to choose.” She points to William Christian and his concept of Spanish “local Christianity” to show how the European idea of divinity was much like that of the natives.<sup>88</sup> More will be said on local Christianity in section 2.3 of this dissertation, but it can be pointed out here that this is useful in order to realize that there was far more interaction between the Spanish and Mexicans on the religious front than usually imagined. This contributes to understanding local Virgins as emerging from the interface of the two cultures.

This interface permitted the Nahua to retain their own spiritual structures and routines. They already had beliefs that resembled those of Christianity, including a heaven and hell that were entered not by one’s actions during life but by method of death (warriors who died in battle and women who died in childbirth were heaven-bound) and sin, which could have its temporal punishment commuted to religious penance by means of confessing to a priest. There was also a kind of baptism, performed when a midwife poured water on a newborn child’s head, and reverence of a cross that symbolized the four points of the compass.<sup>89</sup>

Native holy sites were retained as holy sites for psychological reasons: throwing down a native temple or shrine and erecting a Christian one was intended to establish the power of the Christian god over the native ones.<sup>90</sup> This also kept sacred

---

88. Nancy Farriss, *Maya Society Under Colonial Rule: The Collective Enterprise of Survival* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 293 quoted in Fernando Cervantes, “The Impact of Christianity in Latin America,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 14, no. 2, (1995): 201-02.

89. Robert Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*, trans. Lesley Bird Simpson (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1966), 31-32.

90. Issa Paola Vásquez Gutiérrez, “Estudio Monográfico del Santuario de Nuestra Señora de los Remedios en Cholula Puebla” (Tesis Licenciatura, Universidad de las Américas, Puebla, 1998), section 1.4.1., published online: [http://catarina.udlap.mx/u\\_dl\\_a/tales/documentos/lha/vazquez\\_g\\_ip/portada.html](http://catarina.udlap.mx/u_dl_a/tales/documentos/lha/vazquez_g_ip/portada.html)



sites sacred, as in Salles-Reese. This action can be seen with the Virgin of Ocotlán, installed in a shrine to St. Lawrence that stood in place of a temple to the goddess Xochiquetzal. Another example is the site of the great pyramid of Cholula, sacred from the Olmecs onward and currently crowned with a shrine to the *Virgin de los Remedios* (Virgin of the Remedies).<sup>91</sup> The friars were sensitive to approve use of holy sites as churches because the natives were already accustomed to worshipping in these places, characterized as they were by spiritual power.<sup>92</sup>

Education is another area where the conquerors were able to retain native structures. Schooling was a basic part of Aztec life, with both boys and girls from the age of about twelve attending a *cuicacalli* or “house of song”. This prepared them for the *calmecac* that trained priests, or the *telpochcalli* that trained warriors; although the *calmecac* included military training as well, the Aztec being a militaristic society. Female priests were educated in the temple to which they had been dedicated at birth.<sup>93</sup>

The Catholic clergy saw immediately that they would have to provide something similar. They arranged for lower class children to be taught catechism and prayers every morning, and to be walked to school and back by an old man of their neighbourhood as in pre-hispanic times.

In contrast, the sons of aristocracy were sent to boarding school at the monastery “for before the Spanish conquest some Aztec youths were educated in this

---

91. Ibid.

92. Vásquez Gutiérrez, section 1.1.3.

93. Carrasco, 109, 113, 115-16.

fashion.”<sup>94</sup> The pupils at these boarding schools would prove to be most enthusiastic preachers, as we shall see in chapter three.

Other rituals in which continuity was possible were those associated with the community, which in a way were more important than the rituals of the mass and cycle of prayers that are normally considered central. Inga Clendinnen in her article “Ways to the Sacred” writes how in the years after the conquest, the natives adapted their traditional ways of accessing the sacred (dance, drink, sacred plays) and what she terms “manipulation of regalias [sic]” by which she means how statues were dressed and decorated.<sup>95</sup> The Nahua had organized their communities around a patron god, and the new religion allowed them to maintain this organization around a local saint, promoting social cohesion in the face of racism and exploitation, and preserving the community.<sup>96</sup> The use of iconography as described by Certeau comes into play here.

Spanish towns and villages also had their special festivals and processions for which the entire town came out to see their saints paraded on litters.<sup>97</sup> The Franciscans were able to make use of this. The natives in turn were able to take advantage of Spanish fashions in statuary. Since the natives liked to dress up their images, they preferred doll-like images consisting of a head, and hands and arms which could be moved and posed, attached to a frame. In 1585 a Church council, feeling this was too close to pre-hispanic custom, insisted that all images be carved as already wearing clothes, but native and earlier Spanish tastes prevailed. By the 17<sup>th</sup>

---

94. Ricard, *Spiritual Conquest*, 98-99.

95. Inga Clendinnen, “Ways to the Sacred: Reconstructing ‘Religion’ in 16<sup>th</sup> Century Mexico” *History and Anthropology* 5 (1990): 130.

96. Burkhart, *Slippery Earth*, 190.

97. Clendinnen, 113.

century, statues which could be dressed were the norm, along with churches that boasted *camarines*,<sup>98</sup> or dressing rooms for them.<sup>99</sup>

Art was used heavily in evangelization, the Nahua books being themselves pictographic in style. Fray Mendieta made paintings of “the mysteries of our redemption” so natives could understand them. In the 1520s, Pedro de Gante opened an atelier to reproduce European paintings and engravings. These were popular with the natives for their home altars,<sup>100</sup> another holdover from pre-hispanic religion that resembled Spanish religious practices. The natives now gave their own meanings to the symbols, including the saints, on their home altars.

Finally, the Nahua were accustomed to dreams and visions as being part of their contact with the sacred.<sup>101</sup> The greatest sign that the natives had internalized the new religion was that their dreams and visions began to reflect the Christian supernatural. During the years 1580-1610 the Jesuits kept records of visions and mystical experiences reported by their native converts.<sup>102</sup> What they witnessed was that as the native “imaginaire” was colonized, they switched from their own symbols to Christian symbols, and the Spanish took them seriously. Motolinía, who had used pictures to preach, said that some of his neophytes had visions that seemed real, though others were illusions. “Real” visions were of hellfire or salvific acts by angels

---

98. *Ibid.*, 127.

99. This ban may possibly help assign a date to the statue of Our Lady of Ocotlán, which is carved as wearing robes. Nonetheless, she has an extensive wardrobe of capes and jewellery and the statue is kept dressed in them.

100. Serge Gruzinski, *The Conquest of Mexico*, trans. Eileen Corrigan (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1996), 186-87.

101. *Ibid.*, 202-03.

102. *Ibid.*, 195.

or Mary.<sup>103</sup> Still, the content was never of Christian figures who had not been seen through art or some kind of other visual representation, and this was another repetition of a pre-conquest pattern.

Qu'il s'agisse des rêves, des apparitions nocturnes, des théophanies et peut-être des délires hallucinatoires, quelle que soit leur origine, les expériences préhispaniques paraissent avoir un équivalent pictographique. [Whether stemming from dreams, nocturnal apparitions, theophanies and perhaps delirious hallucination, whatever their origin, pre-hispanic experience seem to have a corresponding visual.]<sup>104</sup>

Christian visions matched up with Christian art.

The meeting of Christian and Nahua religions led thus not to a mere fusion of elements from them both, but to a movement of Christian meanings and symbols into a space left behind in the Nahua soul by the conquest. Their gods had fallen before the new gods from Spain and their normal patterns of seeking and worshipping the sacred had to be re-purposed. Nahua structures now had Christian content. They worshipped saints, not *teteo*; penance was performed for merit, not sacrifice.<sup>105</sup>

The need for maintaining structures of pre-conquest religion was largely because it conveyed how the natives understood their universe, showing what was “objective reality and its essence for the Indians.”<sup>106</sup> To quote Clendinnen, “Old actions are changed in new contexts, and men innovate as they seek to maintain the familiar.”<sup>107</sup> The world had suddenly become very unfamiliar to the people of Mexico, but fortunately, many of their Spanish evangelizers were prepared to use that need for familiarity as a tool for catechesis.

---

103. Jean Michel Sallman, ed., *Visions indiennes, visions baroques: les métissages de l'inconscient*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), 134.

104. Ibid., 138-39.

105. Burkhart, *Slippery Earth*, 187-88.

106. Gruzinski, 150-51.

107. Clendinnen, 130.

### 2.2.1 The Clergy

In the first three years after the conquest evangelization was carried out by a handful of men, beginning with Cortés's own chaplain, Fr. de Olmedo. Another Mercedarian and a few Franciscan friars including Pedro de Gante, arrived soon after. However, on 13 or 14 May 1524 the first major conversion force arrived in the form of twelve Franciscan friars. Not to be outdone, their main rivals, the Dominicans, sent twelve friars of their own who landed on or around 2 July 1526. Finally, the Augustinians sent seven men who arrived in 1533.

The Franciscans were arguably the defining religious order in Mexico. The fact that they arrived first allowed them to have their pick of missionary areas, namely the valley of Mexico and the Puebla-Tlaxcala area.<sup>108</sup> The Dominicans had second choice, eventually centering their activity around Oaxaca, spreading down into Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras.<sup>109</sup> The Augustinians inserted their missions between Franciscan and Dominican territories, filling the often large gaps.

The Franciscans and Dominicans are the orders most significant in this work of proselytization. It was the Franciscans who began the large schools, including the Santa Cruz. This institution opened on 6 January 1536 with sixty male students from noble Nahua families. They were given a classical education and several were excellent Latinists. The best-known graduate was Antonio Valeriano, who would later be considered a source of the Guadalupe legend.

---

108. Ricard, *Spiritual Conquest*, 64.

109. *Ibid.*, 70.

The first ethnologist and linguist of the Nahua was also a member of the Franciscans. Fray Bernardino de Sahagún's encyclopaedic *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* described the religion, life and language of the Aztecs, with a short chapter on the conquest at the end. His work is one of the primary sources for what is still known of Aztec culture and belief.

The Dominicans contributed some outstanding religious personnel as well. First was Bartolomé de las Casas, at one point bishop of Chiapas but best known for his exposé of atrocities in the New World, *Devastation of the Indies*. Fray Julián Garcés would be the first bishop of Puebla. The second bishop of Mexico, Alonso de Montúfar was also a Dominican. His debates against the Franciscan Bustamante would give us some of what little we know about the origins of the Guadalupe shrine.

### 2.3 16<sup>th</sup> Century Mariology

The sixteenth century was a time during which the sacred was almost as imminently present for the average Spaniard as it was for the natives the Spanish conquered. William Christian, in his books *Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain* and *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain*, shows what kind of religious background the Spanish invaders had. Christian coins the term "local religion" for the kind of Catholicism practiced by the Spanish, which was heavily influenced by folk belief over strict adherence to Catholic doctrine.

Christian's work also provides definitions and models that are useful for this study. A word that recurs often in Guadalupan literature in particular is *ermita*. This is normally translated as "shrine" but Christian further clarifies this as "a public

devotional centre outside a parish church or monastery.” These devotional centres are also frequently the headquarters of confraternities (*cofradías*) and endowed chaplaincies.<sup>110</sup>

When a shrine is built around a miraculous encounter with Mary or another saint, common themes are involved. Legends locate sacred images to places that have universal significance for agricultural and herding communities, near water, important trees, hills or mountaintops. Pilgrimage to these places thus allows for a movement from the town into nature.<sup>111</sup>

With Spanish marian shrines in particular, Mary initiated the encounter and chose the community. The images themselves willed to be venerated in a certain place. People then knew who would help them and where to go for grace.<sup>112</sup> All these factors are likewise in play in the legends of the Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán.

### 2.3.1 Mary to the Spanish

Cortés, Díaz del Castillo, and many of the other conquistadors came from the same barren part of Spain called Extremadura. This area is known for being rich in Marian apparition lore, and is most notably the home of the original Virgin of Guadalupe. When they came to New Spain, they brought this belief in the

---

110. William Christian Jr., *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 70.

111. *Ibid.*, 91.

112. *Ibid.*, 75.

miraculous power of the Virgin Mary with them and the history of the conquest eventually became entwined with stories of Mary's interventions.

The shrine of Extremaduran Guadalupe was privileged by Castilian monarchy to the point of being used as a castle and a bank. It was the richest and most powerful shrine in Castile in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>113</sup> The image is a statue about 18 inches high, holding an infant Jesus. It is dressed in the conical robes popular in Spain, with only the face and hands visible. There is no similarity in appearance with Mexican Guadalupe beyond that the highly stylized face and hands of the statue are dark.

The legend behind the statue is that it was, like other Black Virgins in Europe, carved by Luke the Evangelist. It was buried with him, discovered miraculously, and became the property of Pope Gregory the Great. The pope gave the image to Bishop Leander of Seville as a gift, but it had to be hidden years later to protect it from the Moors.

Five hundred years after this, a cattle herder by the name of Juan Cordero (*cordero* is Spanish for "lamb") was looking for a missing cow. He found it lying dead by the banks of the Guadalupe River. He took out his knife so that he could at least save the hide, but the cow sprang up again, alive. Terrified, he looked up to see the Virgin Mary who told him:

No tengas miedo, porque yo soy la Madre de Dios, mas avisa a los sacerdotes de Cáceres y diles que en este lugar se esconde una imagen mía que deseo reciba aquí singular veneración. Y siguió: en ese mismo sitio habrá una iglesia, un edificio muy remarcable y un pueblo bastante grande. [Don't be afraid, I am the Mother of God, but inform the priests of Cáceres and tell them that in this place is hidden my image that I want to receive singular veneration here. Furthermore, in this same place will be a church, a very remarkable building and a large town.]

---

113. William Christian Jr., *Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 88.



When Juan Cordero went home, he found his wife in tears because their son had just died. The Virgin revived the son just as she revived the cow. Some priests who had stopped to visit and who did not initially believe Juan believed him now and went to unearth the statue.<sup>114</sup>

Hellbom points out the motifs common to Spanish shrine legends which appear in this story. These are: 1) There is an apparition, or discovery of an image; 2) The image appears for the first time or is found after being hidden during a hostile attack, often by Muslims; 3) When found by chance, the finder is a country person, often a poor shepherd. The image is found in a cave, a trunk or a tree. Often a cow or bull indicates the presence of the image by kneeling to it, and often there is a sign of flowers; and, 4) The authorities express disbelief, but are convinced later.<sup>115</sup>

These motifs re-appear in the legends of Mexican Guadalupe and Ocotlán, as well as in that of the *Virgen de los Remedios*. *Los Remedios* is particularly noteworthy because she is the Virgin who unites the Spanish and the natives in devotion.

### 2.3.2 Mary to the Native People

The Virgin of Remedios is somewhat hard to place because of the way she unites the devotions of the Old World and the New. She began as a helper to the conquistadors, but her cult soon became associated with the natives. Her story is also

---

114. Anna-Britta Hellbom, "Las apariciones de la Virgen de Guadalupe en México y España," *Ethnos* 29 (1964): 62-64.

115. *Ibid.*, 65-66.

the best-known example of the divine being “written in” to the history of the conquest.

Bernal Díaz del Castillo tells several stories about the miracles of the Virgin Mary in his history of the conquest. Motifs common to Spanish miracle stories appear in some of them. First, he writes of how a number of natives, enraged at the detention of Moctezuma by the Spanish and the placement of a crucifix in a temple went to pull it down, but found themselves unable to move it.<sup>116</sup> Later, of the *Noche Triste*, he writes:

It was God’s will that we should at length reach the place where we had put up the image of Our Lady, but when we came there it was not to be found, and it seems that Montezuma [sic], actuated either by fear or devotion, had caused it to be removed.<sup>117</sup>

Finally, he writes:

At the conquest of Mexico, a church was founded on the site of this temple and dedicated to Nuestra Señora de los Remedios, and thither many ladies and inhabitants of Mexico go in procession, and to pay the nine day devotion.<sup>118</sup>

So in these three anecdotes we find the theme of an unmovable religious item, a statue being hidden from hostile attack, and the establishment of a church possibly on the same spot as the hidden statue.

The earliest version of the Remedios story comes from a legend that the Virgin Mary appeared to the Spanish as they fled Tenochtitlan on the *Noche Triste*. She came to them at Tototlepec hill, where the Spanish had built a shrine in her

---

116. Díaz del Castillo, *True History*, 245.

117. *Ibid.*, 251.

118. *Ibid.*, 261.

honour with a small statue.<sup>119</sup> The Spanish saw Mary throwing dirt into the eyes of the Aztecs, blinding them temporarily and allowing the Spanish to escape.<sup>120</sup>

As the legend developed, more details involving historical events were inserted. Now Cortés was the one to place the statue in the temple in order to cause rain and show that his God had more power than the gods of the Aztecs. This same statue could not be removed by hostile natives at the Noche Triste. The statue vanished from the temple and then was seen throwing dirt into the eyes of the warriors before disappearing for twenty years.<sup>121</sup>

Another version says that the statue was removed by a conquistador at the Noche Triste and hidden. In 1621 Luis de Cisneros, a Mercedarian priest, wrote that the statue had been owned specifically by Juan Rodríguez de Villasuerte who put it in a temple, where it eventually vanished into a maguey plant that grew there.<sup>122</sup>

The statue was found again by a Christianized *cacique* named Juan de Tovar. In a sequence of events that should now be familiar, the Virgin Mary appeared to him. He reported this to the Franciscans, who told him he was too imaginative, and he avoided the site of the apparition from then on.

While doing construction work on a church, Juan fell from a scaffold, but was miraculously healed by the Virgin and able to go back to work the next day. Later, while hunting he was drawn to the ruins of a temple, where he found the statue in a

---

119. William Taylor, *Our Lady of Guadalupe and Friends: The Virgin Mary in Colonial Mexico City* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999), 13.

120. David Brading, *Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe: Image and Tradition From Across Five Centuries* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 41.

121. Linda A. Curcio-Nagy, "Native Icon to City Protectress to Royal Patroness: Ritual, Political Symbolism, and the Virgin of Remedies," *The Americas* 52, no. 3 (January 1996): 368-69.

122. Brading, 47.

maguery plant. He took it home and gave it offerings, but after a while it started transporting itself back to the ruined temple. Realizing that the Virgin wanted to be venerated there, Juan build a small church on the site of the ruined temple. The current shrine stands on this same site.<sup>123</sup>

In the Cisneros version, Juan is injured by a falling pillar<sup>124</sup> and the cathedral chapter (*cabildo*) takes the statue away from him. The Virgin appears to Juan in a very petulant mood, complaining:

Does it seem good what you have done to me, that you have thrown me out of your house? Are you so annoyed by my company? And now that you have thrown me out, why did you not put me back in the place where you found me?

Juan responds by building the shrine.<sup>125</sup>

For the first twenty years, Remedios was largely a native devotion. The Franciscans, seeing that the natives made sacrifices when there was no rain, instituted processions and prayers to the Virgin of Remedios, who became associated with rain, taking the place of the god Tlaloc in Cholula.<sup>126</sup> Remedios at Naucalpan was carried to the cathedral in times of drought.<sup>127</sup> Furthermore, in the murals in the Naucalpan shrine, seven out of ten of them depict Mary dispensing favours to both natives and Spanish alike. They tell the story of Juan de Tovar, of the victims of a shipwreck being saved, and of Mary curing sick natives. There is also a painting in the choir of

---

123. Curcio-Nagy, 369-70.

124. Although outside the range of this work, I think the pillar is possibly significant, as the Virgin of the Pillar (*Virgen de Pilar*) is a frequent theme in Spanish Marian art.

125. Brading, 48.

126. Vásquez, 2.2.

127. Taylor, 11.

Mary giving the staff of office to a *cacique* and saying “Peace be with you. You are no longer guests or strangers but citizens of the House of God.”<sup>128</sup>

Eventually, the Mexico City municipal *cabildo* (not to be confused with that of the cathedral) became aware of the devotion to Remedios and provided money for regular services for the natives, including a chaplain to say mass.<sup>129</sup> In the 1570s, the city council took over building a new shrine church, administering the properties and appointing chaplains. In 1576, the Vatican gave the shrine the authority to dispense indulgences, based on the Virgin’s participation in the conquest of the territory for the Catholic Church.<sup>130</sup>

By 1579 the shrine was completed. An arch-cofradía made up of city councillors and other notables was installed there. Remedios was officially patron of Mexico City, and native devotion would soon be moving over to a new local Virgin on Tepeyac hill.

When the Spanish arrived in Mexico, the natives already had a tradition of *zazanilli*, (tales). The Spanish introduced the concept of the miracle narrative proper and there are several texts in Nahuatl that show the natives had adapted them to their own use. Burkhart makes reference to a manuscript from around 1572 that had possibly been owned by a *cofradía* of the Rosary.<sup>131</sup> These stories are interesting in that they follow European models and involve European figures such as abbesses,

---

128. Curcio-Nagy, 374-75.

127. *Ibid.*, 383

130. *Ibid.*, 373.

131. Louise Burkhart, “‘Here Is Another Marvel’: Marian Miracle Narratives in a Nahuatl Manuscript,” in *Spiritual Encounters: Interactions Between Christianity and Native Religions in Colonial America*, ed. Nicholas Griffiths and Fernando Cervantes (Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1999): 91-92.

priests and Jews, but with details that would call to mind stories familiar to the native reader.

Jews are symbolic of the unconverted native in these stories. For instance, a story about a Jewish father who kills his son is reminiscent of the martyrdom of Cristobalito in Tlaxcala (see chapter three). In another story about a Jewish woman who calls out to Mary in childbirth, Mary takes the place of the old goddesses of female reproduction. She grants a painless childbirth to the woman, who is then baptized. Burkhart refers to this as an inversion of the Nahua paradigm of death in childbirth rewarded by the dead woman becoming a goddess herself.<sup>132</sup>

One last incident points to how the Virgin Mary had moved into the native spiritual landscape. William Taylor writes of the case of a native woman who in 1774 found an image of the Virgin Mary in a kernel of corn and how it was dealt with by the church authorities. In a town near Taxco, a woman named Anna María was sorting seed corn. She was pregnant, nearly due, and there was no one in the house to help her. After sorting, she went into labour and prayed to the Virgin for assistance. She looked down at the kernel of corn in her hand and discovered it contained a perfect, tiny image of the Virgin Mary. She then gave birth easily. Later, she showed the kernel to her husband, who “kept it secret, fearing the curate who was always preaching to them about the abomination of idolatry.” He eventually gave it to the schoolmaster, who gave it to the curate, who gave it to the priest.<sup>133</sup>

---

132. Ibid., 102-3.

133. William Taylor, “Our Lady in the Kernel of Corn, 1774,” *The Americas* 59, no. 4 (April 2003): 562.

Anna María was already known for her piety. She was devoted to the Mater Dolorosa and St. Isidore, both of which she kept on her home altar.<sup>134</sup> She swept the village church, burned incense and lit candles. She also fasted every Friday, except when she was nursing.<sup>135</sup>

An ecclesiastical judge, Fray Bernardino de Mesa, was sent to investigate. There had already been several miracles; while the kernel was being kept at the priest's house, every pregnant woman who prayed to the Virgin there was granted a safe childbirth, and a one-year-old who was brought in near death revived when placed near the kernel. This happened in the presence of the priest.<sup>136</sup>

Nonetheless, the ecclesiastical court saw fit to quash any incipient devotion. The kernel was taken and filed away, with no opinion ever rendered by the court.

A few things are noteworthy in terms of the way Catholicism had become part of the native psychology. First, these events happened two days before the feast of St. Isidore, to whom Anna María had a devotion. While this may have been coincidental, the fact that this holiday was coming may have predisposed her to feeling a miracle was possible.

Second, Mary again fulfills the role of the birth goddess referred to earlier by Louise Burkhart. She gives not only Anna María a painless birth, but all the women who invoked her in the image in the kernel. This may explain why the ecclesiastical court took the kernel away. While the local priest may have been convinced of the miraculous nature of the kernel, allowing it to be kept in a monstrance in his house, the curate obviously still had concerns about persistent idolatry.

---

134. *Ibid.*, 563.

135. *Ibid.*, 567-68.

136. *Ibid.*, 564-65.

Third, there was some debate as to which manifestation of the Virgin was visible in the kernel. Anna María felt it was the Mater Dolorosa, who was again one of her favourite saints. However, Bernardino de Mesa takes pains to compare it to Our Lady of Guadalupe, indicating that the tiny image is surrounded by “rays” and pointing out that the kernel has at this point survived a year in that climate, which is more miraculous than the preservation of the image of Guadalupe “because cloth is less perishable than a kernel of corn, especially in these parts.”<sup>137</sup>

Although this native devotion was halted quickly, others spread to the Spanish, while Spanish devotions were sometimes taken over by the natives. While the ecclesiastical court heard Anna María’s case, the devotion to Remedios was becoming associated with royalty.

### 2.3.3 Rivalries between city Virgins

For the first 20 years of its existence, Remedios was a miraculous icon to the natives. Even though she was initially a “fighting” image who took the side of the Spanish, she was rediscovered by natives in a native temple and adopted as their own. Curcio-Nagy describes her cult as “spontaneous and indigenous.”<sup>138</sup> Viceroy Manrique wanted to encourage native devotion. To this end, he replaced the original Juan de Toval church, which was in ruins, and staffed it with bilingual Franciscan friars.<sup>139</sup>

---

137. *Ibid.*, 563.

138. Curcio-Nagy, 372.

139. *Ibid.*, 376.



William Taylor and Curcio-Nagy both indicate that by the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century, the heady feeling of triumph that resulted from the conquest was starting to fade. The years 1621 and 1648 saw the publication of books about Remedios and Guadalupe respectively. Taylor comments that these books were a response to the mood resulting from declining fortunes in Spain, a feeling that they were losing the “spiritual conquest,” a sense of loss of faith, and a persisting sentiment in the Spanish mind that the natives were subhuman.<sup>140</sup> The Virgin of Remedios was the last symbolic connection to the conquest. She was the city patron, protecting against epidemics, drought and famine. Her annual *venida* (procession) had multi-ethnic participants and was an integrating force in the capital.<sup>141</sup>

With this much popularity, the question naturally arises of why the Virgin of Guadalupe rose to be the national Virgin while Remedios fell into near disuse, her shrine in Mexico City becoming a parish church.

To answer succinctly, conditions in the city changed from ones with which Remedios was associated, to ones the Virgin of Guadalupe, and not Remedios, seemed to be able to control. Images of the Virgin usually specialize in certain kinds of human suffering, such as danger at sea, childbirth, childhood illness, imprisonment or bad weather. Remedios was believed to have power over rain, but between 1629 and 1634 Mexico City was plagued by flooding so persistent that the city was almost abandoned. Our Lady of Guadalupe was taken to the cathedral by canoe where she stayed for the duration as the water subsided “little by little.”<sup>142</sup>

---

140. Taylor, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 14-15.

141. Curcio-Nagy, 378.

142. Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 97.

In 1692, drought caused a grain shortage over which there was a local revolt. Remedios was then brought to the cathedral where she remained until 1695, not to end the drought specifically but to protect the city and the royal government there from further uprising. This began a trend towards royal causes and alienation from the natives and Mexican-born Spanish. In 1696 a procession was held to assure the safe arrival of the fleet.<sup>143</sup>

The 19<sup>th</sup> century solidified this identification with royal causes when Napoleon took Spanish King Ferdinand VII hostage. A procession in honour of Remedios was carried out for his safety, including an allegorical cart showing a native waiting for Remedios to help defeat Napoleon. The slogan on the cart was “Indian Loyalty without Rival.”<sup>144</sup>

In a complete reversal later that year, Fr. Hidalgo began his revolt against the Spanish. Once again, Remedios became a conquistador, invoked against the natives. Since she was in the capital after a storm had damaged her sanctuary, the nuns of San Jerónimo dressed her in the uniform of a Captain-General of the army, complete with gold baton and sword. When Hidalgo’s forces were defeated at Las Cruces on 30 October, medals of her were passed among the regiments and a novena of masses was said in the cathedral in thanksgiving.<sup>145</sup>

By 1821 Remedios was identified with the Spanish, even though attendance records and the accounts for spending on festivals indicate that she still had many native devotees.<sup>146</sup> Nonetheless, Guadalupe was becoming associated with pride in

---

143. Curcio-Nagy, 385-86.

144. Ibid., 389-90.

145. Brading, 230.

146. Taylor, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 16.

being Mexican, not Spanish, even though her image was in the Royalist stronghold of Mexico City. During the wars of independence, both sides, Royalist and rebel, invoked many images of Mary with the Independistas favouring Guadalupe.<sup>147</sup> By the time Mexico had liberated itself from Spain, Guadalupe had emerged as not only patroness of Mexico but as a national symbol.

---

147. Ibid., 20.

### **3 The Ocotlán Shrine**

The story of the Ocotlán shrine is far more obscure than that of Guadalupe, in several senses of the word. It is obscure in that its origins can no longer be clearly seen, hidden as they are in the darkness of unrecorded history. It is obscure in that it is not well known outside of the state of Tlaxcala. It is also obscure in that its significance is not nearly as well-analyzed as that of Guadalupe. The purpose of this section is to put the Ocotlán image in a historical and religious context in order to see what its significance is and has been, and to be able to draw parallels to Guadalupe.

Tlaxcala's association with Christianity and the Spanish goes back farther than the state and city of Mexico. The Tlaxcalans were the first allies of Cortés and a number of their women, primarily daughters of the nobility, were some of the first Mexican natives converted to Christianity before their marriage to conquistadors. After Tenochtitlan fell, the Spanish made it the capital and foremost city of what was then called New Spain while Tlaxcala began to fall in political stature. The shrine at Ocotlán may have partially been founded as a response to that loss of stature. However it will be shown that Tlaxcala had a history of Marian devotion and legend that made it an ideal place for a prominent shrine to be established.

### 3.1 Christianization of Tlaxcala

Little is known of the history of the area before the Conquest by the Spanish. Tlaxcala was head of a confederacy of indigenous groups that, while part of the Nahua group of natives, were enemies of Moctezuma and his empire based in Tenochtitlan. The pre-Hispanic Tlaxcalans worshipped a pantheon similar but not identical to that of the Aztec, including a goddess named Xochiquetzal (flower-plume or flower-bird) who was associated with art, flowers and games.<sup>148</sup> She was also believed to appear to mortals who found her favour. Xochiquetzal lived on a mountain with dwarves, musicians and dancing maidens, where she was the wife of the rain god Tlaloc, though stolen from him by Tezcatlipoca (Smoking Mirror).<sup>149</sup>

The Spanish encountered the Tlaxcalans in 1519, on their way to Tenochtitlan, entering the city on 23 September. The conquistador Bernal Diaz del Castillo, who sailed with Cortés from Cuba to Mexico, described in his memoirs how the first native allies of the Spanish recommended that they meet with the Tlaxcalans because they were enemies of the Mexicans.<sup>150</sup> Charles Gibson reports that although the *requerimiento* was read to the Tlaxcalans, there were no conversions at the time.<sup>151</sup>

---

148. Nutini, 308.

149. Irene Nicholson, *Mexican and Central American Mythology* (New York, N.Y.: Peter Bedrick Books, 1985), 109-10.

150. Díaz del Castillo, 117.

151. Charles Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale, 1952), 28.

There is a legend that four prominent Tlaxcalan caciques<sup>152</sup> were baptized 20 days after the arrival of the Spanish, but there is no contemporary account of this, including from any of the Spanish who were present.<sup>153</sup> It is more likely that they were baptized separately with the story of the group baptism becoming the starting point of the tradition of “grandeza tlaxcalteca.”<sup>154</sup> Specific care was taken to enshrine this “official version” of the baptism of the caciques; Diego Muñoz Camargo, writing between 1580 and 1585 said that the walls of the cabildo chambers had murals of this event and illustrations of them appeared in his book *Descripcion de la Ciudad y Provincia de Tlaxcala*. For him, the event represented the beginning of the spiritual conquest.<sup>155</sup>

The only natives who were baptized at the arrival of the Spanish were a group of noblewomen presented to them by the Tlaxcalans as a gift. After their baptism, Cortés had the women returned to their parents. Always interested in promoting the faith, Cortés explained the Catholic religion using a statue of the Virgin Mary as an attractive visual aid. According to del Castillo, the people feared the wrath of the gods and asked not to hear any more. Cortés’s chaplain Fr. Olmedo, who would repeatedly show himself to be the voice of religious moderation, told Cortés not to force any conversions, but to ask for one temple to be made into a church. The

---

152. Sometimes these native leaders are referred to as “lords” or “senators.”

153. A stone font in which this event supposedly took place stands in a chapel to the right of the sanctuary in the cathedral of La Asunción. It should be noted that the present-day cathedral is part of a former Franciscan monastery, the monastery portion of which is now a museum. The city’s original cathedral is now the parish church of San José, which lost its status as a cathedral when the bishopric moved from Tlaxcala to Puebla.

154. Elisa Vargas Lugo, “El Bautizo de los Señores de Tlaxcala,” *Archivo Español de Arte* 63, no. 252 (1990): 627.

155. *Ibid.*, 624.

Tlaxcalans agreed, and by September of 1519, mass was being celebrated on one such site.<sup>156</sup>

Eventually, the religious rituals of the Spanish came to interest the Tlaxcalans a great deal, particularly the Angelus that was recited thrice daily in front of a cross.<sup>157</sup> In the city of Cocotlan (not to be confused with the subject of this dissertation), the chief was less receptive. When Cortés wanted to erect a cross as was his habit, Fr. Olmedo talked him out of it, saying that it would be in danger of desecration.<sup>158</sup>

By virtue of its participation in the Conquest, Tlaxcala earned itself several privileges. One was the right to be called a city with its own cabildo (municipal council). It was exempt from taxes, had its own coat-of-arms,<sup>159</sup> and most importantly the natives were never put into the *encomienda* system where they would be forced into free labour for a Spanish landowner. It also had its own diocese, although this right was soon lost to nearby Puebla.<sup>160</sup> Tlaxcala never suffered the same religious devastation as other cities, which saw their gods and temples destroyed and churches raised in their places. The Spanish needed their Tlaxcalan allies and pre-Hispanic religion was still practiced in the late 1520s.<sup>161</sup>

The twelve Franciscans paused in Tlaxcala on their way to Tenochtitlan. While these were not the first Franciscan friars in New Spain, the number of them

---

156. Gibson, 33.

157. Ricard, *Spiritual Conquest*, 27-28.

158. Díaz del Castillo, 118-19.

159. Vargas Lugo, 621.

160. James Lockhart, Frances Berdan, and Arthur J. O. Anderson, *The Tlaxcalan Actas: A Compendium of the Records of the Cabildo of Tlaxcala (1545-1627)* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1986), 2.

161. Gibson, 29.

sent, and the fact that they set out to walk from the port of Veracruz to Tenochtitlan, made their mission as apostles very clear. The Tlaxcalans contrasted the friars with the Spanish soldiers they were used to seeing, and the ragged Franciscans intrigued them. Some of the nobles even accompanied them for the rest of their journey.<sup>162</sup>

The 16<sup>th</sup> century was the golden age of Catholicism in Tlaxcala. With the Franciscan friars building hospitals and schools, Cortés ensured the conversion of the natives with the cooperation, not always unwilling, of the *caciques*. He had them deposit their sons with the friars in monastery schools for education,<sup>163</sup> and the *Actas del Cabildo* of 6 June 1548 reports a decision made by the city council to immediately establish one such school for small boys at the Franciscan monastery.<sup>164</sup> Although no pupil became a friar until more than a century later, the friars were able to boast back to their royal patrons in Spain that even failed native novices made excellent Christians once they married.<sup>165</sup>

The religious fervour of these noble children could be stronger than that of the friars themselves. Friars went on preaching tours accompanied by their pupils. Muñoz Camargo tells the story of three such boys who were invited to dinner by some *caciques* who were secretly anti-Christian. Two of the boys escaped because some Christian natives warned them of the plot while a third was not so lucky and was beaten to death.<sup>166</sup>

---

162. Ibid.

163. Ibid., 33.

164. Lockhart, Berdan and Anderson, *Tlaxcalan Actas*, 39.

165. Robert *Spiritual Conquest*, 277.

166. Diego Muñoz Camargo, *Historia de Tlaxcala*, ed. Germán Vásquez, *Crónicas de América* 26 (Madrid, Historia 16, 1986), 239.



The most famous converts of this era though, were the three *Niños Martires* (Child Martyrs) beatified in 1990 by John Paul II. Cristóbal, Antonio and Juan were unrelated children who died at the hands of anti-Christian natives. Antonio and Juan were two pupils of the Franciscans who went preaching on their own in the region of Tepeaca, an area “full of idols” according to Luis Nava Rodriguez. They took it upon themselves to enter houses and destroy any images of native gods that they found, and eventually met up with resistance from knife-wielding practitioners of the local religion.<sup>167</sup>

The story of the third boy, Cristóbal (*Cristobalito*) is more directly relevant to the history of marian devotion in Mexico. Cristóbal’s father, the cacique Acxotecatl, hid his bright young son from the friars when they came to take him to their school. The friars found him anyway, and the boy converted to Christianity with great enthusiasm. Acxotecatl, who had returned to his traditional Tlaxcalan religious beliefs, waited until his son came home and murdered him along with the boy’s mother.

There are two versions of why he killed his wife. According to Fray Toribio Motolinía, Acxotecatl killed Cristóbal so that another son by one of his other wives could inherit. He then killed Cristóbal’s mother Tlapaxilotzin, “de la cual nunca pude averiguar si fue bautizada o no” (of whom I never could discover if she was baptized or not).<sup>168</sup>

---

167. Luis Nava Rodriguez, *Historia de Nuestra Señora de Ocotlán*, revised and abbreviated ed. (Tlaxcala, Mexico: Editoria de Periodicos “La Prensa,”1983), 28.

168. Rodrigo Martínez Baracs, *La secuencia tlaxcalteca. Orígenes del culto a Nuestra Señora de Ocotlán* (Mexico City, INAH, 2000), 168.

In the version cited by Tlaxcalan historian Diego Muñoz Camargo, Cristóbal destroyed Acxotecatl's household gods in an effort to make his father return to the faith. Acxotecatl killed his son for this, and then killed the boy's mother who had likewise become a Christian. The friar Motolinía wrote in 1539 about these events that took place in 1527. Muñoz Camargo wrote about them in 1619. The pious elaboration upon the story is evident, even though the murder itself is historical as is the connection between Cristóbal and the friars.

What almost all re-tellings of this story ignore are Acxotecatl's years as a Christian. In fact, Acxotecatl had been one of the first caciques baptized, and he had been a close ally of Cortés. In recognition of his participation in the conquest of Tenochtitlan, Cortés gave Acxotecatl a small statue of the Virgin Mary, known as the Conquistadora. This image became an "emblem of Tlaxcalan favors and rewards."<sup>169</sup> The statue was displayed prominently in Acxotecatl's house "on a table surrounded by painted mantles and floral decorations. Acxotecatl carried it in public dances and other ceremonies, and it was valued as a precious and sacred possession."<sup>170</sup>

A few years later the Franciscan friars of the newly-founded city of Puebla decided that this statue would be more appropriately housed in their new church and took it away from him.<sup>171</sup> This statue, a wooden figure about seven inches high, can still be seen in the chapel dedicated to Blessed Sebastian de Aparicio in the San Francisco church in Puebla. It is kept in a reliquary shaped like the double-headed eagle of European royalty and appears to enjoy less devotion than the mummified saint below, although I was able to buy a picture of it in the religious goods store.

---

169. Gibson, 35.

170. Ibid.

171. Martinez Baracs, 165-66.

The story of the cacique Acxotecatl and the statue of the Virgin given to him by Cortés may underlie the origins of Our Lady of Ocotlán. The Conquistadora statue was a symbol of the rewards Tlaxcala received for aiding the Spanish and, as we shall see, some writers describe the statue of Our Lady of Ocotlán in the same way. Even after the statue was taken away, and Acxotecatl had returned to native religion, the sacred legend continues with the martyrdom of Cristóbal, an event which is seen as being further proof of Tlaxcala as a place worthy of a marian apparition.

The Conquistadora itself may be the basis for many similar stories including that of the Virgen de los Remedios. The former Franciscan monastery in Tlaxcala houses another of Cortés's Conquistadoras, this one painted on fabric and rumoured to be the one he carried inside his armour. The statue of Los Remedios was likewise carried by a Spaniard, lost during the *Noche Triste*, and found in an agave by Juan de Tovar. Yet a third statue of Mary is reported to have been placed in the great temple at Tenochtitlan by Cortés, and could not be moved by the natives who tried to take it out of the temple.<sup>172</sup>

Even before the Virgin of Ocotlán made her appearance, Tlaxcala had other heavenly visitors. In 1610, a native man experienced an apparition of San Diego. In 1668, Jesús Nazareno (Jesus in purple robe and crown of thorns) appeared to a native named Juan Ventura.<sup>173</sup>

The appearance of San Miguel del Milagro was the most noteworthy of these events. In 1631, St. Michael the Archangel was reported to have appeared to a native

---

172. Brading, 41.

173. Martínez Baracs, 31.

by the name of Diego Lázaro, an inhabitant of San Bernardino,<sup>174</sup> and to have left behind a healing spring. Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz, bishop of Puebla, approved the cult and a statue of St. Michael is central to the fountain in the *zócalo* (main square) of that city.<sup>175</sup>

F. A. Lorenzana, in a biography of Juan de Palafox y Mendoza dated 1769, reports that the archangel made his appearance specifically in a place formerly used in native religion. Palafox says in his account of diocesan visits that there was a small ruined shrine built by one of his predecessors, not far from the miraculous spring. Palafox ordered a larger shrine to be built for the spring itself, and it was completed after he returned to Spain.<sup>176</sup>

Religious devotion in 16<sup>th</sup> century Tlaxcala was perhaps the strongest in New Spain. One of the important functions of the municipal cabildo was to oversee the preparations for religious festivals. On 30 June 1555, the cabildo listed requirements for the upcoming feast of Corpus Christi as involving flowers, tree foliage, angel wings, yellow hair wigs and devil images.<sup>177</sup> For the feast of the Assumption, they provided food, drink and wind instruments to be played in the church.<sup>178</sup> Mary of the Assumption was patron of Tlaxcala at the time, but would in turn be displaced by the Virgin of Ocotlán. With a pre-existing tradition of statues revered by the natives and saints appearing to them, Tlaxcala was ripe for the emergence of its own marian cult.

---

174. This is, of course, not the first time we find the juxtaposition of these names.

175. Martínez Baracs, 30.

176. José Eduardo Castro Ramirez, *Palafox: su pontificado en Puebla, 1640-1649* (Puebla, Mexico: Secretaría de Cultura/Gobierno del Estado de Puebla/Arzobispado de Puebla, 2000), 98-100.

177. Lockhart, Berdan and Anderson, *Tlaxcalan Actas*, 95.

178. *Ibid.*, 49.

## 3.2 The Appearance of the Ocotlán Legend

### 3.2.1 The Ocotlán Legend

In his book *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century*, Charles Gibson writes:

So thorough was the religious conversion of the 1530s that subsequent generations imbued it with legends and false beliefs, projecting its history into the past and assuming an immediate, voluntary shift in religious thought at the time of the conquest.<sup>179</sup>

We have already seen how the story of the baptism of the four Tlaxcalan lords fits this model and the legend of Our Lady of Ocotlán as it is found today also reflects this idea. In it, we find the elements of the Tlaxcalan conversion, specifically pious young native men, Franciscans, religious celebrations and a miraculous statue of the Virgin at the center of it all.

The legend of Our Lady of Ocotlán as it is known today has two layers. The first dates from 1750 when the third caretaker of the shrine, Manuel de Loayzaga, published the second edition of his book *Historia de la Milagrosísima Imagen de Nuestra Señora de Ocotlán*. There is evidence of a devotion before then, but this is the first known time that a foundation legend for the shrine and statue was published. The legend as presented in Loayzaga's book was further promoted by the Jesuit Francisco Florencia in *El Zodiaco Mariano* (1755), a book on marian devotion in Mexico. The chapter on Ocotlán in the *Zodiaco* also gives a contemporary snapshot of the shrine and how it was used.

The layer atop that one was put in place in 1976 when Hugo G. Nutini, an anthropologist from the University of Pittsburgh and a specialist on Tlaxcala,

---

179. Gibson, 29.

published “Syncretism and Acculturation: The Historical Development of the Cult of the Patron Saint in Tlaxcala, Mexico (1519-1670).” In this article, Nutini developed his theory of religious syncretism, that is, how a new religious system emerged out of the meeting of two separate systems (Spanish and Tlaxcalan). He explains the apparition of Our Lady of Ocotlán as being an expression of this syncretism, based on a document allegedly written by Fray Martín de Hojacastro, third bishop of Tlaxcala. This document has since been lost, and its veracity was disputed even when it was first discovered.

Loayzaga said in his own book that “el día y año en que esto sucedió, no se sabe” (the day and year in which this happened, I do not know).<sup>180</sup> In a footnote, Nava Rodríguez cites several sources, including Nicanor Quirós y Gutiérrez, Cantor of the Puebla Cathedral and a known specialist on Ocotlán, as saying that the apparition took place during the first days of spring in 1541.<sup>181</sup> However, as no other source uses this date, my conclusion is that this was a detail drawn from the Nutini document.

Juan Diego, we are told, was a young Tlaxcalan man who worked for the Franciscan friars as a *topil* (an attendant of the altars) keeping them stocked with flowers as well as running errands for the friars.<sup>182</sup> He was a native of the town of Santa Isabel Xiloxostla, where he is said to be buried. On the evening of the apparition he was going to the river, which was believed to have healing properties.

---

180. Miguel de Loayzaga, *Historia de la milagrosísima imagen de Nra. Sra. de Ocotlan* (Mexico, Viuda de Joseph Hogal, 1750), 21.

181. Luis Nava Rodríguez, *Historia de Nuestra Señora de Ocotlán*, second ed. (Tlaxcala, Mexico: Editoria de Periodicos “La Prensa 1972), 35. Please note that the 1972 and 1983 versions of this book are substantially different.

182. Nutini, 309. This is in the Loayzaga version cited by Nava Rodríguez as well as the *Zodiaco Mariano* of Florencia.

There was an epidemic in the region, and he was going to draw water to take to the sick, the best efforts of herbalists and traditional healers having failed.<sup>183</sup> On a hill, he met a very beautiful lady who greeted him with the words “Dios te salve, hijo mío, ¿a donde vas?” (God save you my son, where are you going?) Juan Diego told her what his errand was and she responded:

Ven tras de mí, que yo te daré otra agua con que se extinga ese contagio y sanen no solo tus parientes, sino cuantos bebieren de ella; porque mi corazón siempre inclinado a favorecer desvalidos, ya no sufre ver entre ellos tantas desdichas sin remediarlas. [Follow me closely, I will give you another water with which you will extinguish the contagion and cure not only your family but all who drink of it; for my heart is always inclined towards the lowly, and will not suffer to see such things without remedying them.]

The woman led Juan Diego down the steep hill as night began to fall. Nava Rodríguez describes the scene as:

Lo sombrío de los árboles silvestres, que llaman ocotes los naturales, lo hacen tan respetable como alegre; además, la multitud de pájaros y el bello matis de las flores la hermocean.” [It (the sunset) fell on the forest trees which are called pines by the locals, and it made them respectable and glad; furthermore, the multitude of birds and the beautiful colours of the flowers beautified it.]<sup>184</sup>

At the bottom of this hill was a spring, *que aún dura* (which lasts to this day).

The woman directed Juan Diego to this spring, telling him that whoever drank the smallest drop would be restored to perfect health. She then pointed to the small church dedicated to St. Lawrence at the top of the hill and said:

Que antes de mucho, en aquel propio sitio encontraría una imagen suya, un verdadero retrato, así de sus perfecciones como de su piedad y clemencia; que avisase a los padres de San Francisco la colocaran en dicha iglesia de San Lorenzo.” [That in that same site he would find her image, a true portrait of her perfections and clemencies, and that he should advise the Franciscan fathers to place it in the church of St. Lawrence.]<sup>185</sup>

---

183. Loayzaga, 20.

184. Nava Rodríguez, 1983, 36.

185. *Ibid.*, 37; Francisco de Florencia and Juan Antonio de Oviedo, *Zodiaco Mariano*, introduction by Antonio Rubial García (Mexico City: CNCA, 1995), 257.

Juan Diego took the water and hastened off to cure the sick. Later he went to the Franciscan monastery to tell the friars of his experience. The friars saw Juan Diego's face as he told the story and believed him. That evening they followed him back to the pine grove where in the light of sunset the trees seemed to burn without being consumed. One of the trees was exceptionally fat, and when it was opened up with a hatchet the friars and natives found the statue of the Virgin Mary as Juan Diego had predicted.

They prepared a litter from tree branches and flowers and lifted the statue up onto their shoulders to carry it to the church of St. Lawrence. The crowd was "más que las hojas de los árboles" (more than the leaves of the trees). The natives accompanied the ascent of the Virgin with songs, dancing and festivity of the kind they enjoyed during religious holidays.

The legend goes on to tell of how the caretaker of St. Lawrence's shrine, having a great devotion to this saint, was offended by having his saint's image displaced by this new one. During the night he took down the statue of Mary and returned that of St. Lawrence to its place. Angels switched them back as he slept. He tried this again the next night, with the same result. On the third night, he went so far as to lock the statue of Mary in a chest bound with chains. When the angels still replaced it in the niche, he admitted defeat.

One thing that should be pointed out is how this legend contains details found in the origin stories of popular shrines in Spain, notably the finding of a statue of the Virgin Mary in a tree and the Virgin indicating where she wants to be venerated by moving her image there.



An apparition in Santa Gadea in Burgos is a noteworthy example. In 1399 two young shepherds saw a shining lady in a hawthorn tree, which, like the pines of Ocotlán, burned without being destroyed,

just as God the Father came to Moses in the briar bush, which was not consumed by fire for the good of his people, so I [the Virgin Mary] was sent in the hawthorn for the good of the souls and bodies of the faithful of the human race. You will find that the hawthorn is not burned or damaged in any way; it will serve as medicine for the diseases that people have here.<sup>186</sup>

The Virgin in this case does not leave an image, but she does demand that a Benedictine monastery be built on the site, which was in fact done.

Another legend featuring Mary appearing in a tree is that of the Virgin of Salceda. In this story, two knights lost in a storm came upon a shining willow tree in which they found a statue of the Virgin Mary, around which a Franciscan monastery was founded.<sup>187</sup>

That the statue of the Virgin of Ocotlán is able to physically displace the statue of St. Lawrence from its niche is also a common theme in Spanish miracle stories. Christian refers to this as being the “most common sign” of a site being the preferred one for a Marian shrine. He comments that miraculous statues persist in returning “usually at night, from the parish church to which they had been taken to the sacred location where they were found.”<sup>188</sup>

In Mexico, the Virgin of Remedios insisted on transporting itself from Juan de Tovar’s house to the ruined temple where the statue was originally found. In Ocotlán the statue shows ownership of a shrine through its movements. These themes are conspicuously absent from the legend of the Virgin of Guadalupe, as we shall see.

---

186. Christian, *Apparitions*, 30.

187. Christian, *Local Religion*, 76-77.

188. *Ibid*, 75.

Juan Diego disappears from the story after the finding of the statue. The last details we have about him are that he died and is buried in the church of Santa Isabel Xiloxostla. Loayzaga says that since any descendants of Juan Diego would have served in the *cabildo*, the fact that none did means there must not have been any.<sup>189</sup> There appears to be no devotion to him as there is to the recently-canonized Juan Diego of Tepeyac. I made one trip to the church on a weekday and found it locked up with an unattended trash fire dangerously close to its walls. There is a photograph of a tomb in the book by Angel T. Santamaría and in the 1975 edition of his book on Ocotlán, Nava Rodríguez transcribes two inscriptions from inside the church.

According to Nava Rodríguez, the existing sacristy of the church of Santa Isabel Xiloxostla was originally “el Oratorio de Juan Diego” (Juan Diego’s oratory). The first inscription transcribed is the dedication of the sacristy chapel to Our Lady of Ocotlán with the names of those who paid for its renovation. The second is dated 1766 and found by the altar “en donde según se cree está sepulcrado” (in which it is believed he is buried). It states that Juan Diego (again, not Bernardino) was born in Tlamaohco, a subsidiary of Santa Isabel Xiloxostla, part of the Cabecera of Ocotelolco,

primera y más antigua de las cuatro que componen a la felicísima y muy distinguida República de la insigne, noble, y siempre muy leal Ciudad de Tlaxcala, en donde tuvo principio la divina Ley del Santo Evangelio por una felicidad Diocesana de la Cristianidad primera y más principal de Nueva España.” [(Tlamaohco) first and oldest of the four which make up the most happy and distinguished Republic of the insigned, noble, and always very loyal city of Tlaxcala, which first had the divine Law of the Holy Gospel by the first and principal happy Christian Diocese of New Spain.]

---

189. Loayzaga, 34.

This inscription is interesting in that it speaks more of the respect due to Tlaxcala than that due to the native visionary.

Finally there is a letter dated 1895 to which Nava Rodríguez makes reference. It was written by the priest Jesús Lumbreras to another priest, Refugio Ornelas. In it, Fr. Lumbreras writes that while he was a priest at Santa Isabel Xiloxostla, one Don Mariano Vargas decided to look for the tomb of Juan Diego. He opened up the floor to the right of the altar and discovered “un cajón pequeño de restos humanos” (a small box of human remains) but that it contained nothing else of note. He replaced the box and marked down where it was.<sup>190</sup>

Another interpretation of the legend is found in the shrine church. Off the sacristy is a small chapel which is not open to the public. It contains a series of paintings dated 1781, by a painter named Manuel Caroje (sometimes rendered as *Caro*) which bear detailed descriptions of what is happening in each scene. It closely follows the Loayzaga legend, emphasizing the procession in which the statue was carried to the St. Lawrence shrine.<sup>191</sup>

The Relación de Hojacastro cited by Hugo Nutini gives a third version that is quite different from the two described above. The Relación was a document owned by Señor Lozano Lavallo, who in 1963 possessed “a vast collection of 16<sup>th</sup> century documents.”<sup>192</sup> Nutini writes that he was allowed to see this document and copy most of it by hand. It is his belief that the documents were taken from the Archivo del Ayuntamiento of the city of Tlaxcala before 1948, while the room in which they were

---

190. Nava Rodríguez, *Historia de Nuestra Señora*, 1972 ed., 178-79.

191. Manuel Caroje, *Apparition of the Most Holy Virgin Mary to Juan Diego on the Hill of Ocotlán*, sequence of paintings, oil on wood (S.l.: s.n., 1781).

192. Nutini, 320n5.

stored was being repaired. Allegedly the documents were never returned to the room. Nutini says that “When Charles Gibson worked in Tlaxcala shortly afterwards, the documents must already have disappeared, for he does not mention them in his 1952 publication.”<sup>193</sup>

Nutini does not explain, nor does he raise the question of why the information in the Hojacastro document is not reflected in the works of Loayzaga or Florencia.

However, he admits that the document was controversial.

Professor Wigberto Jiménez Moreno [personal communication] believes that the Hojacastro document may be a forgery, perhaps from about the end of the sixteenth century. I still think that the Hojacastro document is genuine, but if it should ever prove to be a late sixteenth or early seventeenth century forgery, its importance is in no way diminished as an interpretation of an origin myth or legendary account, nor is it damaging to the ensuing analysis of syncretism. The only mildly significant consequence for my conception of syncretism is that the timetable of the syncretic process would have to be advanced another 25 years or so.<sup>194</sup>

Nutini’s approach to the Ocotlán legend was anthropological and not related to the shrine or the contemporary state of the devotion. He therefore provides this different version of the story without apologies or attempts to reconcile it with the legend as told by Loayzaga or the paintings in the old chapel.

What the Relación tells is that the young *topil*’s name was in fact Juan Diego Bernardino, and that he was drawing his water in the morning of 12 May 1541. The lady appeared to him in a burning pine tree, dressed in a blue blouse and white wrap-around skirt, the same garments worn by the goddess Xochiquetzal whose ruined temple was nearby. Her request was that a shrine be built to her on the site of those ruins.

---

193. Ibid.

194. Ibid., n6.

It was mentioned earlier that Xochiquetzal was the patroness of art, flowers and games. She was also a goddess of love and pleasure, the “smiling face” of the otherwise terrifying mother goddesses of the Nahuatl.<sup>195</sup> Her femininity, benevolence and the extent of her cult are what could have rendered it impossible for St. Lawrence to fill the hole left behind by the destruction of her temple.

Xochiquetzal was also known for making appearances. One such legend is about a holy man named Yappan. Xochiquetzal descended to the place where he was, saying: “I come to greet you and carry out with you the ministrations of a woman.” The *Cantares Mexicanos* say that she then covered him with her dress, causing him to break his penitent’s vows.<sup>196</sup>

Since she was also the teacher of spells and enchantment, the Tlaxcalans believed that she would appear to practitioners who called upon her. “On the hill of mirrors in the place of encounter, I call to the woman, I intone chants. I am weary. My sister Xochiquetzal comes to my aid, surrounded by a snake and her bound hair shines.”<sup>197</sup> This association with the serpent, and of her being a sinner, made Franciscan missionaries equate Xochiquetzal with Eve.<sup>198</sup>

The differences, besides the name of the visionary, are striking. The twelfth of May does not fall in the “first days of spring” as the tradition used by Loayzaga reports. The apparition takes place in the morning. The hill is absent, as is the well. Most importantly, there is no mention of the statue that is at the heart of the shrine. This apparition of the Virgin Mary does not even resemble it; the statue is not clad in

---

195. Miguel León-Portilla, *Toltecáyotl: Aspectos de la cultura náhuatl* (México: Fondo de la Cultura Económica, 1980), 418.

196. *Ibid.*, 418-19.

197. *Ibid.*, 419.

198. Nicholson, 109-10.

a blue and white blouse and skirt but in gold and red robes like many of its European counterparts.

As the *Relación* has vanished, it is impossible to know if it was a forgery or not. However, the way it is treated by 20<sup>th</sup> century writers is striking in the way its alleged existence is, while not ignored, certainly not admitted into the body of the legend. It is treated as potential evidence that the Virgin really did appear in 1541, but reactions to it are selective or dismissive.

The *Prologo de la edicion de 1972* (introduction to the 1972 version) of Luis Nava Rodríguez's book, which was reprinted in the 1983 edition, was written by the painter Señor Desiderio H. Xochitiozin. It contains this paragraph:

Sólo lamentamos que en esta nueva obra dedicada a difundir la Historia de Nuestra Virgen Tlaxcalteca, su Aparición y Culto, aún no se cite el "Documento de Hojacastro de 1547" (documento del segundo Obispo de Tlaxcala fray Martín Sarmiento de Hojacastro, donde se informa de la aparición de Nuestra Señora de Ocotlán). Con toda seguridad la prudencia de la jerarquía eclesiástica aconseja se pueda dar a conocer dicho documento cuando éste – hoy desaparecido de Tlaxcala – sea localizado y debidamente estudiado por las autoridades eclesiásticas e historiadores eruditos." [We only lament that in this new work dedicated to our Tlaxcalan Virgin, her apparition and cult that it does not cite the "Document of Hojacastro" of 1547 (a document by the second bishop of Tlaxcala, Fray Martín Sarmiento de Hojacastro, where he informs of the apparition of Our Lady of Ocotlán). We trust the prudence of the ecclesiastical hierarchy counsels to inform when this said document – now vanished from Tlaxcala – will be found and studied by the ecclesiastic authorities and erudite historians.]<sup>199</sup>

The existence of the document is thus acknowledged, though not by Nava Rodríguez himself but by Xochitiozin who wrote the prologue. Within the body of the book itself, the details published by Nutini are ignored. Instead, Nava Rodríguez puts in the footnote at the beginning of the second chapter:

---

199. Nava Rodríguez, 1983, 12-13.

La historia y la tradición dicen: "Era la tarde de uno de los días próximos a la primavera de 1541, como queda dicho. El sol despedía ya sobre la comarca sus últimos fulgores cuando Juan Diego subiendo por la ladera occidental del cerro de San Lorenzo, penetró el bosque de ocotes que en aquel tiempo existía junto a una barranca". Fray Vicente del Niño Jesús Suárez de Peredo. Pbro. Calixto del Refugio Ornelas. Nicanor Quirós y Gutiérrez, Chantre de la Basílica Angelopolitana, y Pbro don Carlos Martínez Aguilar. (The history and the tradition say: "It was the afternoon of one of the days near to the spring of 1541, as previously stated. The sun spread its last rays on the region as Juan Diego descended the west slope of the hill of St. Lawrence, entered the pine forest that existed in those days near a ravine".)<sup>200</sup>

The men listed afterwards are priests of some dignity at the time. Padre Nicanor Quirós y Gutiérrez, cantor at the cathedral of Puebla (the Basílica Angelopolitana) was author of his own short book on the history of the Virgin of Ocotlán, written for the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the apparition.<sup>201</sup> Although it cannot be conclusively proven, it would seem that this note, which appears at the beginning of the chapter recounting the legend, was included in order to give credence to the Loayzaga version of the story over the Nutini version. This would be supported by the slight implication by Xochitiotzin that the ecclesiastical authorities are the ones to have hidden the document, perhaps out of a feeling that the Nutini version, forgery or no, threatened the shrine.

The book sold most at the shrine is *Nuestra Señora de Ocotlán: Su historia, su arte, su mensaje* by Angel T. Santamaría. Santamaría has a more welcoming view of the Nutini version, although he still subordinates it to the Loayzaga. He includes the *Relación* as one of the testimonies to the apparition.

---

<sup>200</sup> Nava Rodríguez, 1972, 35n15.

<sup>201</sup> Padre Nicanor was fondly remembered by some of the researchers who routinely visited the Archives at the cathedral. When I mentioned I was researching Ocotlán, they immediately mentioned his name. None, however, had read his book or knew where to find a copy, nor did the Archives have one.

includes quotations, although he does not say if these were taken from Nutini's handmade copy.

The document was written, he reports, by Hojacastro upon becoming guardian of the Franciscan monastery in Tlaxcala. Having heard of the apparition, he interviewed the elderly resident friars and any eyewitnesses who still survived. Hojacastro's conclusions were thus:

Tomado e rresibido juramento del Guardián, prometio decir verdad el indio Joan Diego, e syendo preguntado dixo avers hablado con Santa María Virgen, en doze dias del mes de maio passado, e que lo susodicho acaesió en una aruolea un cuarto de legua de este dicho monasterio. [Under oath to the Guardian, he promised to say the truth about the Indian Juan Diego, and on being asked said he spoke with the Holy Virgin Mary on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May past, and that it took place in a forest a quarter of a league from this very monastery.]<sup>202</sup>

Though not using quotations from Hojacastro, Santamaría goes on to write that the Virgin appeared inside a burning tree, dressed in blue and white Tlaxcalan clothing, asking to have a church built. Finally, he says that Hojacastro felt the apparition was providential in helping the friars convert the natives.

He does not mention that the statue is absent, nor the discrepancy between the clothes the Virgin is wearing in the apparition and the ones the statue is wearing. In fact, the book contains photos of two young girls dressed in blouse and *titixle* (wrap-around skirt) with the caption, “¿Venía vestida así la Virgen?” (Did the Virgin come dressed like this?)<sup>203</sup>

As for the visionary himself, the segment of the book devoted to him is entitled “Juan Diego Bernardino.” It repeats that he was a young man who worked

---

202. Angel T. Santamaría, *Nuestra Señora de Ocotlán: Su Historia, Su Arte, Su Mensaje* (Tlaxcala, Mexico: Párraco de Ocotlán, 1990), 7.

203. *Ibid.*, 6.



tending the altars. However, outside of this section heading he is never referred to as Juan Diego Bernardino again, only as Juan Diego.

While the *Relación* could be an early version of the Ocotlán story based on its simplicity, it is impossible to make a solid judgment with the document no longer available. On the other hand, it is hard to imagine that the name Juan Diego Bernardino is coincidental, given that Juan Diego and his uncle Bernardino saw the Virgin of Guadalupe, especially since natives were not given triple names. Ultimately, the *Relación* has not been influential on the state of the legend or the devotion. If it were genuine, it could be seen as proof that the Virgin appeared in Tlaxcala as believed, but on the other hand it discredits the statue.

However, I believe that it is the late appearance of the *Relación* that relegates it to being a footnote to Ocotlán history. The statue is the origin of the shrine, more so than just the command from the Virgin, and the Loayzaga story gives the origin of the statue. Like the statue of Mary taken away from Acxotecatl, the Virgin of Ocotlán is a Tlaxcalan symbol, just as Guadalupe is for Mexico as a whole. The books on the apparition are published in Puebla, with one reprinted in Barcelona.<sup>204</sup> The Loayzaga legend is deeply engrained, reinforced by the art of the shrine and the festivals surrounding the Virgin. The change in the name of the visionary is fairly unimportant, as the visionary himself is almost incidental to the legend. What is important is the visual appearance of the statue, its continuing presence and the healing power of the shrine which is an essential part of its history.

---

204. Martínez Baracs, 60-61.

### 3.2.2 Historical realities of the Ocotlán shrine

Having treated the legend, it is now necessary to discuss the known facts about the shrine. As with Guadalupe, they are hazy and few at first, only coming into focus more than a century after the event allegedly occurred. Baracs provides the only non-devotional source of Ocotlán history I have found thus far, and most other sources rely on the Loayzaga book.

In 1553 Bishop Hojacastro was involved in the destruction of shrines and images, with the cooperation of native authorities. He may have investigated the Ocotlán shrine at this time if it existed. The *cabildo* of the city of Tlaxcala approved of this activity:

December 18, 1553. And all around Tlaxcala several churches have been abolished. However, it was first put before the bishop of Tlaxcala, don Martín de Hojacastro, by whose order it was done [...] because people have been much afflicted by there being churches at such small intervals. And it was ordered that only four churches be brought to full splendor; the ones at San Francisco Ocotelulco, San Esteban Tizatla, Tlapitzahuacan de los Reyes, and Tepeticpac de Santiago Mayor. And the father guardian will decide where any other churches are approved to stand. For the saints are not to be dishonored and often something goes wrong there [at small, under supervised, under supported churches].<sup>205</sup>

The first mention of the shrine is in Muñoz Camargo, who makes reference to there being a Franciscan *visita* (missionary centre) in Tlaxcala in 1588 or 1589 called Santa Maria Ocotla. It was a *visita* with 142 natives attached to it. In his earlier book *Descripción de la ciudad y provincia de Tlaxcala* he refers to there being:

[...] dos ermitas de muy gran devoción, arrimadas al propio cerro, por cima destas fuentes y estanques, y aquí está un monte de pinos y robles con otras arboledas que causan gran espesura...y, junto al nacimiento desta agua, está una cruz con una peña de árboles silvestres, que provoca a muy gran devoción

---

205. Lockhart, Berdan and Anderson, *Tlaxcalan Actas*, 90.

con su buena traza y compostura de yerbas y plantas campesinas, espinosas y peregrinas. [(...) two shrines of great devotion, brought together on their own hill, on the top with fountains and ponds, and there is a grove of pines and oaks with other trees that cause it to be thick...and there at the source of the water is a cross with a group of forest trees that evokes great devotion with its good appearance and collection of herbs and country plants, spiny and wandering.]<sup>206</sup>

It should be noticed that an emphasis on the wild and forested location in which the Virgin of Ocotlán chooses to appear is a frequent detail in the different versions of the story, and is in fact common to marian apparition stories as a whole.

Another mention of the shrine (though not the statue) is from no less a person than Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, then Archbishop of Puebla. In 1644, he was making a visit to the territory under his supervision and on 29 June he visited the Ocotlán shrine. His comments add little to the description given by Muñoz Camargo beyond establishing that there was indeed a strong local devotion. However, the presence of the Archbishop there perhaps gave the shrine legitimacy.

A la tarde fui a una ermita de gran devoción, que se llama Santa María Ocotlán, donde recé el rosario con los de mi familia, que es lo que acostumbro siempre en todos los pueblos para asentar devoción tan loable para los cristianos, lo cual admiten los vecinos de los pueblos con mucha devoción, acudiendo todos para tomar la forma de cómo se reza. [In the evening I went to a shrine of great devotion which is called St. Mary Ocotlán where I recited the rosary with those of my family, as is customary always in all the towns to establish devotion so praiseworthy in Christians. They admitted the locals of the towns with much devotion, all coming to learn to pray.]<sup>207</sup>

Palafox was a great believer in placing shrines and Catholic images in locations that had been regarded as holy before the Conquest. Even in Palafox's time, Church authorities were still uncovering adherents to the native religion.

---

206. Martínez Baracs, 48.

207. Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, *Relación de la visita eclesiástica de parte del obispado de la Puebla de los Angeles*, transcribed with notes and introduction by Bernardo García Martínez (Puebla, Mexico: Secretaria de Cultura Estado de Puebla, 1997), 75.

Palafox wrote to his priests that asking faithful natives to reveal the location of “idolaters,” then putting shrines or images in the locations where the “idolatry” took place was an excellent way of propagating the faith.<sup>208</sup>

In 1689, Don Manuel de los Santos y Salazar published the *Historia cronológica de la Noble y Leal Ciudad de Tlaxcala*. This was a book started around 1662 by another author, Don Juan Buenaventura Zapata y Mendoza and as such, it is most likely that the dedication page was written by Santos y Salazar.

What makes this book significant is that it contains the first reference to the statue in the shrine. The first page, dated 1689, carries the dedication “A la Sacratissima Virgen Maria en la milagrosa Imagen de Ocotlán, cita en la dicha Ciudad, dedica, consagra, y ofrece.” (To the Most Holy Virgin Mary in her miraculous image of Ocotlán, in the said City, dedicated, consecrated, and offered.)

The authors of this history give us more than just a mention of the statue of the Virgin. They are curious themselves about the origin of the statue and discuss what is known of its origins. In fact, they lament the lack of sources about it, and suggest that already there have been hoaxes about its origin:

Ojalá en ella hubiera hallado la invención y origen de vuestra milagrosísima imagen, de que nos ha privado el tiempo, y sola una remota y obscura tradición nos consuela, que corrió los años pasados de que en poder de un cacique de esta ciudad se hallaba un escrito antiguo aunque no auténtico (qué desgracia).” [If only someone found the discovery and origin of your most miraculous image, of which time has deprived us, and only a remote and obscure tradition consoles us, which circulated in years past, that in the power of a chieftain in this city was an ancient writing, although not authentic (what a shame)]<sup>209</sup>.

---

208. Castro Ramirez, 98-99.

209. Martínez Baracs, 16-17.

Baracs continues to cite Santos y Salazar, quoting his very bare account of the discovery of the statue:

La substancia de ella es que en la primitiva, cuando estaba el cerro todavía lleno de pinos de donde se denominó [Ocotlán], pasaba por él continuamente un natural de sus contornos, cuyo nombre se ignora, y vio arder un pino, que repitió tantas veces esta visión que le motivó dar cuenta de ella a sus padres espirituales (que lo eran entonces de la Seráfica familia), que con zelo ardiente fueron al lugar, y mandado cortar el pino hallaron dentro de ella por centro dibujada y formada vuestra sagrada imagen, la que perfeccionaron y colocaron en la ermita más cercana que era dedicada a San Lorenzo Mártir, donde hoy te veneran todos, y liberal repartes tus misericordias, esto es lo que supe y oí, que piadosamente podemos creer. [The substance of it is that in the beginning, when it was still a hill full of pines which they called Ocotlán, a native of those parts whose name isn't known continually passed by. He saw a pine burning, and the vision repeated itself several times. It motivated him to tell the spiritual fathers (who belonged to the Seraphic Family) and with burning zeal they went to the place and cutting down a pine found sketched and formed inside your holy image, which they perfected and placed in the nearest shrine which was dedicated to St. Lawrence the Martyr, where now all venerate you and your mercies are liberally shared. This is what was known and heard, and which we piously believe.]<sup>210</sup>

This account is possibly more telling than the Loayzaga legend because it hints at a possible real origin of the statue when it says that the image inside the pine was *found sketched* and then *perfected* and placed in the shrine of St. Lawrence. As with recent sightings of crucifix-shaped trees or the Virgin Mary in the stains of a Mexico City subway station floor, it suggests that a strange formation resembling the Virgin Mary was discovered inside a tree, and that this formation was removed, carved, and painted into the statue venerated in the shrine today.

The other relevant details which persist are the emphasis on the wooded location, the unnamed native visionary and the role of the Franciscans in the

---

210. Ibid., 18.

discovery of the statue. However, by the 17<sup>th</sup> century the shrine had passed into the hands of the secular clergy.

In 1670, Diego de Osoria de Escobar appointed Juan de Escobar as *castellan* (custodian) of the shrine. According to Loayzaga's book, the shrine had at this point been without a guardian for over a century. Baracs believes this literally, and thus dates the shrine conclusively to 1570 although the first sure reference to a shrine of any kind is in Zapata y Mendoza in 1589.

Juan de Escobar, parish priest of Santa Ana Chiatempan, took over his new assignment with great zeal. He was the one responsible for constructing the shrine according to the floor plan it has now, with the chancel, transept and cupola. The project was completed using native labour. Florencia says that whole families participated in the construction, without pay.<sup>211</sup>

It is often believed that the chapel off the sacristy is the original chapel of St. Lawrence. However, Angel de Santamaría cautions that this small chapel which holds the Caroje paintings is actually the old sacristy.<sup>212</sup> (The Museo de la Memoria has a display of the floor plan of the shrine claiming that the old sacristy is the whole of construction done by Escobar. This seems unlikely, considering that his successor was able to install a retablo into the wall of the already existing church.) Juan de Escobar served as shrine-keeper for 20 years before his death, whereupon he was, curiously, interred not in the shrine but in "the parish church of Tlaxcala."<sup>213</sup>

---

211. Florencia and Oviedo, 261.

212. Santamaría, 9.

213. Florencia, 262.

It is not clear from the account in the *Zodiaco* if Juan de Escobar was appointed shrine-keeper for the shrine of St. Lawrence or for Our Lady of Ocotlán.

On one hand, the book clearly states:

La iglesia de San Lorenzo, por pequeña, y no según el arte de la arquitectura, no era decente concha para una perla tan preciosa como la soberana y milagrosa imagen de María. [The church of St. Lawrence, being so small and not architecturally artful, was not a decent shell for such a pearl as precious as the sovereign and miraculous image of Mary.]<sup>214</sup>

On the other hand, we have the evidence from the past to indicate that the statue had its own cult and the church was indeed referred to as that of “María Ocotlatia.”

The fact that the shrine is referred to as that of St. Lawrence, housing the statue of the Virgin but not being the shrine of the Virgin itself, is interesting. It suggests a clear history of the statue of Mary being a native Mexican cult that displaced a European one. While it did not do so as thoroughly as Guadalupe did, taking the very name of the pre-existing Spanish shrine, the fact that the original church continued to still be known as that of St. Lawrence and was destroyed in order to build a new shrine, gives a concrete picture of this displacement.

The second caretaker of the shrine was Francisco Fernández, who was in charge from 1691-1716. He installed the *retablo* dedicated to the Virgin of Guadalupe, but still developed the cult of Ocotlán. During his 25 years at the shrine, he faithfully assured that processions in honour of the Virgin were held during all times of need.

In a motion that Nava does not explain, Fernández also had a wall built around the holy well to mark it as being under the shrine’s authority rather than that

---

214. Ibid., 261.

of the parish. This was by order of the bishop at the time, Pedro Nogales Dávila.

Nava further adds that Fernández finished his days as a Franciscan.

The third caretaker, Manuel Loayzaga, was, as mentioned, the one who put the final shape on the shrine and cult. Appointed to the task in 1716, he served as caretaker for 42 years. During this time he put out two editions of his book detailing the legend of Our Lady of Ocotlán, one in 1747 and another in 1750. He put in the magnificent central *retablo* with the great silver niche in which the statue stands as well as the pulpit.<sup>215</sup> Loayzaga took immense personal pride in the glories of the shrine as he left it, although he did take time to praise the beauty of the image.<sup>216</sup> However, the part of the shrine for which he will always be remembered is the Camarín, the eight-sided chapel behind the niche which is used as the Virgin's dressing room. This incredibly ornate room is decorated with "solomonic columns," paintings from the Life of the Virgin, portraits of Doctors of the Church who defended the Virgin Mary and, at the centre, the great round table on which the Virgin stands as she is being dressed.<sup>217</sup>

The veneration of the statue has been the focus of the shrine for as long as the statue has been known. Standing 148 centimetres tall, it is reportedly made of pine, although this cannot be certain. It is carved as wearing a long tunic and mantle. The tunic is gold, with red trim. The mantle was blue at one time, but the paint has faded, revealing more gold beneath it. The statue stands erect, looking straight ahead, hands folded in front of the chest. The carved hair is brown and a replica of the image in the Museo de la Memoria shows it to have seven plaits of hair in back.

---

215. Santamaría, 9.

216. Loayzaga, 53-93.

217. Nava Rodríguez, *Historia de Nuestra Señora*, 1983, 63-64.



Normally, the statue is dressed in a cape, of which she owns many, and a large crown that was given to the statue in 1975.<sup>218</sup> She also has pierced ears, earrings and many finger rings in addition to the sceptre she carries. A silver crescent moon with a *man-in-the-moon* face looking up at her has been put at the base of the image in order to confirm its identity as an Immaculate Conception.<sup>219</sup> It should be noted that a silver moon was placed at the feet of Our Lady of Guadalupe for the same reason.

It should also be noted that one of the same claims about Guadalupe is made about Ocotlán: namely, that despite time and the elements, the image has suffered no wear or damage.<sup>220</sup> This unfortunately is not true. Close examination of the statue shows wear around the feet, probably from being touched by the faithful on the days the statue is taken from its niche, and worm holes (insect damage) at the back.

Having seen what the background of the shrine and statue is, it is necessary to examine the nature of the devotions shown to them in the present day.

### 3.3 State of the Devotion

The Ocotlán devotion is concentrated around the various processions that take place several times during the year. The statue leaves its niche over the altar on three fixed dates: New Year's Day and the first and third Mondays in May. The Monday processions are referred to as the *bajada* (descending) and the *subida* (going up) respectively.

---

218. Ibid., 43.

219. Nava Rodríguez, *Historia de Nuestra Señora*, 1972, 43; Loayzaga, 83.

220. Ibid., 177.

Other pilgrimages to the shrine take place in May. One is a horseback procession from Amixtlan in Puebla which takes two days. There also are marian-themed tours that have Ocotlán as one of their highlights.<sup>221</sup>

The *bajada* is the smaller of the two festivals. After a mid-day mass, the statue of Our Lady of Ocotlán is carried out of the shrine by members of her *cofradía* (religious fraternity). She rides on a wooden litter and a fabric canopy is carried over her (figure 1). The procession takes her through the square of streets around the



**Figure 1** Our Lady of Ocotlán on her litter at the Bajada.

shrine, with stops along the way for prayers and hymns. Along the way, people throw flower petals down onto the image as it passes (figure 2, page 103). Once the

---

221. "XXIII Peregrinación a Caballo de Amixtlan," Poster (Puebla, Mexico: s.n., 2003)



**Figure 2 Throwing confetti and flower petals down onto Our Lady of Ocotlán.**

circuit is completed, the statue is brought back into the shrine. At one time the statue would have been brought into the city but this is no longer the case.

A different route makes the *subida* two weeks later much longer. This is a more solemn procession, involving a descent from the shrine into the city, a tour through the city, mass at the former Franciscan monastery which is now the cathedral of Tlaxcala, and finally a gruelling climb back up to the shrine. The procession takes about 12 hours.

Preparations take place the night before, with the statue being dressed in the *camarín* and taken into the church. In the meantime, volunteers make elaborate carpets of coloured sawdust in the streets (figures 3 and 4, page 104). These carpets are destroyed as the image of Mary is carried along them.



Figure 3 A path of coloured sawdust for the Subida of Our Lady of Ocotlán.



Figure 4 Another path for Our Lady of Ocotlán with the procession approaching.

The syncretistic effect is particularly evident during this event. We know that the Nahuatl peoples of the Valley of Mexico also used processions in which the images of the deities were carried along paths the worshippers had swept and covered with new mats. Remedios was likewise honoured with a path swept and covered in flowers.<sup>222</sup> While I did not see anyone sweeping in front of the statue of the Virgin of Ocotlán, the concept of the flowery mat was certainly present.

Also present was a musical offering: a man with a homemade drum, who walked backwards in front of the image drumming (figure 5). During mass at the



**Figure 5** An offering of rhythm for Our Lady of Ocotlán.

---

222. Curcio-Nagy, 380.

cathedral later, his drumbeats could be heard during the Consecration. The procession continues from the cathedral back down into the city, then up the hill to the well before returning to the shrine and its surrounding festival.

It is helpful to return to Michel de Certeau's writing on hagiography at this point. One of the observations he makes is how the life of a saint carries a festive element to the community. One of the ways in which this occurs is through holidays (literally "holy days") that interrupt the course of the normal working year and traditionally have been marked with religious festivities, as shown here.<sup>223</sup>

Another of Certeau's relevant observations is how the life of a saint is "the literary crystallization of the perceptions of a collective consciousness"<sup>224</sup> and that the kind of hagiography in question indicates the nature of the community.<sup>225</sup> The Virgin of Ocotlán is a symbol used to demonstrate the privileged status of the state and city of Tlaxcala. Through her, Tlaxcala demonstrates to the world how it is special, and reminds the world that even though it is small and minor now, the city was crucial to Mexican history. The pride of Tlaxcala is maintained through the existence of its Virgin.

### **3.4 Mariological significance of Our Lady of Ocotlán**

The theological, and by extension mariological, significance of the Virgin of Ocotlán is that of "spiritual motherhood." The divine came to earth not to chastise but to help, heal and leave something of itself behind. The Virgin Mary came to

---

223. Certeau, 278-79.

224. Ibid., 275.

225. Ibid., 278.

Tlaxcala to bring a healing, maternal presence that increases faith and has written itself into the daily life of the community.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains the concept of the spiritual motherhood of Mary in paragraph 501:

Jesus is Mary's only son, but her spiritual motherhood extends to all men [sic] whom indeed he came to save: "The Son whom she brought forth is he whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren, that is, the faithful in whose generation and formulation she cooperates with a mother's love."

Mary takes a maternal interest in the brothers and sisters of her son.

In order to be of assistance to the faithful, God has allowed Mary to draw her powers of mediation from the unique mediation of her son.

All the Blessed Virgin's salutary influence on men and women [...] flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it.<sup>226</sup>

Thus, Mary's mediation and power draw upon those of Jesus because God wants it to be possible not only for Mary to assist in the work of salvation, but in the work carried out by all Christians. "The unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in one source."<sup>227</sup>

While the Virgin Mary is a powerful divine helper in the lives of those who turn to her, she plays another critical role as the model Christian.

But while in the most Blessed Virgin the church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle, the faithful still strive

---

226. "Lumen Gentium," in *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, N.Y.: Costello; Dublin, Ireland: Dominican Publications, 1996), 85.

227. *Ibid.*, par. 62.

to conquer sin and grow in holiness. And so they turn their eyes to Mary who shines out to the whole community of the elect as the model of virtues.<sup>228</sup>

The Virgin of Ocotlán, despite having been crowned and adorned like a queen, is very much a mother figure in Tlaxcala. This is not only consistent with Roman Catholic teaching, but serves as a demonstration of what Mary's spiritual motherhood signifies in the "real world" to people who believe in Mary as someone who listens, cares and gives assistance.

When the Spanish came to Tlaxcala, it was a nation that worshipped a benevolent goddess, Xochiquetzal. In 1528 her temple was destroyed by Fray Martín de Valencia and the shrine to St. Lawrence was built on the hilltop nearby.<sup>229</sup> Baracs and Nutini both speculate that St. Lawrence could not fill the emotional and religious void the people experienced from the loss of this goddess. The Virgin Mary could. To give a specific example, when Cortés gave his statue to Acxotecatl, this particular image fulfilled the needs which Xochiquetzal had once addressed. When the statue was taken by the Franciscans to their new church in Puebla, it not only sent Acxotecatl back to worshipping his old gods, it left a goddess-shaped void for a second time. The Franciscans were thus compelled to replace the St. Lawrence shrine with one devoted to the Virgin Mary.

If the cult of the Virgin of Ocotlán does indeed date back to the 1540s, as Baracs believes, this would also explain the Virgin's specialization as a healer. She would have been invoked in 1548 during the great plague in Tlaxcala.<sup>230</sup> The Loayzaga book, with its story about Juan Diego and the miraculous spring of water,

---

228. *Ibid.*, par. 65.

229. Martínez Baracs, 180.

230. *Ibid.*, 46.



would have spread the word about Ocotlán's power over disease and infirmity.

Loayzaga himself says of the shrine, "Desde esse día, se declaró este Templo por Casa de refugio, y Propiciatorio." (From that day, the temple was declared a house of refuge and place of penance.) It was and still is a place for the sick to be healed, the afflicted consoled, the sinner to find pardon and for the just to find more graces.<sup>231</sup>

One of the documents I was able to obtain from the shrine listed a small collection of late 20<sup>th</sup> century miracles, which occurred between 1986 to 1993, and which have been formally investigated.<sup>232</sup> Many, though not all, of the miracles even have the names, addresses and in some cases phone numbers of the people who received the favours.<sup>233</sup>

From the collection of August 1986: A Protestant woman had a son who was sick. Her Catholic *comadre*<sup>234</sup> gave her water from the holy well. The Protestant woman thought it couldn't hurt and gave it to him. Her son drank the water and vomited up an earring after which he was fine. There is, however, no mention of the woman converting as there would be in a medieval story.

Sr. Amador Leyve Tejada had a brain tumour. After making a novena in front of the image of Mary at the shrine, he received a phone call that a specialist had

---

231. Loayzaga, 29.

232. Agustín Estrada Monroy to Fray Junípero Rivera Alonso, OFM, memorandum, unpublished, Shrine archival material, Tlaxcala, Mexico, 9 August 1997.

233. José Luis Horta Ortega, "Favores atribuidos a Ntra. Señora en su advocación de Ocotlán," testimonies signed and dated August 1986, unpublished Shrine archival material, (Tlaxcala, Mexico: s.n., 1986) n.p.

234. The term "comadre," as explained to me by Tlaxcalan mother of ten children Guadalupe Martínez Díaz, means a friend who is also a mother, with whom you can reciprocate parenting duties as needed.

arrived in Mexico City and that surgery was now possible. Sr. Leyve said he felt God, as a favour to Mary, had given him more time to prepare for eternal life.

Another story is about a pregnant woman with leukemia. Her doctors in Leon did not want the responsibility of her treatment, so they sent her to Mexico City. The sick woman's aunt told the husband about the miraculous water. The woman's mother said the novena. The woman gave birth by caesarean section to a healthy daughter and is still alive.

A miracle from 1993 is most documented, perhaps because it was recounted by a historian. *Historiador* (Historian) Agustín Estrada Monroy wrote the account of "Una mujer sordamuda de nacimiento y loca esquizofrénica, quien el día de su sanación había intentado asesinar a su propia madre." (A schizophrenic woman deaf and mute from birth, who on the day of her healing wanted to kill her own mother.)

This woman's aunt came to Historiador Estrada looking for a folk cure. Since none existed, he gave her water from the well and told her to invoke the Virgin of Ocotlán. After this was done, the sick woman signed, "What is that in the air?" It turned out she meant birdsong. She was taught to make a few sounds on the spot, whereupon she used them to thank the Virgin. Estrada refused payment, saying that this was due to the power of God and that any payment would be made to him in Heaven. The story, which was written four years later, says that the healed woman was in therapy to learn to speak and was no longer insane.

There are also several brief accounts of miracles. A boy burned by a bakery oven prayed to the Virgin of Ocotlán and was restored to "perfect health" (*perfecta salud*). A child's delicate health was restored by application of the water. A woman discovered, after invoking the Virgin, that she did not need an unspecified operation.

The water cured a patient's eye when it was infected after surgery. A woman was able to deliver a baby without a caesarean. Finally, there is one mention of a woman whose problems with her mortgage were resolved easily.

It is apparent from these little stories that water from the holy well is a crucial aspect to healing. In this, the stories stay in direct contact with the words of Mary to Juan Diego, "Yo te daré otra agua con que se extinga ese contagio y sanen no solo tus parientes, sino cuantos bebieren de ella; porque mi corazón siempre inclinado a favorecer desvalidos, ya no sufre ver entre ellos tantas desdichas sin remediarlas." (I will give you another water with which you will extinguish the contagion and cure not only your family but all who drink of it; for my heart is always inclined towards the lowly, and will not suffer to see such things without remedying them.)<sup>235</sup>

Another more recent part of asking for healing is the novena. The one sold at the shrine is dated 1977, and was written on the occasion of the upcoming coronation of the statue. Unlike many novenae, this one is meant specifically to be recited in the presence of the image, to bring home more literally the concept of bringing one's sins, sicknesses and grief to Mary. The connection to this Virgin is real and personal: "¡Qué contento es el estar algunas horas contigo, mirar tu Imagen, y darte nuestro corazón, y contarte nuestras penas!" (How content [are we] to be here a few hours, to see your Image, give you our heart and tell you our sorrows!)<sup>236</sup>

At the same time, there is constant recollection of how Mary's mediation rests on that of her son. This was also mentioned in the miracles, with the man who suffered from a brain tumour expressing that God was the one who healed him, with

---

235. Nava Rodríguez, *Historia de Nuestra Señora*, 1983, 36.

236. "Novena A Nuestra Señora La Virgen de Ocotlán," (Tlaxcala, Mexico: s.n., 1977),. 7.

the intention of preparing him for Heaven, and Historiador Estrada saying that God would reward him. In the novena, the petitioner prays to leave sin behind and to unite more and more with Jesus Christ.<sup>237</sup>

The shrine itself is far heavier in Mary imagery than Christ imagery. The statue of the Virgin of Ocotlán dominates the space, and to either side of the nave there is a statue of Guadalupe and a Pietà. Jesus Christ appears in the Stations of the Cross, in his mother's arms in the Pietà and in a small crucifix behind the altar. Nonetheless, it is clear that the shrine is understood as being a firmly Christian one. The tone of the miracle stories is one indication. Another is an ongoing theme of Scripture. The legend is presented in terms of the Exodus and the beginnings of the Hebrew people.

The first analogy is obviously that of the burning bush in which God spoke to Moses. The *Zodiaco Mariano* describes Juan Diego as

habiendo llegado cerca del bosque vieron que todo él ardía, aunque con llamas tan inocentes que como el fuego que cercaba la celebrada farsa de Moisés, sin consumirla, así aquel fuego más servía de hermoso y lúcido adorno a los árboles del bosque.” [having come near the forest, seeing all was burning, yet with flames as those that surrounded Moses' celebrated bush without consuming it, this fire did more to beautify and illuminate the forest.]<sup>238</sup>

This theme is repeated in the novena, which says, “Así como ante Moisés se presentó aquella zarza que sin consumirse ni gastarse, ardía por todas partes en esplendentes llamas.” (There as before Moses stood this bush that burned in all its parts with splendid flames, without being consumed or burned up.)<sup>239</sup>

---

237. *Ibid.*, 9.

238. Florencia, 258.

239. “Novena,” 10.

After the statue is discovered, it is carried to the shrine of St. Lawrence. Florencia compares it to the Ark of the Covenant. “Ordenóse aunque sin orden por el numeroso gentío una proceción, llevando los religiosos en sus hombros aquella nueva arca del testamento hasta la iglesia de San Lorenzo.” (Ordered without an order by the large crowd, the religious lifted onto their shoulders this new Ark of the testament to the church of St. Lawrence.)<sup>240</sup> An 18<sup>th</sup> century painting in the sacristy of the shrine illustrates this scene and draws the same comparison. The Virgin Mary is sometimes considered a new Ark in Catholic thought because she carried within her the Word of God.

The burning pine tree itself is compared to Mary. The pine is seen as a pure tree, always green, with a scent that cleans the air and a resin that burns brightly.<sup>241</sup> The pine tree can also be used to make a medicine for chest ailments. The novena compares this medicinal compound to Mary, who is the pure and cleansing medicine for spiritual sickness.<sup>242</sup>

Finally, Mary’s presence in Tlaxcala is seen as a sign of favour towards that city. With the founding of Puebla, Tlaxcala lost a considerable amount of status. Baracs refers to two blows to Tlaxcala’s status, the first being Acxotecatl losing his statue of Mary to the Franciscans, and the second when the first Episcopal see was moved from Tlaxcala to the new and more (to a European) agreeable city of Puebla. Despite the fact that the visionary’s name is given as Juan Diego, it appears that the city Tlaxcala was rivalling was Puebla, not the city of Mexico.<sup>243</sup> He thus ties the

---

240. Florencia, 259.

241. Santamaría, 5.

242. “Novena,” 13-14.

243. Martínez Baracs, 180-81.

founding of the Ocotlán cult to 1543 when the see of Tlaxcala was translated from that city.

Loayzaga defends Tlaxcala as

primer hermoso diamante de los muchos, que ilustran en estos Reynos la coronoa [sic] de nuestros Catolicos Reyes [...] Throno desde donde desplegó el Evangelio sus primeras vanderas: y la luz de la Fee [sic] todos sus rayos. [the first beautiful diamond out of the many that shine in the crown of our Catholic Kings (...) the throne from which the Gospel and all the rays of faith shone in the beginning.]<sup>244</sup>

He goes on to describe how after working with the Spanish against Moctezuma, the city was slowly downgraded.<sup>245</sup>

The Virgin of Ocotlán is seen as being mother of the Tlaxcalan family. “God has placed in your family, as in all homes, the figure of a woman who quietly and in the spirit of service, keeps vigil in it and protects its way towards Heaven,” Angel T. Santamaría gives Bishop Hojacastro as saying.<sup>246</sup> The novena describes generations of *tus hijos* (your [Mary’s] children) coming to the shrine with their troubles, to be comforted by her presence. The shrine is a place of spiritual healing and prayer that the people not fall victim to *sectos y errores* (sects and errors) according to the Novena.<sup>247</sup>

The Virgin of Ocotlán is a local Mary. Local, however, does not equal minor and it is in my opinion somewhat surprising how little known she is. Her artistically impressive shrine deserves much more attention and her cult almost certainly does reach back into the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The cult appears to have indigenous roots, with the

---

244. Loayzaga, [A].

245. Ibid., 1-2.

246. Santamaría, 32.

247. “Novena,” 15.

shrine displacing that of St. Lawrence when the natives needed a new Virgin to replace the one they had just lost.

The origins of the statue are much harder to discern. There is a tantalizing mention in Tlaxcalan history of a statue being found in a tree and “perfected” which may give us a clue as to how it was created. The statue serves to give the Virgin Mary a physical presence in the city and a means of participation in the life of the people. Believers are able to come to the shrine to see the statue and bring their troubles before it, feeling they are truly in the presence of the Mother of God. Three times a year, the statue leaves the shrine and goes among the people in procession, which are times of holiday and festival.

Many of these details are found in the cult surrounding the Virgin of Guadalupe. Guadalupe and Ocotlán share a similar origin story and have images that are believed to have miraculously appeared and remained. However there are significant differences in the way the two Virgins have been used in the course of Mexican history which have led to different reactions to them. To understand these differences, it is necessary to briefly discuss the history of, and devotion to, Our Lady of Guadalupe.

## 4 The Guadalupe Shrine

### 4.1 Pre-conquest History of Tepeyac

The shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe on the north side of Mexico City is the national shrine of Mexico and the spiritual heart of the country. The area has since pre-conquest times been known as Tepeyac, and later Tepeaquilla in Spanish. This name simply means “hilltop” and it is a common place name in areas where Nahuatl was or still is spoken. It was a suburb of Tenochtitlan, passed by Cortés and his forces on their way to re-taking the city at the beginning of 1521.

It is commonly believed that Tepeyac was, like the shrine of Ocotlán, built to replace the shrine of a native deity. The only source for this, however, is the Franciscan linguist and anthropologist Bernardino de Sahagún, who identified Tonantzin with the goddess *Cihuacoatl* (woman serpent). She was said to send trouble such as poverty, illness and labour. Despite this, she did have some Marian tendencies:

Aparecía muchas veces, según dicen, como una Señora compuesta con unos atavíos como se usan en palacio [...] Y también la llamaba Tonantzin, que quiere decir, “Nuestra madre.” [She appeared many times they say as a Lady with adornments such as those they wear in the palace, and they also called her Tonantzin, that is to say “Our Mother.”]<sup>248</sup>

---

248. Sahagún, 39-40.



Thus, it appears Sahagún believed that this goddess actually represented Eve, who had been deceived by the Serpent.

None of Sahagún's informants mention a shrine to this goddess on Tepeyac. Another report from the Ciudad Real calls the supposed deity of Tepeyac *Ixpochtli*, which means adolescent girl or young woman and was the word the friars used for "virgin." As this was a title used for Mary, but never for any native goddess, Louise Burkhart hypothesizes that native historians were projecting Christianity *backwards* into a pagan past, reasoning that if they prayed to Mary on that hill in the mid-sixteenth century, they must always have prayed to goddesses there, as well.<sup>249</sup>

This hypothesis is supported by Richard Nebel's observations about the name of the shrine. The origin story for the shrine was developed long after the church was founded. One of the stories often told about this foundation is that the location had a further Nahuatl name, Coatloxopeuh, which the Spanish could not pronounce and hispanicized into the more familiar "Guadalupe." (*Coatloxopeuh* means: I crushed the serpent beneath my foot.) This seems too convenient to be plausible. Nebel points out that this is a case of an etymology being projected back into the past as well, citing that this theory was only proposed after the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, it appears that the shrine was only built in the 1550s, at least 20 years after the famous apparition of the Virgin is supposed to have taken place, and that it was originally dedicated to the Extremaduran Madonna.

---

249. Louise Burkhart, "The Cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico," in *South and Meso-American Native Spirituality: From the Cult of the Feathered Serpent to the Theology of Liberation*, ed. Gary H. Gossen in collab. with Miguel Leon-Portilla, World Spirituality 4 (New York, N.Y.: Crossroad, 1993), 208.

## 4.2 Early history of the shrine

One fact is unavoidable when considering the history of the shrine: there is no story about a miraculous origin to the famous Guadalupe image, much less a story about an apparition of the Virgin Mary to a native man, until the late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century. In this, the shrine's and image's origins are like Ocotlán's in that there is shadowy and vague evidence for the spot being held as sacred for a long time, but with the legends and devotions coming onto the scene in a way that seems disjointed from the tradition that had existed before.

While at Ocotlán a shrine constructed to meet native needs was eventually appropriated by the Spanish, the reverse seems to be true of Guadalupe. Louise Burkhart points out that the cult's development is much more complex than a merging of goddess and saint, or of a Christian overlay on native belief. Instead, the cult developed over time in reaction to the needs of a wide variety of worshippers.<sup>250</sup>

The Virgin of Guadalupe of Extremadura was discussed in chapter two. It is important to keep in mind the significance of this, as Cortés and many of the twelve Franciscans were from that part of Spain and had a strong devotion to that Guadalupe. Richard Nebel writes that it is therefore not surprising to find writings and references about a shrine to her starting almost immediately after the conquest.<sup>251</sup> The oldest testimony to a cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico is the will of the conquistador Bartolomé López. In it, he paid for 100 masses to be said “en la casa de

---

250. Ibid., 198.

251. Richard Nebel, *Santa María Tonantzín, Virgen de Guadalupe : continuidad y transformación religiosa en México*, trans. Carlos Warnholz Bustillos, in collab. with Irma Ochoa de Nebel, 1<sup>st</sup> Spanish ed. (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1995), 133.

Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe” in 1537. Since this request appears twice in the same will, Nebel speculates, though without elaboration, that it is meant to indicate two shrines, one in Mexico and one in Spain.<sup>252</sup>

A letter of payment from a Spanish woman named María Gómez in 1539 is similar, with two donations to “la casa de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe” and “su procurador.” Fray Fidel Chauvet observes that before 1560, the Extremaduran shrine did not have a “procurador” and believes this indicates the existence of a Mexican shrine that did.<sup>253</sup>

The second archbishop of Mexico, the Dominican Alonso de Montúfar, appointed the first resident priest for the Tepeyac shrine in 1555. As we shall see, Montúfar had a particular interest in the shrine and it is from a controversy surrounding him that we receive first evidence for the image we know today and what people felt and believed about it. In 1561, the cathedral chapter wrote to the king complaining that Montúfar diverted alms to Guadalupe because of his fondness for that shrine.<sup>254</sup> This promotion of the shrine would lead to a famous confrontation with the Franciscans.

In 1568, the conquistador Bernal Díaz del Castillo described the Guadalupe shrine at “Tepeaquilla” as being one where “miracles happen every day, commanding praise and gratitude to God and his Blessed Mother,” and that women and girls of the town went there often to pray.<sup>255</sup> In 1570, the chaplain of the shrine at the time, Antonio Freire, wrote to the Archbishop to describe the *ermita*. He reported on how

---

252. Ibid.

253. Xavier Noguez, *Documentos guadalupanos* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993), 87.

254. Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 59.

255. Nebel, 134.

many native people, married and unmarried, were attached to it and confirmed that it was established by Montúfar in 1555 with donated money. Neither he nor Díaz del Castillo mention an image (although evidence exists for one) or an apparition.<sup>256</sup>

It is documented that there was a shrine on Tepeyac in 1555. It is possible that it was only established by Archbishop Montúfar at that time. It seems more likely that a church already existed, judging from the attachment the first Spanish had to Extremaduran Guadalupe and the gifts made to a Guadalupe shrine that Montúfar chose to endow. It is also documented that by 1556 there was a new, miracle-working painting in the shrine that became the reason for pilgrimage there, although it would only become famous over the course of a century.

### **4.3 The appearance of the Guadalupe image**

#### **4.3.1 The legend**

The legend of the image in the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe dates from two versions of the tale, one published in 1648 in Spanish, and the other published in 1649 in Nahuatl. It is the second version, usually referred to as the *Nican Mopohua* (Here is Recounted), that is regarded as the “official version” of the image’s origin. It is a very detailed account, with dates, locations and named historical characters.

In December of 1531, a humble commoner (*macehuatl*) named Juan Diego who lived in Cuauhtitlan in Mexico, was on his way to church in Tlatelolco. He was

---

256. Noguez, 94.

near the top of Tepeyac at dawn when he heard birdsong so beautiful he wondered if he was in the heaven “of which our ancient forefathers used to speak.”<sup>257</sup>

Juan Diego heard a female voice calling him to the hilltop. On arriving there, he found a beautiful woman in shining clothes whose radiance made the rocks and plants nearby look like jewels. After an exchange of polite Nahuatl greetings, the woman identified herself as the Virgin Mary. She told him that she wanted him to go to the bishop and ask him to build her a temple there. However, she gave a very clear reason for her motives:

I will manifest, make known, and give to people all my love, compassion, aid, and protection. For I am the compassionate mother of you and of all you people here in this land, and of the other various peoples who love me, who cry out to me, who seek me, who trust in me. There I will listen to all their weeping and their sorrows in order to remedy and heal all their various afflictions, miseries, and torments.<sup>258</sup>

Juan Diego readily agreed and went to the bishop, identified as the first bishop of the city of Mexico, the Franciscan Juan de Zumárraga. After a wait, he told the bishop what he saw and heard. The bishop told him, “Come again and I will hear you at length. First I will thoroughly look into and consider what you have come about, your wish and desire.”<sup>259</sup>

Juan Diego immediately went back to Tepeyac and sadly told the Virgin that he saw the bishop and passed on the message, was received “kindly” but told to come back later. He suggested that Mary give the message to one of the nobles, who would be believed over a poor peasant who carried burdens for a living. Mary assured him

---

257. Lisa Sousa, Stafford Poole and James Lockhart, eds. and trans. *The Story of Guadalupe: Luis Laso de la Vega's "Huei Tlamahuicoltica" of 1649* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 63.

258. *Ibid.*, 65-67.

259. *Ibid.*, 69.

that she always asks the lowly to be her servants and asked him to go back to the bishop the next day.

Juan Diego agreed again, and after Sunday mass went back to Zumárraga where the same thing happened. This time, the bishop had his servants secretly follow Juan Diego, but they lost sight of him after he crossed the causeway leading out of the city towards Tepeyac.

On Monday, Juan Diego was not able to go to Tepeyac because his uncle, Juan Bernardino, was very ill and expected to die. On Tuesday morning then, Juan Diego set out to find a friar to prepare his uncle for death. He decided to avoid Tepeyac and an encounter with the Virgin for which he had no time. Nonetheless, she still appeared to him and asked where he was going. Juan Diego was very embarrassed and responded charmingly:

My daughter, my youngest child, Lady, may you be content. How did you feel on awakening? Is your precious body in good health, my patron, my very noble lady? I am going to cause you concern [...] I am going to your home of Mexico to summon one of those beloved of our Lord, our friars, to go hear his [the uncle's] confession and prepare him, for what we were born for is to come to await our duty of death.<sup>260</sup>

On hearing this, the Virgin Mary gives him her famous reassurance:

Understand, rest very much assured, my youngest child, that nothing whatever should frighten you or worry you. Do not be concerned, do not fear the illness, or any other illness or calamity. Am I, your mother, not here?<sup>261</sup>

Juan Diego learned later that his uncle was cured at this precise moment, but not knowing this, he asked for a sign to give the bishop. The Virgin told him to pick some flowers that were not only out of season but native to Spain. He gathered them

---

260. *Ibid.*, 77.

261. *Ibid.*, 79.

in his *tilma*, she arranged them, tied the ends of the *tilma* around his neck and sent him to the bishop, instructing him to show the flowers to no one else.

The servants made Juan Diego wait, during which time they pestered him to give them just a peek at the flowers. They allowed him into Zumárraga's presence, and before opening his cloak he gave his message again. The flowers fell to the floor, revealing that "the precious image of the consummate Virgin Saint Mary, mother of God the deity, was imprinted and appeared on the cloak, just as it is today where it is kept in her precious home, the temple of Tepeyacac, called Guadalupe."<sup>262</sup>

Zumárraga and his servants fell to their knees, begged Mary's forgiveness, and the bishop took the image to his private oratory, later taking it to the cathedral. After staying in the bishop's house for a day, Juan Diego went home to find his uncle fully recovered. The account then turns to a description of the image as it appeared in 1649.

This legend is spiritual sustenance for many people, including this writer. However, it is necessary to realize that it does not reflect historical reality. Nonetheless, both the image, and the history of the devotion to it, reflect centuries of spiritual needs and liturgical tastes that, if nothing else, show Guadalupe playing an ongoing role in the lives of Mexican Catholics.

#### 4.3.2 The image

A word should be said here about the composition of the Guadalupe image (figure 6, page 124). With the exception of one detail, the image appears as it is

---

262. Ibid., 85.



**Figure 6 The Virgin of Guadalupe.**

described in the *Nican Mopohua*. In 1981, Philip Serna Callahan was allowed to photograph the tilma under infrared lighting, a technique used in art restoration to determine if there are paintings or sketches underneath the surface paint. What he discovered was a great deal of paint on the fabric.

The original figure, which he describes as “inexplicable” because of the lack of under-drawing or sizing (a fabric backing behind the porous and loose weave of the maguey cloth) and unidentified pigment, is simple. It shows the woman in a plain pink dress and blue mantle, standing on rocks.<sup>263</sup> The other details such as the

---

263. Philip Serna Callahan, *The Tilma Under Infra-Red Radiation: An Infrared and Artistic Analysis of the Image of the Virgin Mary in the Basilica of Guadalupe*, , CARA Studies on Popular Devotion, 2; Guadalupan Studies, 3 (Washington D.C.: CARA,1981), Front cover sketch.



sunburst, fur cuffs, tassels on the belt, stars on the mantle and embroidery on the gown, are additions, meant to give a Spanish Gothic feel to the picture.<sup>264</sup> The entire lower portion of the painting: the moon, lower fold of the dress and angel are all additions.<sup>265</sup> The angel and the moon are significant in terms of Marian iconography because they allow a viewer to identify a figure of Mary as the Immaculate Conception.

Furthermore, there is a painted-on detail that has been erased, although it is still visible to the naked eye if one looks for it. The 1649 account mentions a crown on Mary's head, and reproductions of the tilma up the late 19<sup>th</sup> century make it clear that until 1887 the image wore one. However, in that year a campaign was started to have the image receive a papally-approved crown and the one already on the tilma was removed. The priest who spearheaded the campaign, José de Jesús Cuevas called it a "public and solemn miracle" and explained that the Virgin had removed her own crown so that Mexicans might crown her anew.<sup>266</sup>

In the seventeenth century, the additional details would have brought to the Spanish mind another identification with Extremaduran Guadalupe. As was noted earlier, there is no physical resemblance between the Extremaduran statue and the Mexican tilma image. However, both Stafford Poole and Anna-Britta Hellbom note that these additions make the tilma very similar to a statue of Mary that is in the choir of the monastery, above the prior's chair. Although the image holds a child Jesus and the head is not turned to the right, it is surrounded by a sunburst and is standing atop

---

264. *Ibid.*, 6-8.

265. *Ibid.*, 11.

266. Brading, 304.

a moon held by an angel that is almost identical to the one in Mexico.<sup>267</sup> This similarity was noted in 1743 by the Hieronymite friar Francisco de San José, who commented that the tilma painting is so similar to this statue that, “it seems that the Virgin took it as the pattern for making a perfect copy in the Mexican one.”<sup>268</sup>

The Spanish painter Baltasar Echave de Orio made a copy of the tilma in 1606, a photograph of which can be seen in David Brading’s book.<sup>269</sup> At that date, the image looked as it does today, with the exception of the crown.

At this point in history few believers, if any, associated the miraculous tilma image with Guadalupe of Extremadura, much less a little-known statue in its monastery. The Virgin of Guadalupe is now best known for her dark skin and native features. These details are apparently part of the original, unpainted figure and not commented upon until the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **4.4 Appropriation of the image to the Mexican consciousness**

In order for the image to be commented upon and discussed for its theological value, it first had to be noticed by the Church hierarchy who were authorized to rule on it. While there is much documentary evidence that Alonso de Montúfar favoured the shrine to Guadalupe at Tepeyac and endowed it with money and a chaplain, there is little evidence for the shrine being built specifically to house the miraculous tilma image whose origin is told in the Juan Diego legend. The image was abruptly

---

267. Hellbom, 63; Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 75.

268. Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 74.

269. Brading, 105.

brought to the public's attention in 1556, as the subject of a controversy between the archbishop and the Franciscans of Mexico.

#### 4.4.1 The Bustamante Controversy

On 6 September 1556, Montúfar delivered a sermon, now lost, praising the Virgin of Guadalupe and speaking favourably about the miracles that took place at the shrine. He compared it to European and American Marian devotions such as Remedios, bringing it into the mainstream of Catholic devotional life, complaining that natives did not have a devotion to Mary.<sup>270</sup> He also cited the Lateran Council that called for excommunication to those who promote false miracles, probably in order to support his claim for these miracles.<sup>271</sup> Protest began from the Franciscans almost immediately, with Fray Alonso de Santiago writing against the sermon, questioning the archbishop's use of scripture and citing Deuteronomy 13, which condemns those who promote false gods.<sup>272</sup>

Fray Francisco de Bustamante, Provincial of the Franciscans, riposted on 8 September 1556, the Nativity of the Virgin Mary. Speaking in the Chapel of the Indians in the convent of San Francisco, he agreed with Sahagún's as yet unwritten argument that promotion of Guadalupe would allow secret worship of *Tonantzin*.<sup>273</sup>

---

270. Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 59.

271. Edmundo O'Gorman, *Destierro de Sombras: Luz en el Origen de la Imagen y Culto de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Tepeyac* (México: UNAM, 1991), 70-71.

272. *Ibid.*, 77.

273. Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcoatl et Guadalupe: la formation de la conscience nationale au Mexique (1531-1813)* (Paris, Gallimard, 1974), 316.

The next day, Montúfar called for an investigation into Bustamante's words in regards to how they reflected on the archbishop. Since Bustamante's sermon also has not survived, this investigation allows for some reconstruction of what both he and the archbishop said. He disputed Montúfar's claim that the natives had no devotion to Mary, saying that some of them considered her a goddess. They considered the image in the shrine, which he described as being "painted yesterday by an Indian,"<sup>274</sup> to be miraculous and were disappointed when they did not receive a miracle. He said that promotion of the shrine and image was undermining his work as a missionary and that funds going towards the shrine would be better off used to take care of the sick and the poor.<sup>275</sup>

Several points should be noted here: there is no mention made of any apparition story connected to the image; the image is clearly a painting; there was concern about what effect this devotion, which seems to have been primarily Spanish, would have on the native population; finally, the painted image is promoted as miraculous.<sup>276</sup>

The findings of the investigation, which were skewed towards Montúfar, did not result in discipline for Bustamante and were never sent to Spain.

From the history already presented, my theory on the development of the Tepeyac shrine is as follows. There was in fact a shrine dedicated to the Extremaduran Virgin since shortly after the conquest. In the 1550s, the image was placed in the shrine and Archbishop Alonso de Montúfar promoted both the shrine and image heavily. It is possible that the image, which was nameless, was gradually

---

274. O'Gorman, 86.

275. Ibid., 60.

276. Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 63-64.

identified by the name of the shrine where it was housed; one Fray Antonio de Huete found it curious that the image was called Our Lady of Guadalupe and not Our Lady of Tepeyac.<sup>277</sup> To maintain identification with Extremaduran Guadalupe, the Mexican image was retouched in order to resemble a statue in the Guadalupan monastery church, since retouching the painting to look like the Gil Cordero statue would have been quite impossible.

Although Montúfar's promotion of the shrine and image were presented very abruptly, it is clear that a history was already behind them. This history is attested to in both Spanish and native writings.

#### 4.4.2. Native Writings

After the investigation following the Bustamante sermon in 1556, more writings about the image, or mentioning it, began to appear. This may be partly because the shrine had now been brought to the public's attention. Some of these writings, frequently anonymous and undated, suggest that there may have been some association between Tepeyac and an apparition experienced there.

The *Cantares Mexicanos*, a collection of Nahuatl poems in a manuscript preserved in the Biblioteca Nacional, hints at a miraculous painting of the Virgin, made of flowers. Poole's translation reads:

I am the creation of God, the only God,  
only in pictures was your heart walking  
on a mat of paper you were singing  
You were causing the princes to dance  
the bishop our only father

---

277. O'Gorman, 78.

you were shouting there in Atlitempan  
 God created you  
 abundant flowers he caused you to be born  
 a song he painted you Santa María  
 the bishop  
 The Toltecs were painting, ay!  
 finished are the books  
 your whole heart came to be perfect  
 Oh with the Toltec art I will live here.<sup>278</sup>

The precise meaning of this song is obscure. Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora attributed it in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to a native poet named Francisco Plácido. Sigüenza y Góngora was informed by the Jesuit writer Francisco de Florencia that the poet had written it on the occasion of the procession taking the image from the city to Tepeyac. While Francisco Plácido is known to have been involved in the redaction of the *Cantares*, there is no proof that he was the author of the poem. There is even less evidence that this was written for an event involving the image.<sup>279</sup> Nonetheless, its early date (1551-1565) makes it noteworthy in its suggestion of a painting made by God from flowers.

One type of writing that the natives produced abundantly was historical annals. Before the Spanish came, it had been common for historians to keep records of significant events during the year. After the conquest, the friars (unlike many other missionaries) encouraged the natives to continue writing about the events, in the Nahuatl language, but using the Latin alphabet, on European paper instead of the traditional vegetable fibre or animal hide. There is thus a record of the principal events in each specific historian's part of Mexico.<sup>280</sup> Many of them do cite the apparition to Juan Diego in 1531, but they are also written much later and projecting

---

278. Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 45.

279. Noguez, 44.

280. Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 50.

back. Therefore, I will only mention annals that discuss the Guadalupan devotion around the time the apparition allegedly occurred.

Richard Nebel quotes from the *Anales de Juan Bautista*, written in 1574, which contains the phrase, “In the year 1555, when St. Mary of Guadalupe showed herself there in Tepeyac.” If this is a reference to an apparition, it is 24 years after the date normally accepted. More likely it is a reference to the building of the church or a procession bringing the image there.<sup>281</sup> More notably, Juan Bautista writes about a statue donated by a rich Spaniard, Juan de Villaseca. He presented it to the shrine on 15 September 1566, in an event accompanied by native dancing. This statue, almost life sized and made of gilt silver, is thought by Edmundo O’Gorman to have been a reliquary meant to house the tilma.<sup>282</sup>

Another annalis which makes reference to Mary appearing is the “Sexta Relación de Chimalpahin.” It states that “En el mismo año (1556) fue cuando se apareció Nuestra Amada Madre Santa María de Guadalupe en el Tepeyac.” (This same year [1556] was when Our Beloved Mother St. Mary of Guadalupe appeared on Tepeyac.)<sup>283</sup> There is no further comment on this sentence, which Noguez attributes to the chronicler simply wishing to put the event, whatever it was, in its year in as succinct a manner as possible. This date is a year later than in the document previously mentioned.

One of the earliest documents that refers explicitly to the apparition is an undated text in Nahuatl found in a Jesuit manuscript. It is from the late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The manuscript contains this among other Nahuatl devotional materials

---

281. Nebel, 137.

282. Noguez, 47.

283. *Ibid.*, 45.

and indicates a Jesuit acceptance of a miraculous origin for the Guadalupe image. Furthermore, it shows they were using it for proselytization among the natives. This text is often referred to as the *Inin huey tlamahuiçoltica* but to avoid the confusion caused by the fact that the Nahuatl book published by Lasso de la Vega has almost the same title, it will be referred to here simply as the *Inin*.

The story tells of an unnamed peasant who is digging for roots when the Virgin Mary appears to him. She sends him to an unnamed archbishop in Mexico. The archbishop, thinking the man is drunk, asks him for a sign. The peasant returns to Tepeyac where the lady instructs him to pick some flowers that are growing in the dry season and take them wrapped in his cloak to the archbishop. He does so, and when he unwraps the flowers, the image appears.<sup>284</sup>

This story appears elsewhere in later Guadalupan literature, but did not receive as much circulation as the Nahuatl text called the *Huey tlamahuiçoltica* (This is the great miracle), referred to here as the *Huey* to avoid confusion with the *Inin Huey tlamahuiçoltica* mentioned above. This is a compilation of materials in Nahuatl and Spanish released by Luis Lasso de la Vega in 1649. Lasso de la Vega had been named custodian of the shrine in 1647,<sup>285</sup> so like Loayzaga after him, he was a custodian who published a history of the *ermita* of which he had been given charge. As the work is known almost exclusively for its Nahuatl version of the legend, it is included in this section.

The most famous portion of the book is the *Nican Mopohua*. In this Nahua narrative we find the details of the apparition rather than just a vague account. It

---

284. Burkhart, "Cult of the Virgin," 215.

285. Noguez, 19.



presents Juan Diego and his uncle Juan Bernardino and features Zumárraga by name. The sources for this story are unknown, although Luis Becerra Tanco in the investigation of 1666 to be discussed in the next section, said his uncle had told him that the story came from Antonio Valeriano.<sup>286</sup>

Antonio Valeriano was a native Latinist trained in the Franciscan college of Santa Cruz in Tlatelolco. The attribution to him of the *Nican Mopohua* has stuck, to the point of being taken as factual during the research for the canonization of Juan Diego. The *Osservatore Romano* cites him as a source for the legend, speculating that he combined traditions to produce the narrative. It further cites Mexican historian Miguel León-Portilla as suggesting that Valeriano may have named the visionary Juan Diego because the name was already associated with the apparition.<sup>287</sup>

León-Portillo first argues for a Nahuatl author, showing analogies in the work that compare to passages of Nahuatl literature and thought. He also points out that the *Nican Mopohua* uses phrasings common to accounts of historical events written in Nahuatl.<sup>288</sup>

León-Portillo gives the evidence of a manuscript found in the collection of Lorenzo Boturini. This Italian knight came to Mexico in 1736 and became a devotee of the Virgin of Guadalupe. He was determined to find historical proof for the apparitions and consequently accumulated a large collection of documents related to it. He was deported just as he started a collection of funds to have the image crowned

---

286. *Ibid*, 20-21.

287. *Osservatore Romano*, English weekly ed., 23 January, 2002, 9.

288. Miguel León-Portilla, *Tonantzin Guadalupe: Pensamiento náhuatl y mensaje cristiano en el "Nican Mopohua"* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2000), 21.

and his collection of documents was seized by the government. Although he was later exonerated, the documents were never returned to him.

In the inventory of the collection taken by order of the Viceroy is something described as “uno manuscrito en lengua mexicana, *Historia de la misma aparición de Nuestra Señora, roto y maltrado.*” (A ragged and mistreated manuscript in the Mexican language: *History of the Same Apparition of Our Lady.*) Léon-Portilla informs us that this document was translated by Carlos de Tapía y Zentano and that it is now in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris under the call number: M3 mexicain 317. He attests that the differences between the *Nican Mopohua* and Boturini’s manuscript are small.<sup>289</sup>

Finally, Léon-Portilla theorizes that Antonio Valeriano’s sources were probably religious plays and apparition stories, of which several were already current. There was already a belief that Mary heard prayers at the shrine and that both Europeans and natives went there to pray, so he was able to synthesize traditions about the Virgin of Guadalupe into the story related in his book.<sup>290</sup>

The most commonly found argument, as already shown, is that the Franciscans were opposed to the Tepeyac cult of Guadalupe, making it unlikely that their protégé Valeriano would support it. Furthermore, it is less likely in the face of this opposition that he would write Zumárraga, whom he had known, into the account.<sup>291</sup>

The *Huey* is followed by a collection of miracle stories, in the tradition of European Marian narratives. Sylvia Santaballa observes that if an indigenous author

---

289. *Ibid.*, 26-27.

290. *Ibid.*, 44-46.

291. Burkhart, “Cult of the Virgin of,” 216.

did write the *Huey*, it illuminates aspects about early native belief in Guadalupe's miracles. As with the miracle stories mentioned in chapter two, they closely follow the patterns of European miracle stories in that Mary herself causes the miracle, not her prayerful intervention.<sup>292</sup>

Just as the miracle stories from the confraternity collection mentioned in chapter two have elements that would feel familiar to native readers, the miracles in the *Nican Moctepana*, while not necessarily about native characters, have uniquely Mexican details. The story of a Spanish woman with a belly swollen from dropsy mentions that she is brought to the shrine "while it was still dark." This is a key time in the *Nican Mopohua* for meeting Guadalupe. As she lies in the shrine there is a commoner there who is sweeping "because of a vow they make." Sweeping was a common act of Nahuatl religious devotion, as it moved displaced matter (*tlazolli*) from the centre to the periphery where it belonged, restoring order.<sup>293</sup> At the end, the woman is cured after a snake comes out "from underneath her buttocks." Snakes and serpents were common elements in Nahuatl mythology. Since they were identified with the Devil in Christianity, snakes were thus both a sign of idolatry as well as of evil, and commonly used in sermons.<sup>294</sup>

It thus appears that the legend was available in Nahuatl for catechistic use after Archbishop Montúfar began to promote the tilma image and the shrine at Tepeyac. It also appears there were two versions: the simple story of the man digging

---

292. Sylvia Santaballa, "Nican Motecpana: Nahuatl Miracles of the Virgin of Guadalupe," *Latin American Indian Literatures Journal* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 38.

293. Burkhart, *Slippery Earth*, 117

294. Robert Ricard, *Conquête spirituelle du Mexique* (Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie, 1933), 62.

for roots on Tepeyac hill to whom the Virgin appeared and asked for a church; and the longer, more familiar version about Juan Diego.

With the first version, it is sometimes said that it is stylistically similar to European miracle stories. While this is true, the issue of the colonization of the *imaginaire* and the readiness of the missionary clergy to believe a native person who came to them claiming to have had a vision make it possible that this is not merely the case of a European story where the lowly herdsman has been replaced by a lowly Indian. It is also possible that the event actually occurred, and that because it validated the Archbishop's favourite shrine that it gained some notoriety.

Despite the existence of Nahuatl accounts of the story, it still appears that Guadalupe began as a Spanish cult. However, as Gruzinki points out, having a Spanish devotion there would still be an advantage to clergy whose task it was to evangelize the natives. Miracles were attractive to them, and they would go to be converted. So while there was some promotion to the natives of the Guadalupe shrine, it was primarily advertised among the Spanish. In this case, the cult moved from having a spiritual use to having a political one that persists to this day.

#### **4.4.3 Spanish Writings**

While the original written source of the Guadalupe legend as we know it seems to have been written in Nahuatl, probably for the purpose of evangelizing, the first widespread diffusion of it was in Spanish by Miguel Sanchez in 1648. Before that, there were a number of Spanish (and in one case English) writers describing the cult and shrine.

Miles Philips was a pirate stranded in San Juan de Ulúa in 1567. He was taken as a prisoner to Mexico City, but apparently allowed to do some sightseeing along the way. One stop was the Tepeyac shrine, at which, he said, any Spaniard passing stopped to pray. He also noted that no Spanish lived in the area, but that a number of natives did.

Inside the shrine he noted that there were hundreds of silver lamps and a gilt silver statue “the size of a tall woman.” This is no doubt the statue presented by Villaseca the year before. He does not mention a maguey image, which O’Gorman would explain by the image being inside the statue, and which Noguez speculates was because Philips was a pirate, and thus more interested in objects of precious metal than indigenous religious art.<sup>295</sup>

Another testimony about the shrine and cult came from Juan Suárez de Peralta who wrote while in Spain about how the new viceroy, Martín Enriquez, came to the shrine in 1568. This brief testimony is interesting because it makes reference to an early version of the legend, possibly the one being spread by the Jesuits. “It is an image of great devotion which is about two leagues from Mexico. It has worked many miracles. It [she] appeared among some rocks and the whole land flocks to this devotion.”<sup>296</sup> It should be recalled that according to Callahan, the original, underlying figure on the tilma is of a woman standing on rocks.

In 1575, Enriquez was asked to write to King Phillip II about the shrine since the Hieronymite friars who took care of the Guadalupe shrine in Spain were afraid

---

295. Noguez, 101-102.

296. Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 84-85, bracketed pronoun Poole’s inclusion.

they were being defrauded of alms given by people who thought the Tepeyac shrine was a satellite of the one in Extremadura. Enriquez observed that

the common understanding is that in the year 1555 or 1556 there was a small ermita there, in which was the image that is now in the church, and that a herdsman, who used to wander about the area, proclaimed that he had recovered his health by going to that ermita. The peoples' devotion began to grow and they named the image Our Lady of Guadalupe because it was said that it resembled that of Guadalupe in Spain.<sup>297</sup>

What these writings all communicate is that the shrine still only received prominence after 1555 or 1556. The shrine was believed to be one where miracles could be obtained, although despite the furor over the tilma image, the shrine seems to have been better known for itself than for any representation of Mary housed within. After Villaseca, the shrine became known for its silver statue of the Virgin, although it is unclear if this was the main attraction in the shrine. It is possible that the statue was a reproduction of the statue of Guadalupe in Extremadura, but this can never be known with certainty as the silver statue was melted down for candlesticks in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century.

As mentioned earlier, the tilma image existed in 1606 when a copy was made. Engravings of it were sold in 1615 to raise money for the shrine. Stephanie Wood documents images of the Virgin of Guadalupe being bequeathed in Toluca wills as early as 1632.<sup>298</sup> Its status between 1556 and 1606 is thus unclear. The *Inin* gives a miraculous origin to the picture, and while it is possibly from the period of time in question, no version of it is dated.

---

297. *Ibid.*, 73.

298. Stephanie Wood, "Adopted Saints: Christian Images in Nahua Testaments of Late Colonial Toluca," *The Americas* 47 (January 1991): 275.

The first appearance of the legend as we now know it came from Miguel Sánchez in 1648. Sánchez was a diocesan priest who by 1662 was chaplain of the sanctuary of Remedios. He chose to retire to Tepeyac where he died in 1672. Sánchez had been inspired to write the legend behind Guadalupe out of a sense of patriotism. Sánchez was a *criollo*, a Spaniard born in Mexico City in 1594. Like many other *criollos*, he sought a separate identity from the European Spaniards. The Virgin of Guadalupe, with its Mexican origin, was to him nothing less than the Woman of the Apocalypse described in chapter twelve of the Book of Revelation.<sup>299</sup>

The story is more or less the same one as that told the next year by Lasso de la Vega, with much exegesis on Revelation 12. The source, however, is unknown.

Sánchez himself confessed:

I searched for papers and writings regarding the holy image, but I did not find any, and even though I had recourse to the archives where they might have been preserved, I learnt that through the accidents of time and occasion, they had lost what they had.

Sánchez continued by saying that ultimately he had to rely on the memories of old and trustworthy residents of the city.<sup>300</sup> Despite this, some believe that he made use of the same documents Lasso de la Vega did, although since de la Vega did not speak Nahuatl, some authors (such as O’Gorman) believe that de la Vega used a Spanish paraphrase of this document, rumoured to have been produced by the historian Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl. Ixtlilxóchitl is known to have spoken extensively to Bartolomé Garcia, keeper of the shrine from 1642 to 1648.<sup>301</sup> Jacques Lafaye states that de la Vega making up the story out of whole cloth would have been

---

299. Brading, 55.

300. Ibid.

301. Noguez, 109-10.

scandalous. Lafaye also believes that the lost document used by de la Vega was written by Antonio Valeriano, and not by Ixtlilxóchitl.<sup>302</sup>

A discussion of the possible author of the missing source is beyond the scope of this work. However, it should be mentioned that the miracles in Sánchez's book are different from those in Lasso de la Vega's. Sylvia Santaballa theorizes that the miracles were based on oral legends, thus allowing for variation, and furthermore that the *Nican Mopohua* and *Nican Moctepana* were two separate indigenous documents that Lasso de la Vega copied.<sup>303</sup>

Other writings followed, many of which served to bring Guadalupe further into the *criollo* consciousness. There were also writings which introduced Guadalupe to a foreign audience; one such description was penned by Juan de Alloza, the pen name of a Lima Jesuit named Juan Alonso Pérez de Arondilla. His account of the Virgin, part of a chapter in a book on Marian apparitions, told of a nameless native man who was very devoted to the Virgin who met her while out in the country. The Virgin told him to go to the Archbishop and request a church for her. The Archbishop, thinking the man was drunk, refused him. After two tries, Mary picked out-of-season flowers for the man to carry in his cloak to the Archbishop. When the cloak was spread out on a table to display the flowers, the image of the Virgin Mary was seen imprinted upon it. What is notable about this text is that despite its mid-17<sup>th</sup> century date, it makes use of the *Inin*, not the *Huey*, further supporting the Jesuit use of this version of the legend.<sup>304</sup>

---

302. Lafaye, 327-28.

303. Santaballa, 35-36.

304. Noguez, 227-28.



Seventeenth and eighteenth century *criollo* intellectuals were often members of the clergy. Like Miguel Sánchez, they adopted Guadalupe as a symbol of their cultural differences with, and separate identity from, the European Spanish who continued to be the top level of Mexican society. Sánchez had been the first to refer to Guadalupe as *la criolla* and others would soon follow suit. In 1688, Francisco de Florencia, a Jesuit, referred to Guadalupe as the “polestar” which guided Mexico. He is the author who applied the verse “non fecit taliter omni nationi” (he has not done so to any other nation) to the apparition at Tepeyac,<sup>305</sup> pinpointing the Virgin’s appearance and image as a sign of God’s unique favour. In 1746, Cayetano de Cabrera y Quintero identified Guadalupe as a symbol for all of Mexico in his book *Escudo de Armas de México*. Finally, in 1810 Father Hidalgo would use Guadalupe as a rallying cry for liberation from Spain.

#### 4.5 State of present day devotion

The shrine at Tepeyac is the single largest pilgrimage site in Mexico, and possibly in all of North America. The Virgin of Guadalupe is a concrete part of Mexican life, and one can find her image on walls, in most homes, and in public places as diverse as markets and mass transit stations. The workers at the Piño Suárez metro station have a chapel in their break room for their own use (figure 7, page 142).<sup>306</sup>

---

305. Nebel, 158.

306. I discreetly tried to take a picture of this chapel in December 2004. When a worker noticed, she called over another employee and they took down coat



**Figure 7** A chapel to Guadalupe in the Piño Suarez Metro station, installed by Metro workers.

---

racks that would have been visible in the picture. I am indebted to them for the quality of this shot, which to me is emblematic of Mexican pride in Guadalupe.

When I attended a lucha libre match the night of the 12 December 2004, one of the wrestlers, El Felino, made it a point to come to the ring wearing a Guadalupe commemorative t-shirt, and there were two Guadalupe shrines in the arena itself.

The feast is celebrated primarily during the night of 11/12 December, but the pilgrimages start during the week before. Groups from all over Mexico arrive to bring their statues, pictures and banners of their religious societies into the shrine, whose staff keeps the groups moving up to the altar rail in an orderly fashion as masses continue non-stop. Native groups come dressed in traditional costumes to perform dances in the basilica square, recalling the dances and processions the Spanish described in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (figure 8; and figure 9, page 144).



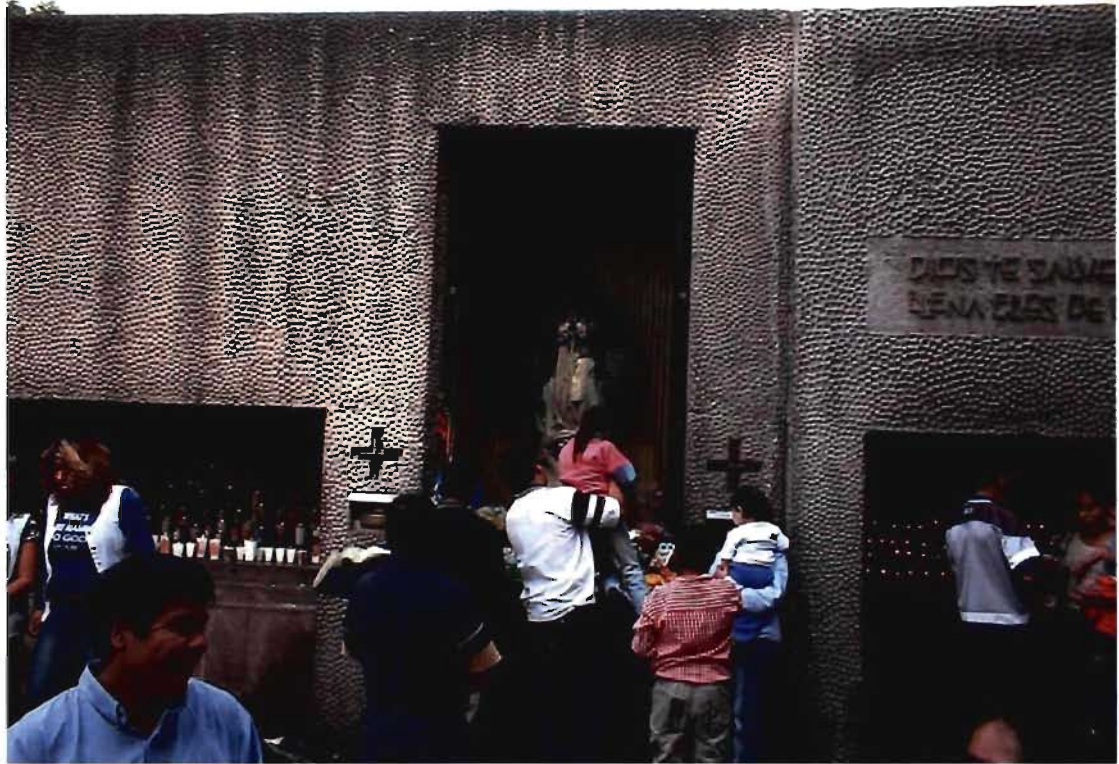
**Figure 8** Pilgrims in native garb.



**Figure 9** More native pilgrims.

With the enormous size of the crowds that go to Tepeyac, it is impossible to have the image as accessible as the one at Ocotlán. The faithful view the image from a moving sidewalk behind and below the altar, looking up at the framed tilma. The votive candles that are instrumental in Mexican Catholicism are placed in designated niches outside the basilica, around a statue of Guadalupe (figure 10, page 145).

Starting in the evening on the eleventh, people come to spend the night in the basilica plaza. Whole families camp in organized *areas de descanso* (rest areas), sleeping on blankets and air mattresses and sometimes even in tents. I was alone and frequently took refuge during the night in the old basilica, which is now open again after years of being structurally unsound.



**Figure 10** The outdoor votive chapel.

During the night, people keep arriving. My husband told me later that he'd seen the number of attendees for the night I was there, 11/12 December 2004, given on Spanish language television as being around 2 million. This is likely; the plaza became too crowded to walk in and the people camping spread out into the streets for blocks around the basilica.

At about four in the morning I found a spot in a pew in the basilica itself. The first mass was said at five. As worshippers dozed through the service, I could hear the sound of the people outside singing the *mañanitas*, the traditional hymns used to welcome the Virgin on the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup>.

Whereas in Ocotlán the emphasis is on following the image in procession, at the shrine of Guadalupe the emphasis is in being in the presence of the image. Rubén Martínez writes:

It's the biggest party I've ever been to. [...] After two in the morning, the chill grows bitter and the party energy flags. [...] They lay out their blankets and huddle together against the cold. It's as if the entire country is in one huge embrace; Mexico hugs itself through the night to keep warm.<sup>307</sup>

The idea of being in the heart of Mexico is one that recurs in devotion to Guadalupe. At the top of the fence around the shrine are the words *ATRIO DE LAS AMERICAS*, (Atrium of the Americas). But while pilgrims are coming to the place where many believe the Mexican race was born, they are also sharing the experience of Juan Diego. They are coming to the hill, with their worries and problems, to greet the Virgin as the cold gives way to the sunlight of a new day. She brings new hope and new creation to the Mexican people and by extension all the Church. The Virgin's role in not only the Mexican Church but the Universal Church is the subject of the next chapter.

---

307. Rubén Martínez, "The Undocumented Virgin," in *Goddess of the Americas = La diosa de las Américas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe*, ed. Ana Castillo (New York, N.Y.: Riverhead Books, 1996), 107.

## **5 Comparing and Contrasting Guadalupe and Ocotlán**

This section presents my theological interpretation of the Guadalupe and Ocotlán images.

Soon after the Virgin Mary appeared in art, she was portrayed as a queen and empress. She has authority, sits in judgment, and is occasionally even shown as a warrior, defending her people. Mary's elevation into royalty is where she begins most clearly to manifest God. We are used to seeing God referred to as Lord, King and Father, with the emphasis on God's patriarchal power.

Mary shows herself as Lady, Queen and Mother, and as such allows the divine qualities of mercy and justice to be presented more than naked divine might. Mary also speaks the will of God in a prophetic fashion. Her Magnificat tells how the will of God is to be on the side of the poor and lowly, and to bring down the tyranny of the great.

Elizabeth Johnson shows how the female imagery of God found in the Bible has been transferred to Mary. Mary, not God, is now the one whose love for her children is unshakable. Johnson suggests that since Mary has traditionally been the divine Mother that marian language and imagery be examined for ways of expressing the divine feminine.

Johnson explores this possibility in her books *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (1992), *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (2003) and her 1989 article “Mary and the Female Face of God” where she first proposed the idea that when we need to find the parts of God that have been displaced by patriarchy, we should look to Mary to find them. She refers to this as “mining” the marian tradition to find language about the holy mystery of God.<sup>308</sup>

Mary as a woman bears “images of the divine otherwise excluded from mainline Christian perception of God as Father, Son, and Spirit.”<sup>309</sup> In particular, the mother-imagery of God from the Bible has been transferred to Mary, who is depicted as the loving mother at the heart of the Church who shows unbreakable love towards her children. She is “merciful, close, interested in the poor and the weak, ready to hear human needs, related to the earth, trustworthy, and profoundly attractive.” Her most appealing trait is that she is a mother who will let none of her children be lost.<sup>310</sup>

The marian tradition carries images of the divine power that protects, liberates and heals. Johnson’s project is to take all these images and return them to God. She writes: “We will not seek to understand Mary as the maternal or feminine face of God because this stops female images from pointing all the way to the loving God who is their true source.”<sup>311</sup>

---

308. Johnson, “Female Face of God,” 501.

309. *Ibid.*, 500.

310. Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York, N.Y.: Crossroad, 1992), 102-03.

311. Elizabeth Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*, 91.



She further comments that, “to my mind, however, it makes no lasting theological sense to use Mary as a coverup for defective notions of God.”<sup>312</sup> Her book takes the approach that Mary’s qualities be returned to God and that the biblical memory of Mary weaves her into the communion of saints which Johnson defines as “the great company of friends of God and prophets.”<sup>313</sup>

My concern is that by taking marian language and concepts to speak of God, we empty Mary, leaving behind nothing but the Woman of Nazareth. While this is a powerful image that speaks to almost all Christians, history has shown that it is only a point of departure when it comes to devotion to Mary. Having spent the past six years studying why human beings are so moved and inspired by the powerful, queenly Mary, (Spretnak’s “Big Mary”) of the medieval cathedrals, I think it is insufficient to say that she is loved only because the divine feminine has been foisted upon her. It is my hypothesis that Mary represents God, in the dual sense that she is God’s representative and also re-presents God. She presents God in a new way.

The Virgins of Ocotlán and Guadalupe show all the maternal qualities that originate in God while still having a very specific place in the Christian community here on earth. In the case of the Virgin of Ocotlán this role is particularly well-defined. Her message is one of healing and solidarity, and the way devotion is shown to her emphasizes this. She goes among her people three times a year, during which time her image can be touched. Her shrine is open and accessible. It is a place where Mary manifests God, and invites the pilgrim to contemplate the many ways this

---

312. Ibid, 86.

313. Ibid, 305.

happens, not excluding the bringing-forth of her son, Jesus, but not limiting itself to that, either.

The role of the Virgin of Guadalupe is much the same, though her cult shows it differently. Her image cannot be approached at this point, as it is kept in a framed niche high above a moving sidewalk from which she can be viewed in her basilica. Nonetheless, she is loved and invoked as an attentive mother, with faith and trust in her shown everywhere in Mexico.

Furthermore, the fact that these Virgins originated with apparitions is also significant. By means of them, Mary shows God's interest in human beings while establishing the ongoing presence of the communion of saints. By actually coming to Mexico, Mary shows both her mercy and the mercy of the God who sends her. She comes to assist God's people and to let them know that God has not forgotten them, and leaves her image as a lasting sign of her presence.

Angel T. Santamaría observes that "En ambos casos, es decir, en Tepeyac y en Ocotlán, la madre de Dios trajo palabras de vida, esperanza, y dulzura para los más humildes y desamparados." (In both cases, that is to say, in Tepeyac and in Ocotlán, the mother of God brought words of life, hope and sweetness to the most humble and helpless.)<sup>314</sup> This is the most important thing to realize about these two parallel Virgins, but they still have somewhat different functions as we shall see.

Elizabeth Johnson herself admits that the marian tradition in Latin America points out some problems with her mariology. Mary is a sign of the liberation she sings about in the Magnificat. Her cult validates the dignity of the downtrodden and

---

314. Santamaría, 22.

gives the strength to resist the dominating powers.<sup>315</sup> She admits that returning the qualities of the Virgin Mary to God in a church that is still patriarchal might lead to “a totally masculine public square, similar to the Protestant churches before women moved into official ministry.”<sup>316</sup>

She also describes her own observations of the festivities at the shrine of Guadalupe on the Virgin’s feast day, saying, “Seeking the living God in prayer and letting oneself be found by the Spirit are precious acts, and there are times and places where devotion to Mary mediates this encounter.”<sup>317</sup> I think this interpretation of the phenomena, while correct, is insufficient in that it does not recognize how strongly Mexicans see their Virgins as not just a figure of the divine, but one of their very own.

### 5.1 As tools of proselytization

Robert Ricard wrote in the introduction to the Spanish edition of *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico* that he gave only four pages to Guadalupe because he limited his book to the work of the friars, and Guadalupe was the work of a later episcopate, followed by the secular clergy.<sup>318</sup> While this is true, proselytization continued at least into the 17<sup>th</sup> century. (This introduction is included as an appendix in the English edition, which I used more extensively than the French edition.)

---

315. Johnson, “Female Face of God,” 514.

316. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*, 91.

317. *Ibid.*, 92.

318. Ricard, *Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*, 302.

To promote the faith, images were used to advance “penetration and local entrenchment of the Christian invisible.” Serge Gruzinski describes how Catholic symbols, including crosses and images of saints, were planted ubiquitously on the Mexican landscape.<sup>319</sup>

The first images presented to the natives were those of St. James and the Virgin Mary. The Virgin soon received more popularity, perhaps because she was comforting whereas St. James represented war and thunder. In 1585, the Franciscans made it obligatory to observe the feast of the Immaculate Conception (8 December), emphasizing devotion to Mary and encouraging the organizations devoted to her.<sup>320</sup> This emphasis on the Immaculate Conception may have been the impetus behind the additions to the images of Guadalupe and Ocotlán, both of which show a moon under Mary’s feet; the Virgin of Remedios in Cholula was already depicted as standing on top of a serpent holding an apple in its jaws.<sup>321</sup>

Hernán Cortés was the first to bring images of Mary to Mexico and to emphasize devotion to her. On first landfall at Ulúa, he erected an altar with a cross and a statue of Mary. Furthermore, he charged four native priests to care for the image.<sup>322</sup> The next place he put one was in the first chapel in Mexico, in the house of the cacique Xichohtencatl, followed by his famous gift of a statue of Mary to Acxotecatl.<sup>323</sup>

Likewise, the statue that is now called Remedios is, according to legend, one carried by the conquistador Juan Rodríguez de Villafuerte. When Cholula was

---

319. Gruzinski, 193.

320. Lafaye, 226.

321. Vásquez, 2.3.

322. Ricard, *Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*, 18.

323. Santamaría, 26.

established as a Christian city, its main parish and patron saint was St. Peter, who received less willing devotion and less generosity than Remedios, who had been presented to the natives as *su Virgen, su protectora* (your Virgin, your protector). The image was placed on top of the pyramid to protect Spaniard and native alike from pestilence.<sup>324</sup>

In Tlaxcala, friars balanced religious repression with strong marian devotion, although it can be argued that marian devotion was used to fill a religious void caused by the disruption of native religious practice. For example, Fray Martín de Valencia, who was noted for his enthusiasm for religious repression, used Acxotecatli's Virgin in a procession for rain; and, the Franciscan monastery, which was devoted to the Virgin of the Assumption, was called the "House of St. Mary."<sup>325</sup>

We mentioned earlier the concept of Catholic practice being introduced in order to fill a religious void, and the use of Christian images to replace native ones is a particularly clear example of this. In Tlaxcala, the use of the crucifix and statues of Mary were meant to fit into the dualistic religious view of the Tlaxcalans and other indigenous groups. The creator god of the Nahua, Ometéotl, had both male and female aspects.<sup>326</sup> The patron deities of Tlaxcala, Xochiquetzal and her consort Piltzintecuhtli also fit this pattern.

While the role of the Virgin of Ocotlán *per se* in proselytization is questionable, it is clear that her shrine took the place of Xochiquetzal's temple. Unlike Guadalupe, for whom there is little proof of her shrine being built on a temple to a goddess, it is clear that the early shrine to St. Lawrence was meant to Christianize

---

324. Vásquez, 2.2.

325. Martínez Baracs, 177.

326. *Ibid.*, 179.

a native holy place. It appears, however, that St. Lawrence himself was not a satisfying substitute and that it was necessary to replace him with the Virgin Mary.

The reason Mary was selected as opposed to another female saint (St. Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary, had a prominent cult in Tlaxcala.) may have been the nature of Xochiquetzal herself. The fact that she was young, beautiful, and benevolent automatically invited comparison with Mary. Although her appearances to human men were for erotic purposes, they were nonetheless signs of her favour towards those whom she found deserving, a theme very familiar to the Spanish.

Xochiquetzal was identified as the first sinner and associated with snakes. This made it easy for the friars to identify her with Eve. Several goddesses equated with Xochiquetzal share this comparison. *Ixnexthli* is called “a sort of Eve” as is *Ixcuina* “who sinned by eating the fruit of the tree.”<sup>327</sup>

The Friar Durán identified the major mother goddess *Cihuacoatl* with the original Eve, because the name of the goddess means “wife of the serpent.” Sahagún agreed, going so far as to say that the Mexicans must have been evangelized at some apostolic date, if *Cihuacoatl* was the same as Eve.<sup>328</sup> Consequently, an image of the Immaculate Conception, seeing as it portrays Mary standing on a moon and a serpent, may have been the symbol best suited for capturing the Tlaxcalan *imaginaire*.

Still, Hugo Nutini cautions that the Virgin of Ocotlán is not merely a continuation of the cult of Xochiquetzal, nor is it a wholly new cult of Mary. “The Virgin of Ocotlán is neither; she is a new supernatural entity partaking of the

---

327. Michel Graulich, *Myths of Ancient Mexico*, trans. Bernard and Thelma Ortíz de Montellano (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 53.

328. Lafaye, 215.

interacting natures of both Xochiquetzal and the Virgin Mary.”<sup>329</sup> Guadalupe joined Ocotlán in Tlaxcala in 1664 when an image was installed in the San Diego church there. In 1686, a chapel to her was built in the Franciscan monastery, and the current shrine to the Virgin of Ocotlán has an altar devoted to her as well.<sup>330</sup>

While use of Guadalupe in proselytization came later, it is blatant that conversion of the natives was indeed the primary reason the devotion was promoted. Bustamante complained in 1556 that the Guadalupe cult was undermining Franciscan efforts. “Even since their conversion, they [the natives] have been told they should not believe in idols. [...] To tell them now that an image painted by an Indian could work miracles will utterly confuse them and tear up the vine that has been planted.”<sup>331</sup>

While there was an investigation into Bustamante’s comments, seeing as they had been critical of Bishop Montúfar and his endorsement of the Tepeyac shrine, nothing seems to have been done about the matter. Bustamante himself died six years later and the testimonies about his sermon archived and forgotten until they were discovered again in 1846.<sup>332</sup>

By the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Franciscans were weakening and the secular clergy gaining ground. Thus, when Lasso de la Vega issued his Nahuatl-language version of the Guadalupe story, they were in no position to challenge the use of the Franciscan bishop Zumárraga in the narrative.<sup>333</sup> The secular clergy outside Mexico City promoted the Virgin of Guadalupe to the natives. While it was advantageous that the

---

329. Nutini, 311.

330. Martínez Baracs, 28-29.

331. Lafaye 239.

332. Poole “Our Lady of Guadalupe,” 64.

333. Burkhart, “Cult of the Virgin,” 218.

legend featured a native protagonist, the timing was also favourable towards these priests.

Previously, native reverence had been strongly oriented towards local saints and ones presented from other areas would not have the same popularity. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century however, the old community boundaries were dissolving. Bilingualism was common and many people worked outside their communities. They could thus identify with a devotion that represented a larger colonial society.<sup>334</sup> This was also the root of Guadalupe eventually becoming the patron saint of all Mexico.

The Jesuits also endorsed Guadalupe and encouraged native devotion to her. We have already pointed out that an early Nahuatl version of the legend, the *Inin huey tlamahuiçoltica*, was found in a Jesuit manuscript. Guadalupe would have been helpful towards furthering the Jesuit project of directing the natives towards the Christian supernatural. Between 1580 and 1650 the Jesuits catalogued native visions and mystical experiences while encouraging the marian cults and miraculous images that were feeding into the native *imaginaire* and, one may cynically surmise, producing these visions and experiences. Serge Gruzinski calls this a “favoured vector of acculturation.”<sup>335</sup> The legend of the Virgin of Guadalupe featured everything the Jesuits could have asked for in this regard: a native who has a vision, a miraculous image and a cult approved of by the clergy in Mexico City.

Once the period of proselytization was over, devotion to both Guadalupe and Ocotlán remained, even if it was no longer necessary for wooing the natives to

---

334. Ibid.

335. Gruzinski, 197.



Christianity. As time passed, they both became nationalistic symbols, one for the state of Tlaxcala and diocese of Puebla, the other for all of Mexico itself.

## 5.2 As symbols of identity

As early as the later missionary period, during which Bustamante and Montúfar were having their debate, there was a feeling that the Virgin could be a symbol around which Mexicans could plant their identity. Archbishop Montúfar himself, while demonstrating how Guadalupe was effective against idolatry, pointed towards the way Mexican cultural identity was asserting itself against Spanish identity.

As an example, he mentioned the custom, enjoyed before the fall of Tenochtitlan and still practiced to this day, of the natives going for Sunday strolls in the Chapultepec forest. Montúfar said that now they strolled to Tepeyac, to enjoy the “pure pleasure of pious contemplation, just as in Madrid they go to the convent of Our Lady of Atocha.”<sup>336</sup> The natives now had a pious motivation for their Sunday walks, and furthermore, the capital of New Spain now had its own shrine, just like Madrid.

The national identity of Mexico has always been intertwined with native identity, even though real, living indigenous people in Mexico are still the objects of deeply-ingrained racism. Although outside the scope of this work, they are viewed as low in class and suitable only for menial work. Guadalupe’s appearance to a native

---

336. Lafaye, 240.

visionary is thus one of the aspects that qualifies her to be a national symbol because it shows her preferring a native man over a Spaniard.

The Virgin of Ocotlán is identified with Tlaxcala as opposed to all of Mexico. She too has a native visionary (although to be honest, native visionaries are standard to the archetypal Mexican apparition story) and an identification with the founding of the Christian state. However, while Guadalupe became a defining symbol of Mexico, Ocotlán is a defining symbol *within* Mexico.

Before the conquest, the Nahuatl social structure was organized around the temple with its titular deities. After the conquest, the Nahuatl took the Christian church as analogous to the temple, and in fact in Mexico churches are often referred to as *templos*. They participated in its construction and decoration, seeing it as the central, tangible symbol of the *altepetl's* (ethnic state) sovereignty and identity.<sup>337</sup> The saint now became the symbol for identifying and unifying the socio-political group.<sup>338</sup> On a wider level, Lafaye points out that the prominent ethnic groups of pre-Columbian Mexico were eventually all endowed with their own protective images of Mary. He identifies Remedios with the Otomi in this case, and Ocotlán with Tlaxcala. To this one could also add Remedios of Cholula to the people of that area. That the visionaries are all named Juan (Juan de Tovar, Juan Diego of Tepeyac and of Tlaxcala) adds to a “musical chairs of supernatural signs.”<sup>339</sup>

We have already discussed in section two how patron saints received a similar honour as the pre-conquest gods did, and that this honour was entwined with group

---

337. James Lockhart, *The Nahuatl After the Conquest*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992), 206.

338. *Ibid.*, 235-36.

339. Lafaye, 284.

identity. The statue of Mary that Cortés gave to Acxotecatl was a symbol for the whole Tlaxcalan province, preserved at his home as “an emblem of Tlaxcalan services and rewards.” In 1528, after the death of Acxotécatl, the statue, like that of Remedios, was carried in procession to alleviate a drought.<sup>340</sup>

Native identity was still strong as late as 1760 in Tlaxcala. It is perhaps worthy of note that the most prominent shrine-keeper’s full name was Manuel de Loayzaga y Maxixcatzin,<sup>341</sup> that being the name of one of the primary lords of the Tlaxcalan confederacy, in whose home the first chapel was installed.<sup>342</sup>

To this day, there is immense pride in the Ocotlán shrine. The books by Angel T. Santamaría and Luis Nava Rodríguez are largely about its beauty. As mentioned earlier, the *Zodiaco Mariano* described it as being a shell worthy of the pearl that is the statue within.

The devotion to Ocotlán can be seen as based on Tlaxcalan identity. When the Franciscans overturned the cult of Xochiquetzal in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it was necessary to install one to replace it. The Virgin Mary and eventually the Virgin of Octolán were the saints needed to fill the niche. The theme of the present-day paintings that adorn the *pocito* chapel is that of the Christianization of Tlaxcala by the Franciscans, including the discovery of the statue. These paintings are from the 1970s. The painting surrounding the window is from 1988 and while it depicts Jesus and the woman at the well, the angels in it are little indigenous children.<sup>343</sup>

---

340. Gibson, 35-36.

341. Nava Rodríguez, *Historia de Nuestra Señora*, 1972 ed., 1

342. Nutini, 302.

343. Santamaría, 31.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the devotion was eventually appropriated by the criollos in the Puebla/Tlaxcala area. Puebla was the only city that could rival Mexico City in terms of earthly status or grace. It contained within its borders the city of Cholula, which possessed the temple of Quetzalcoatl that now had a shrine to Remedios, built by the Franciscans, at its summit. Furthermore, legend had it that the bishop Fray Julián Garcés had, in a dream, seen angels surveying the terrain and laying out the boundaries<sup>344</sup> for a city whose ecclesiastical name is now Angelopolis. It is noteworthy that by 1774, the master of ceremonies of the cathedral of Puebla disputed that Guadalupe could be patron over that city.<sup>345</sup>

By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the cathedral chapter at Puebla was overseeing the Virgin of Ocotlán's festivals and sending commissars, nominated in chapter, to observe the feast of the Virgin's patronage over Tlaxcala, which was established in 1774. Their task was "solemnisar la funsion han de hir, en los mismos terminus qe los años pasados, segun el estilo uso, s costumbre [sic], obserbvado siempre pa est Ve Cabo." (To solemnize the function, as yesterday, in these same times as in years past, according to the usual style, custom, always observed by this venerable Chapter.)<sup>346</sup> This function was carried out annually throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1940, the Virgin of Ocotlán was declared patron of the Archdiocese of Puebla as well.

Hymns to the Virgin of Ocotlán emphasize her role as a Tlaxcaltecan Virgin, queen of Tlaxcala and mother of its people. The "Virgen Sagrada" hymn sings, "Por

---

344. Lafaye, 261.

345. Ibid., 262.

346. *Actos del Cabildo de Catedral de la Puebla de Los Angeles 1774-1899*, entry for 30 June 1778.

esa gala/Tú de Tlaxcala/Madre quisiste ser.” (For this gala, you sought to be Mother of Tlaxcala.)<sup>347</sup> The “Danza de Inditos Mexicanos” (Dance of the little Mexican Indians) contains the verse, “Somos hijos de tu pueblo/que imploramos tu piedad/somos tus xocoyotitos/que te amamos con lealdad.” (We are the children of your people, we implore your pity, we are your youngest ones, we love you loyally.)<sup>348</sup> Furthermore:

Quiere la Virgen que su corazon esté despejado para que no se lo ocupan más que los tlaxcaltecas, que son su único tesoro. Sus piadísimos ojos, mirando de hito en hito a Tlaxcala. Jamás ha aflojado el amor de los tlaxcaltecas con su amable Señora. [The Virgin wishes that her heart be empty so that it may be occupied more by the Tlaxcalans, who are her unique treasure. Her merciful eyes see Tlaxcala landmark by landmark. Never has the love that the Tlaxcalans bear for their kind Lady diminished.]<sup>349</sup>

Tlaxcala is presented as a place deserving of special favours from the Virgin of Ocotlán, who is their mother and sovereign lady. The fact that the visionary, Juan Diego, is a native is given special meaning:

En Ocotlán se descubre la preferencia de María por los humildes, al manifestarse a un joven indígena de la clase más pobre [...] Ella enalteció al indio marginado y proclamó su dignidad de persona. [In Ocotlán is revealed Mary's preference for the humble by her manifesting to a young native of the poorest class (...) She raised up the marginalized Indian and proclaimed his human dignity.]<sup>350</sup>

Interestingly, the social class of the Tlaxcalan Juan Diego is never discussed in the legend. We know that he is young, known for his piety and an assistant to the friars. With this very sketchy description, based on what we know about the educational system enacted by the Franciscans, we can conclude that he was the son of a Tlaxcalan noble, being educated in one of their schools. The description of the

---

347. Nava Rodriguez, *Historia de Nuestra Señora*, 1983 ed., 81.

348. *Ibid.*, 89.

349. *Ibid.*, 32.

350. Santamaría, 26.

visionary as poor, humble and marginalized is from the hagiography of the Guadalupan Juan Diego.

With Ocotlán, the image itself is the symbol of identity with the visionary being quite incidental to the story, even though he is portrayed and supported as an historical figure. With Guadalupe, the visionary Juan Diego has received his own cult, and in 2002 his cult received the ultimate ecclesiastical sign of approval when he was canonized, making him the first native American to receive the title “saint.” Juan Diego of Tepeyac is a more clearly-defined figure than Juan Diego of Tlaxcala and subsequent exegesis of him as a person has formed him into a sign of identity in his own right. The story of Guadalupe is a highly-adaptable legend with multiple meanings. Most recently it has been turned into the story of Juan Diego’s exemplary life.<sup>351</sup>

The name Juan Diego means John James. The pairing of these names is meaningful. John is the evangelist whose symbol is the eagle, who stood at the foot of the cross with Mary, and who tradition says wrote the description of the Woman of Revelation. James is the patron saint of Spain and the conquest.<sup>352</sup> This native whose name suggests praise of Mary and the power of the Spanish becomes founder of a new temple in the heart of Mexico.

To the Nahuatl, “to build a temple” as the Virgin requests in the *Nican Mopohua* means to build a nation or race. As discussed earlier, a socio-political group organized itself and identified itself with its temple and deities. The

---

351. Margarita Zires, “La « génération » du mythe de saint Juan Diego: réappropriation et transformation du mythe de la Vierge de la Guadeloupe,” unpublished article (S.l.: s.n., n.d.), n.p.

352. Burkhart, “Cult of the Virgin,” 217.

destruction of a temple meant the defeat of a people. Juan Diego is thus seen as having a role in building up his people.<sup>353</sup>

Juan Diego is also viewed as a model of the virtues particularly valued by the indigenous people, even today. For instance, he did not complain about being rejected by the bishop because he did not want to offend Mary. He was unperturbed when he was actually before Zumárraga because not being angered showed superiority. The self-deprecating way he spoke about his unworthiness showed his courtesy.<sup>354</sup>

When the *Nican Mopohua* was written, he was held up as an example of the religious attitudes admired at the time. The wills written by natives often recommended him to an heir that they serve a saint. Service was meant to help maintain a cult. The person devoted to this service might live at the shrine or church where sweeping, providing candles and flowers and burning incense would have been among the duties.<sup>355</sup> Juan Diego is described as performing these tasks for the Virgin of Guadalupe.

In 1665 and 1666 the cathedral at Mexico City held inquiries about the apparition and about Juan Diego. The purpose was to secure enough evidence in favour of the cult to send to the Pope to request an official feast day for New Spain. To this purpose, they interviewed elderly natives who testified about parents or grandparents who had witnessed the miracle or known the visionary. What they said about Juan Diego was that he lived in an adobe hut by the ermita and that he was a

---

353. Arzobispo Norberto Rivera Carrera, *Carta Pastoral por la Canonización del Beato Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin, Laico* (México: Arquidiócesis Primada de México, 2002), 30.

354. *Ibid.*, 33.

355. Lockhart, *Nahuas After the Conquest*, 238.

good and holy man,<sup>356</sup> that people came to him to have him pray for good harvests,<sup>357</sup> and that he cared for the shrine with other natives by sweeping it.<sup>358</sup>

The ages of the witnesses are problematic as many claimed to be over 100 years old. Nonetheless, even if their ages were incorrect and Juan Diego did not exist as has been claimed, there seems to have been a cult of Juan Diego among natives in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century that held him up as the ideal pious native.

In the *Nican Mopohua*, Juan Diego is described both by the writer and by himself as a *un macehuatl, una cola, una ala, un indito humilde* (a lowly peasant, a tail, a wing, a humble little Indian). He is an indefinite person and the process of canonization turns him into a concrete individual.<sup>359</sup> The Archdiocese of Mexico is probably correct in saying that canonization does not separate Juan Diego from his people. The Pastoral Letter about the canonization says that the canonization shows how his identity as a man of his time and his status have been perfected by the work of the spirit of Christ resurrected.<sup>360</sup>

Other writers in the wake of the canonization take up this theme. Juan Diego is idealized for being virtuous towards his family according to the norms of his time. He is shown as humble and obedient towards his elderly uncle. The way Juan Diego chose to find a friar to prepare his uncle for death over fulfilling Mary's demands to prove her message to the bishop pleased Mary, which is why she cured the uncle.<sup>361</sup> The Archbishop of Mexico City's Pastoral Letter agrees, saying that Juan Diego's

---

356. Poole, "Our Lady of Guadalupe," 131.

357. *Ibid.*, 132, 133.

358. *Ibid.*, 133.

359. Zires.

360. Rivera Carrera, 47.

361. Ramón Sánchez Flores, *Juan Diego: Raíz de Nuestro Ser* (México: Publicaciones Paulinas, 2002), 49.



solicitude for Bernardino is a native value. To the natives, one's elders were considered "the image of God." The Letter praises Juan Diego's familial devotion as "the legacy of his race."<sup>362</sup>

Juan Diego's spirituality has been praised throughout the centuries. The old witnesses at the Capitular Inquiry of 1665-66 described him as being like a pilgrim and a hermit because of his willingness to walk long distances to church and to live a solitary life by the shrine.<sup>363</sup> The same witnesses reported that he and his wife María Lucía, who died before the apparitions took place, had chosen a celibate marriage after hearing a sermon about it by Motolinía. While this action is no longer considered praiseworthy, 17<sup>th</sup> century listeners would have seen it as proof of his holiness.<sup>364</sup>

The Pastoral Letter refers to Juan Diego as a *laico contemplativo* (contemplative layman). To support this, it mentions that the *Nican Mopohua* describes him as going to instruction at the church at Tlatelolco on a Saturday morning while it was still dark.<sup>365</sup> It cites his wonder at the flowers, music, and birds that manifest before he sees the Virgin and compares the apparition itself to a Transfiguration experience.<sup>366</sup>

Juan Diego's status as a native person is seen as central to the person he is, and this status is something that does indeed make him an appealing figure to Mexicans today. It is seen as a sign of reconciliation between the races, something humanity hopes for, but which certainly has yet to become a reality. In an address on

---

362. Rivera Carrera, 36.

363. Poole, "Our Lady of Guadalupe," 132.

364. *Ibid.*, 125.

365. Sousa, Poole, and Lockhart, *Story of Guadalupe*, 61.

366. Rivera Carrera, 27-28.

12 October 1961, Pope John XXIII said of Guadalupe, “Ella con cara de mestiza entre Juan Diego y el obispo Zumárraga como para simbolizar el beso de las razas.” (She, with the face of a mestiza, between Juan Diego and Bishop Zumárraga to symbolize the embrace of the races.)<sup>367</sup>

Furthermore, the same Pastoral Letter states that Mary, in announcing the Gospel that promotes national unity, makes herself the mother of the mixed race, born as it is in the middle of tension.<sup>368</sup> Just as Juan Diego’s being a native makes him easy to identify with, Mary’s appearing as a mestiza at Tepeyac is what makes her appealing to a wide range of Mexicans. This divine mestiza also gives the native dignity:

Is God’s action on the side of the poor, as is Juan Diego? [...] He is the protagonist, representing all who are marginalized. Similarly, Mexican-American women are the poor; Guadalupe comes and stands among them to reflect who they are – mother, woman, mestiza – and gives them a place in a world that negates them.<sup>369</sup>

The Pastoral Letter says that Mary’s choice of Juan Diego as messenger and the way she interacts with him emphasize his dignity. She calls him *venerable hijo menor* (venerable youngest son), and *mi pequeñito* (my little one), thus indicating him as her chosen son. He, in turn, calls her not only *mi Señora* and *mi Reina* (my Queen), but also *muchachita mía* (my little girl).<sup>370</sup> There is respect but also a feeling of familial tenderness here.

The wide appeal of Juan Diego and Guadalupe has borne some strange fruit. Before the canonization, there were motions to separate Juan Diego from his lowly

---

367. *Ibid.*, 8.

368. *Ibid.*, 31.

369. Rodriguez, 145.

370. Rivera Carrera, 29.

origins and depict him as rich and royal. The tone of the Pastoral Letter is one that endorses the idea of the poor peasant Juan Diego; however some dispute this image, while others claim to endorse it while at the same time showing their discomfort at the idea of Juan Diego as a genuine aboriginal Mexican.

Margarita Zires states in her article that the emerging myth of Juan Diego's exemplary life highlights a power struggle between different sectors in the Church as well as between community and social groups.<sup>371</sup> Part of the debate over the social class to which Juan Diego belonged is illustrated by a dispute between two dioceses, both of which want to claim to be home of the saint.

The diocese of Cuautitlán has a tradition of a Juan Diego who was humble, though not particularly poor, an artisan who owned some land but who was emphatically not nobility.<sup>372</sup> The diocese of Ecatepec, on the other hand, holds the belief that Juan Diego was a nobleman, the nephew of one Nezahualcoyotl, that he was a polygamist and the father of many children. Their version of the saint's life is that he *became a macehuatl* in spirit, giving up house, lands and goods after his meetings with the Virgin.<sup>373</sup> They do not reconcile this with the *Nican Mopohua*, which describes his poverty in no uncertain terms.

Supporting this viewpoint, Joel Romero Salinas writes:

[Juan Diego] no fue hijo de padres de la más base clase social, sino todo lo contrario, fue hijo de Netzahualpiltzintli [sic] [...] rey de Tezcoco por el deceso de su padre. [(Juan Diego) was not the son of parents of the lowest social class, on the contrary, he was the son of Netzahualpiltzintli (sic) (...), king of Tezcoco at the death of his father.]<sup>374</sup>

---

371. Zires.

372. Ibid.

373. Ibid.

374. Joel Romero Salinas, *Juan Diego: Enriquecido y Glorificado*. (Mexico: Ediciones Paulinas, 2002), 5.

Romero Salinas explains the language Juan Diego uses to describe himself to Mary, when telling her that he is an unworthy messenger, as the polite language used by the upper class to their superiors.<sup>375</sup>

The theory also claims as support a legal document validating the bloodline of a woman seeking entry to the Corpus Christi convent in Mexico City.<sup>376</sup> This woman, Doña María Antonia de Escalona y Rojas claimed to be the fifth granddaughter of Juan Diego.<sup>377</sup> The Corpus Christi was open to native women only if they were of noble lineage.

Before the canonization, an official portrait had to be selected. The one chosen is a painting in the Museum of the Basilica of Guadalupe, entitled “Juan Diego Kneeling” and dated 1777.<sup>378</sup> It depicts Juan Diego as wearing the white cotton shirt and trousers which some peasants still wear, with a tilma tied to his shoulder. However, he has European features and a beard and is carrying the staff and hat typical of a pilgrim going to Compostela.<sup>379</sup>

This painting can be seen in churches all over Mexico. A large reproduction of it stands on an easel by the main altar in the cathedral of Puebla and also at Tepeyac. It is possible to buy posters of it. Nonetheless, it is still troubling to some people. Francisco Ortiz Pedroza said that he saw in it not so much Juan Diego as Hernán Cortés. Even the anti-canonization forces, usually the ones accused of

---

375. *Ibid.*, 8.

376. *Osservatore Romano*, 9.

377. Romero Salinas, 9.

378. Castillo, 25.

379. Zires.

racism, denounce use of this portrait, saying it has turned Juan Diego into a white, bearded, noble and rich man.<sup>380</sup>

Margarita Zires concludes that at the same time the Church tries to dignify a native who has no protection, it shows an aesthetic bias in its choice of portrait. This brings to mind how the Mexican aboriginal heritage is constantly invoked while real natives are kept marginal, as in the allegorical cart showing a native praying for Napoleon to release the Spanish king. Any effort to turn Juan Diego into “white, rich and noble” exposes the discomfort caused by the presence of flesh and blood native people. In my opinion, it also eviscerates the Guadalupe message of Mary choosing the lowly to do God’s work, just as God chose Mary, a poor teenager living in an occupied land, to bear God’s son.

The appropriation of Juan Diego to white Catholics, who are more comfortable with him looking more like themselves, is the inverse of Guadalupe, whose first major devotion came from Mexico-born Spaniards (*criollos*) and expanded to include all Mexicans. The *criollos* were starting to feel that they were rivals to the *gachupines* (European-born Spaniards) who had no knowledge of the country and ruled by royal authority alone. Guadalupe was interpreted as a sign of authority that came from God through Mary.

As mentioned earlier, Miguel Sánchez, in his Spanish language book on Guadalupe, saw the Virgin of Tepeyac as a second Eve. Sánchez proposed the idea the Spanish were a new chosen people, designated by God to spread the Gospel in the New World. Furthermore, he described Guadalupe as the first *criolla*, and Mexico as

---

380. Ibid.

a new Holy Land. His idea of Mexico as Western Paradise was taken up by two baroque Mexican poets, Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora and Sor Juana de la Cruz.<sup>381</sup>

Our Lady of Guadalupe and Our Lady of Ocotlán are both symbols of identity. They are patron saints of groups: the subjects of hagiographies that define communities. The difference is that Guadalupe was presentable as a saint of national dimensions whereas Ocotlán is local only to two Mexican states. Guadalupe gained national honour because by the 17<sup>th</sup> century when her devotion was promoted, people had been moving around Mexico for nearly 100 years. They were thus open to a sense of larger nationality rather than of being members of an *altepetl* only, so her hagiography galvanized identity as *Mexicans* rather than as denizens of a locality.<sup>382</sup>

She attained prominence with the wealthy criollos of Mexico City because of the way she appeared in Mexico for the first time, as opposed to Remedios who was carried from Spain by a Spaniard. Her devotion was promoted initially by a Dominican episcopate and later by the secular clergy and the Jesuits.

The Virgin of Ocotlán remains a local Mary, specific to the Puebla/Tlaxcala area. Unlike Guadalupe and Remedios, Ocotlán does not seem to have received any royal or vice royal attention, which may be why she never appeared in the larger Mexican religious landscape. Instead, she has become the symbol of Tlaxcala as the cradle of Christianity in Mexico and is part of the Poblano/Tlaxcalan identity. Puebla was rival city to Mexico and arguably in need of its own miraculous image. Acxotecatl's statue, which is still housed at the Franciscan church in Puebla, is

---

381. Lafaye, 250-52.

382. *Ibid.*, 248.

historical but in no way prodigious. In the cathedral at Puebla, the Virgin of Ocotlán has her own chapel.

It should be mentioned that during times of unrest both images have been targets of violence. In 1915, during conflict between the forces of Carranza and Zapata, it was necessary to hide the statue of the Virgin of Ocotlán to save it from damage. The image of Guadalupe has seldom been moved from its shrine, but in 1921, there was a serious effort made to destroy it with dynamite hidden among a flower arrangement. The dynamite exploded, destroying the altar area and blowing out the windows of nearby houses, but the image itself suffered no damage.<sup>383</sup> A crucifix twisted by the explosion is on display in the basilica as evidence of the strength of the explosion.

Between 1927 and 1930 when the Church was being persecuted by the Mexican government, the Virgin of Guadalupe was a point of reference for Mexican Catholics.

Testimonio de ello era el grito que lanzaban los que morían en defenso de su derecho a expresar y celebrar públicamente su fe: ¡Viva Cristo Rey! ¡Viva la Virgen de Guadalupe! [Testimony to this was the cry of those who died to defend their right to express their faith publicly: Long live Christ the King! Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe!]<sup>384</sup>

The Virgin Mary is always a figure of maternal comfort, and millions of people around the world draw courage and inspiration from her. In Mexico the relationship is particularly familial. It is this aspect of the Virgins of Ocotlán and Guadalupe that we examine next.

---

383. V.-Manuel Fernández, *La Virgen de Guadalupe y su arte prodigioso* (Mexico: Editorial Diana, 1992), 118-19.

384. Rivera Carrera, 7.

### 5.3 As centre of the Church

The eighth chapter of *Lumen Gentium* describes the Virgin Mary as the mother-figure in the midst of the Church:

She is endowed with the high office and dignity of being the mother of the Son of God, and therefore she is also the beloved daughter of the Father and the temple of the holy Spirit. [...] She is at the same time also united to all those who are to be saved; indeed, “she is clearly the mother of the members of Christ.”<sup>385</sup>

As such, Mary is still involved in the work of salvation. “Taken up to heaven, she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to procure for us the gifts of eternal salvation.”<sup>386</sup>

The Virgin of Ocotlán is proudly described as mother of the Tlaxcalans and the Virgin of Guadalupe is hailed as mother of the Mexican people. Neither motherhood can be looked at as merely nationalism, though; they must be seen in the context of being part of the Church. I suggest that Mary, when she becomes the central figure of a particular people, shows forth her specific ministry as mother of the Church. She is in solidarity with all Christians and works for the salvation of all people, two themes which emerge clearly from the legends of Ocotlán and Guadalupe.

Having her as mother gives us the responsibility to take care of each other as members of a family, and to help each other through the difficulties of daily life.

Rubén Martínez explains:

that essence [of Mexico] is the festival of *la Virgen*, where all of Mexico’s children come together to admit that the very pain of our history [...] is what

---

385. *Lumen Gentium*, in Flannery, 80.

386. *Ibid.*, 85.



offers us the path towards redemption. It is a hope that brings us to a tremendous responsibility; to live up to *la Virgen's* faith in us.<sup>387</sup>

José de Jesús Herrera Aceves writes that Mary is mother of the Church, and of the children of God, the Father. He sees the ideal family as having at its centre the figure of the mother, who stands for tenderness, pure love, sacrifice for her children and care for her family.<sup>388</sup> Herrera goes on to refer to the Document of Puebla in saying that mariology is in reference to the concrete realities of history, culture, socio-political situations and popular religion.<sup>389</sup>

This description is obviously problematic in its stereotype of the tender, self-sacrificing mother, which is not very attractive to any woman who is realistic. It is, however, the clichéd image of a Mexican mother. I have included this quotation because, despite the stereotype, it still refers to Mary as centre of the family made up of all Christians. It is an interesting exercise, in my opinion, to follow Elizabeth Johnson's suggestion to take these qualities and re-locate them in God. After all, self-sacrifice has its most perfect example in God the Son.

Popular religion, as mentioned in the first chapter, involves the feelings, acts and experiences of individuals in relation to the divine, or religion as it is experienced by a majority of people. The religion of individuals, directed toward a figure identified as something very personal like a mother, is bound to be emotional, individual and trusting.

---

387. Rubén Martínez, 109.

388. José de Jesús Herrera Aceves, "La Virgen Santa María en el Documento de Puebla," in *450° Aniversario 1531-1981 Congreso Mariológico* (Mexico: Basílica de Santa María de Guadalupe, 1983), 171.

389. Ibid.

Jeannette Rodriguez gives the example of the private dimension of popular religiosity, based on the seeking of favours. The world is seen as interdependent and interconnected in that all people find themselves in relation to one another. Just as we are involved with each other, God is involved in worldly affairs, as shown when someone utters, “*Si Dios quiere*” (If God wills), when saying they intend to do something. Guadalupe represents the familial and personal-relational component of popular religion. She is mother and we are brothers and sisters. God is rarely approached directly, hence the need for a powerful mediator like Mary.<sup>390</sup>

Requests for favours and giving thanks for favours granted are two of the reasons why people go to shrines. The statue of Our Lady of Ocotlán stands against a large wooden star which is taller than the statue itself and encrusted with *milagros*, little metal symbols of the favour a person has received. F. Gonzalez Crussi describes his mother as an unskilled, uneducated widow with two children. He recalls how his mother took him to Guadalupe’s shrine in Mexico City in thanksgiving for a favour received. “And this happened – my mother had not the slightest doubt about that – through the intercession of the swarthy Madonna whose succor she had assiduously beseeched.”<sup>391</sup>

As mother, the Virgin Mary is there to help her children. She is the model of ecclesiastical service in Latin America, and also just a symbol of human beings helping each other. Among the people and in their culture, Mary embodies service as the Handmaid of the Lord, helper of Elizabeth, advocate of the newlyweds at the

---

390. Rodríguez, 147-48.

391. F. Gonzalez-Crussi, “Anatomy of a Virgin,” in *Goddess of the Americas = La diosa de las Américas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe*, ed. Ana Castillo (New York, N.Y.: Riverhead Books, 1996), 2.

Marriage Feast of Cana. Her first action in this capacity is her participation in the Incarnation: “Por medio de María, Dios se hizo carne: entró a formar parte de un pueblo; constituyó el centro de la historia.” (By means of Mary, God became flesh: He entered to become part of a people; he constituted the centre of history.)<sup>392</sup>

Mary is not above or outside the people; she is one of them.<sup>393</sup> This calls to mind an observation made by Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz about Latina women. She noticed during a Christian Mothers meeting she attended, that the women there had all lived Jesus’s message of “no greater love.” In the case of Latina women, this did not mean to die for someone else, but to not let someone else die. It meant to take in children, to worry about neighbours rather than worrying about moving out of the neighbourhood, and to bring *un poquito de justicia*, a (little bit of justice) into the world.<sup>394</sup>

The Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán stand for this as well. “En ambos casos, es decir, en Tepeyac y Ocotlán, la Madre de Dios trajo palabras de vida, esperanza, y dulzura, para los más humildes y desamparados.” (In both cases, that is to say, in Tepeyac and Ocotlán, the Mother of God brought words of life, hope, and sweetness for the most humble and helpless.)<sup>395</sup>

Herrera says that devotion to Mary has been vital throughout the history of Latin America. She is model and mother of the Church and as Guadalupe she is a great sign of the “maternal face,” the nearness of the Father and of Christ, and the

---

392. *La Evangelización en el presente y en el futuro de América Latina: Documento de Puebla* (Puebla de los Angeles, Mexico: s.n., 1979), paragraph 301. <http://www.multimedios.org/docs/d000363/>

393. Herrera Aceves, “Virgen Santa Maria, 178.

394. Isasi-Diaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 106.

395. Santamaría, 22.

mercy of the Father to the newly-discovered people of Latin America. Mary, he goes on to say, invites us to enter into communion with the Trinity and union with individuals and peoples (*los hombres y los pueblos*).<sup>396</sup>

The legends of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Our Lady of Ocotlán are stories about a God who cares. The image, tale and experience of Guadalupe and Ocotlán tell people that God has not given up on them. It affirms them and shows that God is present for them. Mary is also there for the people, to protect and love them. Faith in her is salvific because it helps give meaning to their lives.<sup>397</sup>

Nonetheless, many do see the maternal face of God in the Mexican Virgins. They bear attributes otherwise excluded from the Trinity, as mentioned in chapter one. They manifest God as Mother, God's compassion, God's divine power and might, the presence of God and God's re-creating energy. This is a concept that sits well with the original Nahua belief that everything perfect has its male and female components.<sup>398</sup>

The way Guadalupe and Ocotlán moved into the void left by the defeat and removal of the Nahua gods is one of the things that still makes her appealing to modern Mexicans. Ana Castillo speculates that the native Mexicans may have turned to her as the Mother when their male gods failed. She mentions the need for an idea or image that gives comfort when law and regulation are imposed without mercy on the personal needs of a people. She points to the way Mary speaks tenderly to Juan

---

396. Herrera Aceves, "Virgen Santa María," 173.

397. *Ibid.*, 121.

398. Rodriguez, 154-56.

Diego, using the language the Nahua previously utilized for their gods but with a solicitude previously unknown, caring about the fact that his uncle is dying.<sup>399</sup>

Jeannette Rodriguez writes:

Our Lady of Guadalupe is the one who appeared in 1531 and has never left the people or the Americas. This “felt presence” continues to be experienced even today and is the key to understanding the impact of Our Lady of Guadalupe.<sup>400</sup>

Rubén Martínez continues the idea of the “felt presence” by saying with regard to ongoing apparitions of the Virgin: “It’s no coincidence that She’s been appearing more often lately. In times of crisis, she’s always there.”<sup>401</sup>

Jeannette Rodriguez also writes about this continued presence of the Virgin. She tells the anecdote about a tiny native woman at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City who said she loved Guadalupe particularly because “*Se quedó*” (She stayed).<sup>402</sup> Other apparitions come and leave nothing behind, but this Mary has remained.

Mary’s role as ever-present mother makes her particularly beloved to family women. Jeannette Rodriguez quotes a woman named Catalina as saying that Mary understands her in this capacity: “She knows how I feel and I can talk to her woman to woman, mother to mother.”<sup>403</sup> Elsewhere, Rodriguez has this conversation with a woman named Carolina:

Author: Do Mexican mothers identify with her?

---

399. Castillo, xvii.

400. Rodriguez, 129.

401. Rubén Martínez, 102.

402. Rodriguez, 128

403. Ibid., 121.

Carolina: Yeah, they do a whole lot. I guess because she understands everything that they are going through and what's their goals, and trying to raise a family and trying to accomplish something.<sup>404</sup>

Another consequence of Mary's being mother of the Church is to emphasize that the Church really does, or should, encompass all peoples. This is one of the more popular exegeses of the Guadalupe and Ocotlán stories, that Mary loves native and Spaniard, mestizo and black, poor peasant and bishop. The solicitude Mary shows to Juan Diego opens surprising experiences to him and his society because it creates a new image of humanity which both natives and Europeans must learn. Mary's intervention brings about a social "birth" for the natives in New Spain into a world where they can be respected.<sup>405</sup>

The Pastoral Letter about Our Lady of Guadalupe adds: "Si Nuestra Señora quiere un 'Templo,' significa que desea promover la fraternidad entre los moradores de estas tierras." (If Our Lady desires a "temple," it signifies that she wishes to promote the brotherhood between the inhabitants of these lands.) By being Mother of the Son of God, it is she who engenders the kinship of all people.<sup>406</sup>

Ultimately, the source for people's faith in the Virgins of Ocotlán and Guadalupe are the words of Mary herself. What Mary says to Juan Diego after he nervously apologizes to her for not going to the archbishop because of his dying uncle has stayed with believers since 1648:

Understand, rest very much assured, my youngest child, that nothing whatever should frighten you or worry you. Do not be concerned, do not fear the illness, or any other illness or calamity. Am I, your mother, not here?<sup>407</sup>

---

404. *Ibid.*, 117.

405. Nebel, 264.

406. Rivera Carrera, 74.

407. Sousa, Poole, and Lockhart, *Story of Guadalupe*, 79.

Similarly, Santamaría isolates what he refers to as the three promises of Our Lady of Ocotlán. The first is shown through the miraculous well, the giving of the water that restores perfect health. The second is that her heart will not tolerate suffering. The third is the statue that will show forth her mercy and clemency.<sup>408</sup>

Vatican II presents the Virgin Mary as pre-eminent member and Mother of the Church. In the guises of Guadalupe and Ocotlán, we have seen the way she performs this role. She is mother in both the order of grace, leading her children to salvation and protecting their faith; and in a more familiar sense as well, tending to the needs, illnesses and hurts of her children. In Mexico, the Church recognizes this relationship of Mary with the people and encourages it, albeit with certain concerns and restrictions.

#### **5.4 Official Church approach to Mexican marian devotions**

The official Church approaches to Mexican (and Latin American in general) marian devotions are topics of discussion in a number of official ecclesiastical documents. These documents are the source for many of the writers already cited, who describe Mary in the maternal roles discussed above.

*La Evangelización en el presente y en el futuro de América Latina*, more commonly referred to as *El Documento de Puebla*, was the result of an historic meeting of Latin American bishops in 1979 which took place in Puebla, Mexico. One of the subjects discussed in detail in this document is the Virgin Mary and her specific role in Latin America.

---

408. Santamaría, 32.

She is introduced in the *Documento* as “modelo para la vida de la Iglesia y de los hombres” (model for the life of the Church and of men). She is “reconocida como modelo extraordinario de la Iglesia en el orden de la fe” (recognized as extraordinary model of the Church in the order of faith), “la creyente en quien resplandece la fe como don, apertura, respuesta y fidelidad” (the believer in who shines forth faith as gift, opening, response and faithfulness). She is this model of faith who “cuando no la comprende y queda sorprendida, no la rechaza or relega; la medita y la guarda” (did not reject or push away what she did not understand but meditated and kept it.)<sup>409</sup>

Mary is also presented in the *Documento* as New Eve, working in conjunction with Jesus Christ, the new Adam:

La Inmaculada Concepción nos ofrece en María el rostro del hombre Nuevo redimido por Cristo. [...] En el cuerpo glorioso de María comienza la creación material a tener parte en el cuerpo resusitado de Cristo. [The Immaculate Conception offers us in Mary the face of the human being redeemed by Christ. (...) In the glorified body of Mary begins the participation of the material creation in the resuscitated body of Christ.]<sup>410</sup>

The first description of Mary’s role however, is that of a mother who both raises children to live their vocation as well as the mother who makes all people into a family:

María, Madre [...] en este forma nos lleva a desarrollar la vida del bautismo por el cual fuimos hechos hijos. Simultáneamente, ese carisma maternal hace crecer en nosotros la fraternidad. Así María hace que la Iglesia se sienta familia. [Mary, Mother (...) in this form raises us to live out our life of baptism through being made her children. Simultaneously, this maternal care makes our feeling of kinship increase. Thus Mary makes the Church feel like a family.]<sup>411</sup>

---

409. *Evangelización en el presente*, par. 296.

410. *Ibid.*, paragraph 298.

411. *Ibid.*, paragraph 295.



Thus, Mary is confirmed as having all the qualities she displays in her Mexican apparitions: model of the Christian life; servant of God; New Eve; and mother of the human family. Juan Diego is in a sense her counterpart, the man who goes on to exemplify and carry out her values. When references to Juan Diego appear in Mexican ecclesiastical sources, they are almost exclusively about the Guadalupan Juan Diego, but they can be read with the Tlaxcalan Juan Diego as well, seeing as he too was charged with the same tasks and privileged to discover Mary's miraculous image.

Juan Diego is a missionary. The Pastoral Letter published by the Archdiocese of Mexico City describes him as such, saying that the Church needs "este tipo de evangelizadores llenos de fe, que pongan su persona entera en manos de Dios" (this type of evangelist, full of faith, who places his whole self in the hands of God.)<sup>412</sup>

It later comments that Juan Diego's role in evangelization tells us something about a new role for the members of the Church who are not clergy or religious:

Esta es la hora de los laicos. Su presencia en medio de las realidades temporales les hace contar con su amplio radio de acción para dar testimonio de su bautismo. [This is the hour of the laity. Their presence in the middle of temporal reality makes them take account of their ample radius of action to give the testimony of their baptism.]<sup>413</sup>

The Third Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano in Puebla affirms the legitimacy of popular religion as part of the experience of the laity. It observes that popular religion is part of culture (in Latin America) and is a location for evangelization. It represents spiritual power, and a coming-together of beliefs,

---

412. Rivera Carrera, 41.

413. Ibid., 47.

approved by God. Common wisdom is likewise the light which people use for discernment and to put the word of God into action against oppression.<sup>414</sup>

Two brief statements from Vatican II and the Catechism should also be mentioned in the context of popular religion. Both pertain to the goodness of diversity in liturgy, and that other cultures (by which is meant non-European, as the Latin Church is seen as normative in the Catechism) are to be reflected in it.

Under “Norms for Adapting the Liturgy to the Temperament and Traditions of Peoples” in the *Sacrosanctum Consilium*, (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy) it says:

rather does it (the Church) cultivate and foster the qualities and talents of the various races and nations. Anything in people’s way of life which is not indissolubly bound up with superstition and error the church studies with sympathy, and, if possible, preserves intact.<sup>415</sup>

This would include indigenous beliefs that one finds incorporated into popular religious devotions. The reason for this is that

the celebration of the liturgy, therefore, should correspond to the genius and culture of the different peoples. In order that the mystery of Christ be “made known to all the nations ... to bring about the obedience of faith,” it must be proclaimed, celebrated, and lived in all cultures in such a way that they themselves are not abolished by it but redeemed and fulfilled. It is with and through their own human culture, assumed and transfigured by Christ, that the multitude of God’s children has access to the Father, in order to glorify him in the one Spirit.<sup>416</sup>

Given the personal nature of popular religion, shrines such as those of Guadalupe and Ocotlán are particularly relevant in folk religion. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* defines a shrine as:

---

414. Cáceres, 437.

415. Flannery, 131.

416. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 1204.

a place, usually the object of pilgrimages, where a relic, miraculous statue or picture, or other holy object receives special veneration; also to a spot designated to foster some Catholic belief or devotion.<sup>417</sup>

It classes Guadalupe as a shrine that commemorates an apparition of Mary rather than one that houses a sacred image<sup>418</sup> which is a somewhat strange assessment.

Guadalupe is a major shrine and Ocotlán is a minor one. The distinction is that major shrines have a less stable community with massive pilgrimages whereas minor shrines have stable communities, often being parish as well as shrine churches, and have pilgrimages only at festival times.<sup>419</sup>

The Catholic Church does have some concerns about popular religion that are not far separated from the ones expressed by Fray Bustamante in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. While the fear is not for people to fall back into the worship of old gods, there are many new idolatries that can subvert a religious festival: such as false worship inspired by greed and politics.

Rather than being motivated by religion, a festival can be motivated by commercialism, organization from interests that are not those of the celebrants and for the promotion of tourism: the New Orleans Mardi Gras comes to mind. The shrine at Ocotlán is quiet outside of festival times, with the only vendors being those selling lunch to local residents. On the other hand, one must run the gauntlet of stalls selling Guadalupe t-shirts, souvenirs, rosaries, CDs and other items in order to reach the Tepeyac shrine.

---

417. *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (2003), s.v. "Shrines," by H. M. Gillett.

418. *Ibid.*

419. *La Pastoral de Santuarios de México*, (Mexico: Comisión Episcopal de Evangelización y Catequesis – Departamento de Pastoral de Santuarios, 1988), 17.

The sanctuaries themselves are prone to certain troubles. Shrine-keepers are warned to beware of “mechanization” of rites and commercialization of items related to the shrine such as medals and prints. There is also the danger of a “magical” concept of the place that can be an obstacle to the pastoral, as can superstitious use of the items sold there. They are also to be vigilant for attitudes of “absolutism” attributed to that specific image.<sup>420</sup> Other undesirable side effects can include marginalization of the priest and enforcement of division, not union, among participants.<sup>421</sup>

To this end there is actually an organization of shrine-keepers that has existed since 1970. Their publication is largely related to the challenges of building restoration and renovation, but also to the ministry of the word, liturgy, pilgrimages and festivals. There is also a recognition that as most Mexicans are “folk Catholics,” the shrines are important places for them to receive pastoral care as part of their religious participation there.<sup>422</sup>

Vatican II made recommendations towards securing theologically sound devotions at shrines and sanctuaries, requesting staff be sure that popular liturgies, including dances and songs, illuminate Scripture. The council recommended explanation of the real purpose for blessing images, rosaries and other items and encouraged catechesis related to the sacraments, with special attention on the sacrament of penance. It urged the promotion of vocations to the priesthood and

---

420. Ibid, 19.

421. Ibid, 18.

422. Baltasar López Burcio, “La pastoral en los santuarios marianos,” in *450° Aniversario 1531-1981 Congreso Mariológico* (Mexico: Basílica de Santa María de Guadalupe, 1983), 263-64.

religious life.<sup>423</sup> Again, shrines, sanctuaries and the figure around which the church is organized are to be oriented towards the Christian life of which Mary and the saints are models.

When Mary is the focus of the shrine, there is an opportunity to bring Scripture into popular religion. It is possible and worthwhile to emphasize the human and historical dimension of the Virgin Mary, teaching that she is the first believer, a woman in solidarity with her neighbours, sharing their joys and sorrows.<sup>424</sup> It is important that the veneration which takes place in marian sanctuaries stresses the union between Mary and Jesus, and that mariolatry, the sin of worshipping Mary as if she were divine in her own right, be avoided.<sup>425</sup>

Shrines are commonly the destination of pilgrimages, which are connected not only with popular devotion but also with group identity. The Pastoral Letter calls them expressions of living faith that can motivate the evangelization that leads to coherence between faith and life.<sup>426</sup> Thus, in an ideal pilgrimage, a person or group is travelling to a place where they can receive the sacraments, meditate on the life and meaning of the saint or relic to which the sanctuary is devoted and come away with a better idea of how to live out a life of faith. A pilgrimage is a time to recognize an alliance with Mary and the saints and to change one's life personally and collectively. It is an action that can motivate sinners and the poor towards liberation. Unity and

---

423. *Pastoral de Santuarios*, 21.

424. López Bucio, 265.

425. *Pastoral de Santuarios*, 24-25.

426. Rivera Carrera, 50.

equality are necessary for genuine pilgrimage because where there are divisions and repression there cannot be authentic Christianity.<sup>427</sup>

Mexico is a country historically plagued with corruption, poverty, racism and revolt. Although arguably things have improved in recent years, there is still much to be done. Popular religion, including pilgrimages, is lived inside this setting. If pilgrimages are journeys of realization that lead to liberation, Juan Diego, known as “the pilgrim” to his neighbours a century after his death, is a sign of what must be done.

En medio de una sociedad en la que se levanta el clamor de protesta contra la corrupción, como una de nuestras grandes lacras que impiden el desarrollo en el que debemos participar todos, tenemos que sembrar semillas de esperanza y confianza. [In the middle of a society in which the clamor of protest against corruption is raised as being one of the great blemishes that impedes the development in which we all participate, we have to sow the seeds of hope and confidence.]<sup>428</sup>

Juan Diego, as one who built up that which the Spanish destroyed, is one such person who stands against oppression and brings this hope and confidence.

Intrinsic to oppression is the often-mentioned evil of racism. True faith and religious sentiment of the sort to be cultivated at shrines cannot exist when there is division among people, and the warning to shrine-keepers to be vigilant for divisive attitudes is meant to be a guard against this. Instead the two (or more) cultures must be preserved, not annulled, because the Word made flesh is a mystery of the whole person. The seeds of this Word are to be found in the fountains of popular religion, which includes natives, blacks, rural people and marginalized city dwellers.<sup>429</sup>

---

427. López Bucio, 266.

428. Rivera Carrera, 42.

429. Cáceres, 434-35.

The Pastoral Letter explains how this applies particularly to Guadalupe. The Guadalupe story is a synthesis of the pre-Columbian cultural and religious world and the world of the Europeans, evangelically transformed: from the two peoples, God has made one.<sup>430</sup> Despite the warning about shrines being used for nationalistic purposes, it is perhaps inevitable that the shrine of Guadalupe be one to which an entire nation looks for a symbol of unity.

Guadalupe and Ocotlán have their origins in the time of proselytization, yet both went on to become the symbols for Mexico and the state of Tlaxcala respectively. Serge Gruzinski refers to marian devotion as having been a favoured vector of enculturation. Still, both these Virgins, used by the conquerors, now stand for native identity and Mexican pride.

The reason for their success is one discussed towards the end of this chapter: they represent two (and more) peoples made one through having the Virgin as their mother. The Virgin of Guadalupe has brown skin and appeared to a native man who brought the miracle to a European bishop. The Virgin of Ocotlán is white, but also appeared to a native and took over the spiritual role of a beloved Tlaxcalan goddess, bringing the gift of good health to native and Spanish alike.

Similarities in Nahuatl and Spanish worship also made it possible to make these Virgins into signs of identity. Pre-hispanic Nahuatl societies were arranged around a temple to a patron deity. Households would also keep altars to their own preferred gods. Likewise, Spanish villages had their patron saints and households had altars. When the two societies met, the Nahuatl replaced their gods with those of the Spanish.

---

430. Rivera Carrera, 51.

When the *altepetl* system broke down, the Virgin of Guadalupe, whose shrine was in the capital, was in a position to become patron of the entire country.

The visionary of Tepeyac, Juan Diego, has also become a national symbol through his canonization as the first native American saint. That he is a crucial sign of Mexican identity is attested to by the fact that not only the natives and the poor claim him as their own, but that efforts have been made to appropriate him to the European race and the upper classes as well. Still, he has a universal role as a model layman.

Juan Diego of Tlaxcala, on the other hand, has no cult. He is a symbol of Tlaxcala's role in the missionary efforts of the Franciscans; one of their servants and possibly a student, he is a well-catechized native who never speaks for himself. He represents history more than he does a people.

The Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán belong largely to the field of popular religion, that is to say, religion as it is experienced by a majority of people rather than as how it is officially taught. Yet the hierarchical and official Church and popular religion agree on one thing: Mary is Mother. To the Church, she is mother of all believers and thus our role model in faith who raises us as her children to live out our baptisms.

In popular religion, she is a more personal mother, someone to whom a person can run in times of need. She is involved in the lives of her children and mediates with God to give them favours. All who have Mary as mother have each other as brothers and sisters, and she trusts us to be responsible for one another. Women who are mothers are often particularly fond of her, feeling that she understands them in



ways other people and other saints cannot. To many people, she is the maternal face of God.

The official Church and popular religion meet in the experience of pilgrimage and religious festivity. While the official Church has concerns that expressions of popular religion meet certain standards of doctrinal purity, there is also the stance that religious expression can be used to promote “true” Christianity and that cultural diversity is no impediment. The Church does urge the realization that Mary is an historical and Biblical figure, that she is a human woman and that she wishes to lead us to her Son.

The Church also realizes, at least on paper, that true faith cannot co-exist with corruption, poverty and alienation. As it urges the faithful to recognize that Mary makes all people family, it might be suggested that the people have known this all along.

## **6. Mariological Conclusions**

A mariological question asked at the beginning of this work was: because the legends of the Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán are similar, does this mean that they respond to similar needs in people? I believe the answer is “yes,” demanding an explanation of what these needs are. Guadalupe is the patron of all Mexico, Ocotlán is the patron of Tlaxcala. Ocotlán shows herself to be a sort of Guadalupe in microcosm, fulfilling locally what Guadalupe does nationally.

In fulfilling these specific human needs, these two Virgins reveal something about God that is often referred to as God’s feminine face. As described by Elizabeth Johnson, all femininity has its necessary origin in God, and Mary gives a concrete image of this. However Johnson proposes that these qualities be returned to God, with Mary being given a better-defined place in the communion of saints. Johnson admits that there are theologians and other Catholics who are uncomfortable with her proposal, and I confess to being one of them. I believe that Mary shows the divine power by being Mary. In Mexico, she shows forth God and God’s will in a manner that the people understand well, because she herself has become a Mexican.

Three needs that these two Mexican Virgins fulfill can be summarized as follows: 1) an answer to the question of how God views Mexico and Mexicans, particularly its native population; 2) a supernatural maternal figure who heals and

cares; and 3) a figure who shows heaven's support for the struggle for justice here on earth. In all these things she is a mother, a powerful, loving, prophetic mother, who wants to unite her children and lead them towards abundant life.

Both Virgins emerged not long after the conquest of Mexico by Spain. According to their legends they appeared ten or twenty years later, when the battles between the natives and the Spanish were conclusively over and the Spanish were settling in as permanent colonizers. The Spanish built cities like Puebla to European specifications, instituted their system of government and established their religion as the only acceptable one. In this time of Spanish domination, the Virgin Mary appeared to two native men, entrusted to them a mission, took care of the sick in their families, then left behind two images of herself as signs of her ongoing presence.

### **6.1 Validation of Mexican Identity**

On the surface, validation of national identity might seem a strange venue for divine intervention. As was suggested in chapter two, a question, left by the traumata of the conquest by the Spanish, was what God thought of Mexico and Mexicans. For a long time, native Mexicans could not be ordained or admitted to the religious life. They were told that their previous way of life and worship had been nothing short of demonic. As time passed, even Spaniards born in Mexico found themselves with less privileges than Spaniards born in Spain who emigrated there, as did the *mestizo* offspring of Spanish and native parents. The Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán answer the question, saying that God does approve of Mexico and its people.

The images of the Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán result from *apparitions*. This is significant as a sign of favour, because other large Latin American devotions center around a human-made image. A Peruvian native carved the Virgin of Copacabana, and the Cuban Virgin of del Cobre was found floating in the ocean by two fishermen and a slave boy. The Virgin of Providence of Puerto Rico was actually an Italian devotion brought from Spain in 1849 in order to give Puerto Rico a national Virgin.<sup>431</sup> Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Yolanda Tarango quote a Puerto Rican woman named Inez on the effect this transplanted devotion has had in her own life:

I do not know anyone who is called Providencia in Puerto Rico. In Mexico they are called Lupe [after Our Lady of Guadalupe] and in Santo Domingo everyone is called Altagracia [after Our Lady of Altagracia]. But that thing about Our Lady of Providencia, that is new [...] I think that they needed someone so they could say they [the hierarchy of the church] have a Patroness, and they invented the thing about Providencia. They brought her from outside, nobody knows her. You know that is something very painful. You hear the Mexicans talking so much about their Virgin: the same with the Dominicans, but not us, we are a colony. The Virgin did not appear to us, she came from outside, from Italy.<sup>432 433</sup>

Earlier I mentioned the idea that these Mexican Virgins are like celestial neighbours. I think the comment “They brought her from outside, nobody knows her.” is significant in showing that Providencia is not one of the community. She is an outsider, a stranger. These feelings of alienation from one’s national patron illustrate the special gift Mexicans see in Guadalupe and Ocotlán. In these apparitions, Mary shows herself as one of native people of Mexico. Both speak

---

431. Mariana Yepes, *María: Primera Evangelizadora de América Latina* (Mexico: Ediciones Paulinas, 1994), 129.

432. That no one is named Providencia is a generalization. I, myself, have a Puerto Rican aunt named Providencia.

433. Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Yolanda Tarango, *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church* (Minneapolis, Minn. Fortress, 1992), 17.

Nahuatl, and Guadalupe even takes the form of a brown-skinned woman. By doing this, Mary takes the side of the native people and raises them up.<sup>434</sup>

Because of the way Mary made an appearance in Mexico as the Virgins of Guadalupe and Ocotlán and the way she left behind an image of herself in both cases, she is seen as having a unique, continuing presence. An apparition is “poetic discourse” as well. It goes beyond what can be proven. What is important is the sensible, physical connection between the world of “those who live in God” and “those who live in history.” Humans yearn for this dialogue as it makes us feel less lonely.<sup>435</sup>

Mariana Yepes, a Carmelite nun and author, makes it a point to remind readers that the Virgin who appeared in Mexico, and who is represented in venerated images across Latin America, is the same Mary of Nazareth who accepted the Word of God made flesh.<sup>436</sup> This is a reminder that I received three other times in Mexico, twice from older women who were talking to me about Guadalupe and Ocotlán, and once during a homily on the occasion of the feast of St. Juan Diego. While this is anecdotal evidence, it appears that there is a strong awareness of the Virgins being the scriptural mother of Jesus who volunteers to come to her son’s brothers and sisters.

“Rather than saying that she appeared in 1531, it would be more accurate to say that she started to appear – to be present among us – in 1531 and that her visible,

---

434. Ivone Gebara and María Clara Bingemer, “Mary,” in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino, trans. with the assistance of the Department of Books and Libraries of the Spanish Ministry of Culture (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 493.

435. Ivone Gebara and María Clara Bingemer, *Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, trans. Phillip Berryman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987), 140–41.

436. *Ibid.*, 13.

tangible, and motherly presence continues to spread through the Americas,"<sup>438</sup> writes Virgil Elizondo. One of Elizondo's frequent theological themes is that of Guadalupe as mediator between the Mexican natives and the Spanish conquerors and as the bringer of a new creation in the New World. By adopting the natives, she brings together two disparate peoples into one Christian family.

When Juan Diego encounters Mary, he is on his way to Tlatelolco to learn about God. Elizondo points out that despite his enthusiasm, Juan Diego could never be a priest because natives were barred from ordination. Nonetheless, the Virgin allows him to act as one, climbing the hill and mediating between human and divine.<sup>439</sup> In this she gives him a dignity denied him by the Spanish. Later at the bishop's house, Mary's words give Juan Diego comfort and remind him of her love. Mary calls him by name and again treats him with a dignity he does not receive in the face of the colonizer's church.<sup>440</sup>

At Tepeyac (and Tlaxcala), the "deity" of the Europeans and the native people of Mexico adopt each other. Mary's choice of language shows that she takes the side of the weak in order to strengthen them. She uses their language in order to be understood, as advocates of their culture.<sup>441</sup> Mary comes to the two Juan Diegos to give them the task of building temples. As mentioned in chapter five, building a temple means to build up a nation, and the nation being built here is one comprised of two peoples. "In La Virgen's temple,

---

<sup>438</sup> Virgil Elizondo, *The Future Is Mestizo* (Bloomington, IN: Meyer-Stone, 1988), 58-59

<sup>439</sup> Virgil Elizondo, *Guadalupe: Mother of the New Creation*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), 44-46

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>440</sup> Gebara and Bingemer, "Mary", pp. 148-149.

anyone – first the Indians and then everyone else – would be able to converse freely with the Mother, a close friend and caring relative,” writes Elizondo of the shrine on Tepeyac hill.<sup>441</sup>

In the series of interviews with Latinas that Isasi-Díaz conducted for her book *Hispanic Women*, later cited in *En La Lucha*, there is one with a Mexican-American woman named, appropriately enough, Lupe. She speaks of the Virgin of Guadalupe as being a positive symbol for women, an ally against racism, and as having made a lasting impression on the Mexican people:

The Virgin of Guadalupe, I think, comes closest to giving my Christian womanhood the dignity that it needs. I pray to her because the Virgin of Guadalupe is *morena* (brown skinned), the Virgin of Guadalupe is a mother, she is a pregnant woman, she is an Indian woman, and she spoke to Juan Diego – she understood the Indians and their needs; that the miracle of her apparition took place, well, that has historically changed a nation!<sup>442</sup>

The concept of Guadalupe as nation-builder is prevalent in writings about her since the *Nican Mopohua*. She is a sign of Mexican nationalism, something that does not display theology in an obvious way. However, it is strongly suggestive of the emphasis on Jew and Gentile becoming one people in Christ, as presented by St. Paul.

One passage of Scripture that is an analogy for the native people of Mexico being brought into the Christian family, not by violence but in the way the Virgin illustrates, is Ephesians 2:11-14:

So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, [...] were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.

---

441. Elizondo, *Guadalupe*, 71.

442. Isasi-Díaz and Tarango, *Hispanic Women*, 32.

In Mexico, the people of Europe and the Americas come together to form a new uniquely Mexican people, just as in Christ, Jews and Gentiles become one body. The Gentiles, those who “once were far off” come to the Jewish God whom Jesus reveals. In Mexico, the natives, who were once far off in the literal sense, are brought to the same God. While this process is called syncretism, it could just as easily be called spiritual *mestizaje*. The Virgin of Guadalupe, with her brown skin, is often seen as the agent of this *mestizaje*, with herself as a *mestiza*. Mary comes to Tepeyac asking for a church where she can hear her people. She wants to live on native soil and to give a new religious identity so that people can build a new national identity.<sup>443</sup>

The idea of Mary as the one who, on behalf of God, unites the two peoples into one Mexican people is particularly important to Virgil Elizondo. He sees the Virgin of Guadalupe as an evangelizer and Juan Diego as a prototype of the new human being of the Americas. *Mestizaje* implies not only unity but also a new birth, new creation and liberation.

The festivals at the Tepeyac shrine focus heavily on native traditions. Mariana Yepes comments, “Los manifestaciones de devoción popular son las danzas que nuestros indígenas ejecutan con ritmos y atavíos autóctonos, se entrelazan en los sacramentales transmitidos desde el tiempo en la colonia.” (The manifestations of popular devotion are the dances performed by our natives with indigenous rhythms

---

443. Gebara and Bingemer, *Mary, Mother of God*, 153-54.



and costumes. They interlace with the sacramentals transmitted since the colonial era.)<sup>444</sup>

Although racism towards native people is still strong in Mexico, Tepeyac is a place where indigenous identity is proudly displayed and brought as an offering to the Virgin. The smell of copal, the sound of native music and the sight of pre-conquest costumes are constant during the feast of Guadalupe; native identity, brought into the heart of Mexican Catholicism.

Elizondo observes that Jesus became all, so that all might be one. By breaking down all barriers in the deepest level of human existence, Jesus begins a new creation in his own person.<sup>445</sup> In order for this to happen in Mexico, he had to send his mother to Tepeyac. “I am convinced that were it not for the Lady of Guadalupe, there would be no Mexico today,” Elizondo goes on. “There would simply be new Spain and the descendants of the native peoples, co-existing but never merging into one people.”<sup>446</sup>

The moment at which the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared was a point at which a new creation was needed. Elizondo’s exegesis of the *Nican Mopohua* reads the work as Nahua literature, using Nahua symbolism.

The *Nican Mopohua* describes December of 1531 as a time when, “the altepetl of Mexico had been conquered and the weapons of war had been laid down.”<sup>447</sup> Elizondo explains this as meaning that for the Aztec, war was a metaphor for life. If war had ended, then the ongoing conflicts of life were over and by

---

444. Yepes, 44.

445. Elizondo, *Future is Mestizo*, 82.

446. Ibid.

447. Sousa, Poole and Lockhart, 61.

extension, life itself was over. Juan Diego arrives at Tepeyac as the sun rises, which in itself is a new creation.<sup>448</sup> It is time for a new life to begin.

The Guadalupe apparition was a renaissance, and its aftermath was positive change. The response of the natives was conversion and veneration of the Mother of God through festivals and pilgrimages. Yepes writes that the response from the Church was oriented towards the natives, since the Spanish evangelizers took an interest in the new Christianity that was being born before their eyes. They permitted native customs to be used in worship. Antonio Valeriano wrote his account of the apparitions in Nahuatl. The whole legend was recounted in “flower and song” (*in xochitl in cuicatl*), the way the gods had previously communicated with humans.<sup>449</sup>

While Juan Diego of Tepeyac is a Nahuatl “everyman,” Juan Diego of Ocotlán has a better position in life. He is young, perhaps the son of a noble given that he lives and works with the friars. He is not a labourer and his family is still alive. When Mary appears to him, she is thus not appearing simply to a virtuous native man but *to one particularly representative of Tlaxcala in its golden age of conversion*. She is not so much restoring lost dignity to a poor native as blessing Tlaxcala for its participation in the military and spiritual conquest.<sup>450</sup>

The way the shrine to the Virgin comes about is significant as well. Unlike the way Guadalupe asked for a temple to be built, the Virgin of Ocotlán requests that her Mexican-born image be placed in the Spanish shrine of St. Lawrence. Eventually the shrine is destroyed, so that a church dedicated specifically to the Virgin of

---

448. Elizondo, *Guadalupe*, 33.

449. Yepes, 33.

450. While the citizens of other Mexican states are ambiguous about the role of the Tlaxcalans in the conquest, the city of Tlaxcala has statues of the warriors who fought alongside the Spanish in their campaign against Moctezuma.

Ocotlán can be built. In other words, the Mexican devotion trumps the Spanish one. However, the Virgin has once again brought together both peoples around her image since when Juan Diego reveals the statue, he is accompanied by both his own people and the friars.

In both apparitions, the Virgin Mary brings the conquerors and the conquered together around an image of her. She then stays to help her new family form a shrine that is uniquely Mexican, not built by natives or Spanish alone. She is the mother at the centre of the family, to whom all look for comfort and strength.

## 6.2 Mary As Mother Who Heals and Cares

Mary reveals God using graces and powers given to her by God. She brings the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ into the sad and troubled history of the Conquest. Mariana Yepes calls Mary the “first evangelizer of Latin America” and begins her survey of Mary as patron of all the Latin American countries with a chapter about Guadalupe. In her chapter about the Virgin of Ocotlán, she admits that she does not know if the legend is true or not, due to the lack of any contemporary documents. Yepes says that the story behind the Virgin is a tradition from *nuestros mayores* (our elders), one that tells us about Mary’s preoccupation with the lives of each of her children. Yepes re-states the position of the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* that Mary is mother in the order of grace who wants her children’s lives in Christ to grow.<sup>451</sup>

---

451. Yepes, 56.

The Virgins of Ocotlán and Guadalupe demonstrate this through miracles. Their very existence in visible, tangible images are signs of presence and reminders of two events when the Virgin Mary took action for her people and moved them to action as well. It is thus fitting that these Virgins be the ones people turn to when they need material assistance as well as spiritual help, strength and inspiration.

The Virgin of Ocotlán is seen as a specialist in healing. According to legend, she appeared at a time of plague and gave Juan Diego a miraculous spring with which he was able to cure his relatives and friends. The promises of the Virgin emphasize that her shrine would be a place of physical as well as spiritual healing in perpetuity. The first promise was that the spring would cure not only those sick from the plague at the time, but whomever drank from it. The second was that her heart would not tolerate suffering without providing a remedy. The third, most notably, was that she would use her image to show mercy and clemency.

Miguel de Loayzaga was the shrine-keeper who first wrote out the story of the Virgin of Ocotlán, including these promises. He also recorded elsewhere in his book that the shrine was a place of refuge and penance. Even if the miraculous healing powers of the statue were his invention, which is unlikely because the popularity of the shrine did not begin with his book, it is true that the Virgin of Ocotlán's role as a healer has continued uninterrupted since Loayzaga's time. The *Zodiaco Mariano* contains a small collection of miracles which are mostly physical in nature (a woman assisted in childbirth, insanity cured, eyesight restored) but also spiritual ones such as the Virgin interceding on behalf of a man bound for Purgatory.<sup>452</sup>

---

452. Florencia, 264-70.

As we have seen in chapter three, the Virgin continues to work miracles, usually through the means of the afflicted person drinking the water from the holy well in Tlaxcala, even though testimonies come from as far away as Guatemala. There is a connection by friends and family of the afflicted to the image and the shrine, with the water as a physical link.

The Virgin of Ocotlán is presented as someone to whom the suffering can go for healing, and the water from her spring is her gift to them: evidence that she wants to look after the bodily, as well as the spiritual, well-being of her children.

The Virgin of Guadalupe, on the other hand, is a generalist. She is invoked for anything and everything, from protecting Chicano boys in Vietnam, to rescuing from accidents, to healing brain injuries. She rose to prominence when she was invoked against flooding in Mexico City and became known for her protection of the people of the city while the Virgin of Remedios, formerly the most popular image of the Virgin, became associated with the interests of the Spanish crown in Mexico.

The two miracles recounted in the story of her apparition to Juan Diego were, first, of her miraculous image convincing the Spanish bishop that this native man before him was truly her chosen, and second, of the healing of Juan Diego's uncle Juan Bernardino. Guadalupe showed her interest in spiritual and physical well-being right from the start.

The basilica museum at Tepeyac has a collection of *ex-voto* paintings dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These paintings, usually on tin and always in colour, commemorate the miracle granted to the person who commissioned the

painting and gave it to the shrine as a testimony.<sup>453</sup> Looking at them shows an historic progression in the kinds of troubles for which people invoked the Virgin of Guadalupe. An early *ex-voto* painting from the 17<sup>th</sup> century shows a child being dragged by a horse after falling from the saddle. An example from 1883 in turn shows a man falling from a railway car. A 1902 painting is of a man falling off a relatively modern tall building, and a 1954 offering is of an automobile accident.

“Recall that the Virgin [...] called Herself ‘mother’ and was disposed to heal Juan Bernardino,” says the explanatory text in *La Reina de las Américas: Works of Art from the Museum of the Basílica de Guadalupe*. It comments that there are two types of these paintings, one which shows the believer lying in bed sick or praying in front of a home altar for a favour. The other is of action scenes, with later examples including airplane accidents, factory accidents, and operating room scenes.<sup>454</sup>

What is noteworthy about the second kind of painting is how it once again emphasizes the Virgin as a mother who is near to her children. These paintings depict a crisis wherein the believer, in a moment of stress, called out to Mary and was not disappointed by her. Mary’s children cry out to her and like any attentive mother, she takes action to make sure they are well and safe.

---

453. These paintings are a form of folk art so common that 20<sup>th</sup> century ones can often be purchased at antique flea markets in Mexico.

454. *La Reina de las Américas: Works of Art from the Museum of the Basílica de Guadalupe* (Chicago, Ill.: Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, 1996), 15.

### 6.3 Mary and Her People's Struggle for Justice

The Virgins of Ocotlán and Guadalupe accommodate a mariology that places Mary in history and in God as both a member of the poor as well as someone who stands on their side as advocate. In the case of Mexico, she does this while simultaneously bringing together oppressors and oppressed to form one nation and people. She is thus against racism, poverty, oppression, and alienation while still counting the powerful people of this world as her children. This concept of Mary as living out God's preference for the poor is consistent with liberation theology, which is a theology "from below" having as its goal the elevation of the poorest of the poor.

The Virgin of Guadalupe is still a powerful symbol for many natives, as shown by the number of pre-Hispanic religious practices at her shrine to this day. In the United States, where to be Mexican is to be the object of racism, she has a particularly large place in the hearts of farm workers. Rosemary Radford Ruether observes that since the late fourth century, people who had strong ties to the worship of mother goddesses have joined the Church. Mary became their new patroness of agriculture, overseeing grain, rain and birth.<sup>455</sup>

This thesis has shown how the Virgin Mary was presented as a substitute object of veneration in Mexican ceremonies intended to bring rain and good health. Guadalupe continues this function in the United states where "Guadalupe rallies the

---

455. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Mary: The Feminine Face of the Church* (London, England: SCM, 1979), 46-47.

farm workers, as both a symbol of agriculture and of the oppressed, dark skinned workers of the fields.”<sup>456</sup>

The Virgin Mary can be seen as a clear ally in this struggle. Jeannette Rodriguez’s book on Guadalupe is a whole work on how Mexican-American women look to the Virgin to give them strength in their everyday lives and courage to assert their own dignity. In the conclusion of her book, she states that far from being a model of “submissive, passive Mexican womanhood” that such women find her to be a “role model of strength, enduring presence, and new possibilities.”<sup>457</sup>

Rodriguez also mentions that Mexican-American women who look to Mary as a strong role model also recognize in themselves a call to work towards the same kind of liberation Isasi-Díaz describes. Rodriguez compares it to the call received by Juan Diego. “This call is to speak prophetically to both church and society about the ‘temple’ as a place where the poor and marginalized can feel at home. These women are also called to a liberating faith that seeks a kingdom of peace and justice – a home for themselves and their families.”<sup>458</sup>

Ada María Isasi-Díaz has written several books on liberation theology as it pertains to Latina women, moving from calling it Hispanic Women’s Liberation Theology in 1992 to calling it *mujerista* theology in 1996. The necessity for this movement came out of a need to recognize Latina voices in the church and in the mainstream feminist movement, which according to Isasi-Díaz is fraught with racism.

According to Isasi-Díaz, American feminists of European descent fail to recognize their own prejudice. While doing so, they continue to control power within

---

456. Ibid, 7.

457. Rodriguez, 160.

458. Ibid, 162-63.



the feminist movement. True sharing of power, she goes on, leads to mutuality, which is what *mujeristas* ask of the feminist movement. Latina priorities are indeed different, but they are no less important than those of European-American feminists.<sup>459</sup>

*Mujeristas* also invite Roman Catholics to call for the Church to repent of the sexism inherent in its structure and some of its tenets. If the Church denounced patriarchy, *mujeristas* say, it would be an important moment in the liberation of women.<sup>460</sup>

For Latinas, classism, economic oppression and sexism come together as a multilayered oppression. In response to this, *mujerista* theology exists as theology from the point of view of Latinas. Latino theology already exists, but this brings to the fore the intrinsic element of women. Since women's voices and experiences are not usually considered, *mujeristas* demand that theirs be considered by all liberation theologies.<sup>461</sup>

Because *mujerista* theology is based on Latinas and the way they live day-to-day, popular religion must be privileged within it. Isasi-Díaz quotes Robert J. Schreiter as describing popular religion as "those patterns of behavior and belief that somehow escape the control of institutional specialists, existing alongside (and sometimes despite) the effort at control of these specialists."<sup>462</sup> However, while this description certainly fits, it also recalls Rodriguez's description of popular religion as "religion as it is lived by a majority of people." As such, Isasi-Díaz defends it as a

---

459. Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 19.

460. Isasi-Díaz and Tarango, *Hispanic Women*, x.

461. Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 1-3.

462. Isasi-Díaz and Tarango, *Hispanic Women*, 67.

means of self-identification, with characteristics and peculiarities that keep the religion central to culture.<sup>463</sup> Isasi-Díaz is talking about the United States here, but her statement brings to mind the one in chapter five of the Documento de Puebla regarding religion and culture in Latin America.

The source of Hispanic Women's Liberation Theology is thus the lived experience of Latinas. Their theology is a critical reflection of these experiences. As such, it cannot remain solely in the realm of theory. Instead, it is a *praxis*, that is, a critical reflexive action based on questions of "ultimate meaning." As with most liberation theology, these questions involve soteriology (salvation theology) and the integration of the human and the divine.<sup>464</sup>

The task in the praxis of Hispanic Women's Liberation Theology is to further the liberation of Hispanic women. It is to change structures, including the Church, so that Latinas will be able to fully participate in these structures.<sup>465</sup> To this end, it is a theology involved in historical realities which engages the whole person and does not need "sophisticated academic tools."<sup>466</sup>

In *mujerista* theology, the word survival is given as the core of meaning. Survival means to live fully, so in *mujerista* theology this means overcoming material poverty but also any poverty that despoils one's being. This means that women need not only bread but celebration, and not only rooves over their heads but a future for their children.<sup>467</sup>

The Virgin of Guadalupe stands for liberation as well.

---

463. Isasi-Díaz, *En la Lucha*, 45.

464. Isasi-Díaz and Tarango, *Hispanic Women*, 1.

465. *Ibid.*, 103.

466. *Ibid.*, 7-8.

467. Isasi-Díaz, *En la Lucha*, 16.

Guadalupe es anuncio de liberación tal y como Dios se ha revelado siempre a su pueblo en la historia de salvación desde el Éxodo al Apocalipsis. [...] María es la madre que acoge y conduce a los hombres a Cristo; su hijo les participa de la filiación divina, la libertad y la herencia del cielo. [Guadalupe is the announcement of liberation as and how God has always revealed to his people in the history of salvation from Exodus to Revelation. (...) Mary is the mother who takes in people and guides them to Christ; her son allows them to participate in his divine filiation, liberty and in inheriting heaven.]<sup>468</sup>

While the idea of salvation through Jesus Christ giving true freedom is a standard one in mainstream Catholicism, liberation theology teaches that material and political freedom must be part of that. Hispanic Women's Liberation Theology/*mujerista* theology speaks about this. With Mary showing the divine preference for the poor at Tepeyac and her unwillingness to watch the poor suffer and die in Tlaxcala, it is very clear that she stands for material freedom as well as spiritual. She has been, and still is, used as a rallying point for political freedom, but whether or not this is entirely appropriate is outside the scope of this dissertation. Still, it can be said that "Mary's cult appeals strongly to the oppressed because she gives dignity to downtrodden people and thus renews their energy to resist assimilation into the dominant culture."<sup>469</sup>

#### **6.4 Conclusions: Clarifying a new mariology**

The culturally dominant (male and European defined) mariology sanctifies the image of "female" as the principle of passive receptivity in relation to the transcendent action of a male god. According to this model, Mary is the obedient

---

468. Ibid., 35.

469. Rodriguez, 154-55.

receptacle of divine grace and the symbol of the Church.<sup>470</sup> Since this model of mariology emphasizes Mary's passivity before the "will of God," it can be read as encouragement towards unquestioning acceptance of the "will of God," with this "will" being interpreted by anyone presented as a legitimate representative of that God. This representative is usually a white, male member of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Ivone Gebara and her co-writer María Clara Bingemer give a rebuttal to this reading of the dominant mariology. We are all a priestly race, they say,<sup>471</sup> and Mary must be seen in the context of an anthropology that is human-centred, non-dual and realistic.

What human-centred anthropology means is one that is not male-centred. Women as well as men are centres of history and revealers of the divine, so it is necessary to eliminate male/female dualism. Likewise, there should be no dualism of "human" and "divine" in one's worldview as the will of God is expressed through human history.

The implications for mariology are clear. The Word was made flesh in human flesh, the flesh of men and women, thus showing the historical unity of the male and female, human and divine. Mary is the agent of this union. Through realist anthropology Mary enters into dialogue with time, space, culture, problems and people.<sup>472</sup> Gebara and Bingemer hope to see the rise of a new mariology that will re-read Mary of Nazareth from a standpoint of the needs of our age, and especially from the insights provided by the awakening of women's historical consciousness (feminist

---

470. Radford Ruether, *Feminine Face of the Church*, 4.

471. Gebara and Bingemer, *Mary, Mother of God*, 4.

472. Gebara and Bingemer, "Mary," 482-83.

anthropology).<sup>473</sup> As they put it: “The face of Mary of Nazareth has become manifold, like human yearning, like the response of love.”<sup>474</sup>

Mary works to make the kingdom of God present. Her actions manifest salvation within human history most notably through her cooperation with the Incarnation, but they also speak of her passion for the poor and for justice. Through the graces of the Assumption, by which she was assumed into heaven body and soul, Mary is able to continue this mission on earth. Having lived in history, Mary now lives in God. In Latin America, those who live in history turn to those who live in God to overcome loneliness and abandonment. Mary shows herself to be a mother who will not forsake them.<sup>475</sup>

Furthermore, Mary glorified in heaven is the image and beginning of the Church of the future, the eschatological sign of hope, bringing a woman’s body into the very heart of God.<sup>476</sup> In heaven, she is the figure and symbol of people who believe in and experience the arrival of God, the perfect Church as a new community where men and women love each other.<sup>477</sup>

Mary’s appearances on earth are only possible because of her possessing a glorified body in advance of the rest of humanity. Scripture describes Jesus’s glorified (post-resurrection) body as being physical, yet able to appear and disappear at will (John 20:19-21), which is a key part of the marian apparition stories.

The *Nican Mopohua* and the Ocotlán legend both begin in times of despair.

In the *Nican Mopohua*, Juan Diego is walking to church in the dark. His wife is dead

---

473. Gebara and Bingemer, *Mary, Mother of God*, 6.

474. *Ibid*, 18.

475. Gebara and Bingemer, “Mary,” 484-85.

476. *Ibid*, 491.

477. *Ibid*, 488-89.

and his uncle is elderly and not well. Although he is dealing with his problems with dignity and a grounded attitude, the story suggests that he was finding life to be anything but easy or pleasant. In the Ocotlán story, Juan Diego works for the Franciscan friars. It's late winter, near sunset, and he is looking for a remedy for an epidemic from which his people are suffering.

Mary tells Juan Diego of Tepeyac that she wants him to go to the bishop and tell him that she wants a church on the top of the hill where she can listen to the prayers of the people and manifest her compassion. She says to him that she is “the mother of you and of all you people here in this land, and of the other various people who love me, who cry out to me, who seek me, who trust in me.”<sup>478</sup> In this, she makes it clear that she loves the native people of Mexico as her own children, but that there are others far away who are equally her children.

After the bishop initially rejects Juan Diego's story, Juan Diego tells Mary that she needs to send a different messenger of higher rank. Mary assures him that her servants and messengers “are not high ranking people,” and that “it is highly necessary that you yourself be involved and take care of it.”<sup>479</sup> While the Spanish may see Juan Diego as a native with a dubious story who is possibly drunk, the Virgin Mary seeks him out personally to bear her message. Even if the Spanish don't respect him, Mary does. Mary understands Juan Diego, so that when he tries to avoid her in order to fetch a friar for his dying uncle she does not become angry or upbraid him but announces instead that his uncle has been healed.

---

478. Sousa, Poole and Lockhart, 65.

479. *Ibid.*, 71.

Finally, the request that Mary has Juan Diego pass on to the bishop is to build a temple. As mentioned before, to the Nahua building a temple signified building a people and to destroy a temple signified destroying a people. Mary, the Christian saint who has appeared in the guise of a native woman to a native man, is planting the seed of a new nation and people.

In the Ocotlán legend, Mary's primary concern is for the sick to whom Juan Diego is taking water. It is only after she shows him the healing spring that she tells him he will find an image of her that must be placed in the chapel of St. Lawrence. Juan Diego is not presented with the same trials as his Guadalupan counterpart; after the Franciscans interview him about the apparition of Mary, they decide to believe him. The discovery of the statue is a public event, attended not only by Juan Diego and the friars but by the whole community.

The Ocotlán legend is shorter and much less detailed than the Guadalupe legend but presents interesting variants on the same themes. The status of the visionary, the importance of miracles and the way in which the church is built all signify similar ideas, but with a specifically Tlaxcalan emphasis.

Although the conquest of Mexico was almost 500 years ago, its effects are still felt. When Mexicans move to the United States, they face what could be termed a new, cultural conquest. As national Virgin, Guadalupe is on the side of immigrants who struggle daily to be recognized and to preserve their identity. Virgil Elizondo writes of his own personal experience of feeling he needed to conceal his Mexican heritage in order to be accepted in a German-American school.<sup>480</sup> A few pages later he writes of being renewed by his first trip to the basilica in Mexico City. "This was

---

480. Elizondo, *Future is Mestizo*, 16.

Mexico. This was and is Mexicanity! Here, in the presence of nuestra madrecita morenita – our brown-skinned mother – everyone was!”<sup>481</sup>

Likewise, Jeannette Rodriguez comments that Mexican-American women must cross back and forth daily across an internal border: between being American and Mexican. This dual identity often makes them feel orphaned.<sup>482</sup> Guadalupe gives them a “spiritual form of resistance to the sociopolitical negation of Mexican-American women.”<sup>483</sup> Many of the women in Rodriguez’s survey had been to the basilica to fulfill vows and to pray. It is comparable to having a mother “back home” in Mexico to whom a person can always return for assistance.

As mentioned earlier, Tlaxcala’s participation in the Conquest and the benefits reaped because of this participation have always been a matter of Tlaxcalan pride. Considering that it gradually lost status and privilege, the Virgin of Ocotlán is an ongoing sign of heaven’s favour. It should also be recalled that the first Tlaxcalan Virgin was taken to Puebla, so it is possible to see this as proof of Mary’s ongoing will to remain in what is now the smallest of the Mexican states. She is the Tlaxcalan’s permanent reward and a sign from heaven that their role in history still matters.

There are efforts to show St. Juan Diego as being like a European, or rich. These efforts confuse the meaning of the story, if not completely eviscerate it. In a world where Mexicans, and particularly women, suffer multiple layers of oppression, it is disheartening but not surprising to find that those who do not suffer from such oppressions want to claim Guadalupe as their own. She is the mother of the Mexican

---

481. *Ibid*, 19-20.

482. Rodriguez, 63.

483. *Ibid*, xxi.



people and not all Mexicans are poor and struggling. With such people, Guadalupe is an invitation to view others as members of the same family, and to participate in the ongoing work of liberation.

The message of the Virgin is apocalyptic in both senses of the word. On one hand, it is an unveiling, a revelation. The Virgin Mary shows heaven's preferential option for the poor and lowly. She stays with them, giving them dignity and identity in a world that would prefer to ignore them. On the other hand, it is the end of the world and the beginning of a new one since the world openly prefers the European, the wealthy, the young, and the good-looking, Mary's going to the non-European, the poor, the old, and the ailing is apocalyptic in that it signifies the end of this shallow world and the beginning of a new creation.

I originally began this dissertation because I had been struck by the large number of similarities between the Virgins of Ocotlán and Guadalupe. At this point, I should acknowledge the differences, even though I find that even the differences come around to supporting my hypothesis of how the two Virgins answer the human need for a uniting maternal presence.

The locations of the alleged apparitions differ, in that one was built on a pre-hispanic Mexican cultic site, and one was not. The shrine of Our Lady of Ocotlán is known to be near the location of a goddess temple: specifically a beautiful, loving, attractive goddess.

Xochiquetzal was believed to have been tempted by a serpent, and was thus equated to Eve by the Spanish. The Virgin Mary is often referred to as "the New Eve," and this title of hers dates back to the earliest Christian writings about her.

In contrast, the hill of Tepeyac had no religious significance for the Aztecs until the first Guadalupe shrine was built there. The construction of that first shrine was possibly to the Virgin of Guadalupe of Extremadura, seeing as Tepeyac was on the causeway used by the Spanish when they escaped the Noche Triste. Any other religious significance was imparted to the site by Sahagún, who incorrectly wrote that the place had been sacred to *Tonantzin*. As we have seen, *Tonantzin* is a title for a goddess, not a specific name at all. Nonetheless, the belief that Tepeyac was sacred to a goddess cult has persisted through the centuries. In the United States, this misconception is made use of commonly by adherents to the Catholic right, who add to this story a belief that infant sacrifice was practiced on Tepeyac in honour of this goddess (see appendix, page x).

It is further interesting to note that when Sahagún wrote that the hill had been sacred to *Tonantzin* he was complaining that by praying to Guadalupe there, the new converts were secretly worshipping their old goddess under the guise of the Virgin Mary. While few contemporary writings about the Ocotlán site exist, there does seem to have been a Marian shrine of some sort there since the early years after the Conquest. The Franciscans habitually would place a shrine to the Virgin on old native holy sites, so Sahagún's complaint about the shrine is unusual to say the least.

The two different types of images are interesting in that Ocotlán is a statue, the normal type of miraculous Marian image in the west. (The Eastern Church favours painted icons.) Its discovery follows the norms for European images. The image of Guadalupe is a unique variation on the theme of the miraculous image in that it is a two-dimensional image, allegedly on a man's garment. This kind of image

is not found anywhere else in Marian miraculous literature, and the closest parallel that I can think of is the imprint of Jesus's face on Veronica's veil.

The origin of the images is inseparable from the legends which tell the origin stories. The story of Guadalupe is the older story, with the earliest versions appearing in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The official version is the famous *Nican Mopohua*, which is full of details that make the story sound plausible. In it we have the older Juan Diego; his elderly uncle Bernardino; a number of identifiable locations; and, the inclusion of a prominent historical figure, the bishop Zumárraga.

The Ocotlán story does not seem to have any precedents before Loayzaga published his book in 1750. There was of course a shrine there, since he was the third custodian and built onto an existing church, but writings about the origin of the church are lacking. The story again has a native man named Juan Diego as protagonist, but in this case he's young, and while we know that at the time he worked as a helper to the Franciscans, we know less of his back-story than we do of the Guadalupan Juan Diego. We also have no historical detail such as the names of any of the Franciscans who allegedly were there when the statue was discovered. In contrast to the Guadalupe legend, the Ocotlán legend is short and vague.

Different parts of the apparitions are emphasized in the two legends as well. In the Ocotlán legend, Mary's mercy, compassion for the suffering and role as a healer is the emphasis. She leaves her image as proof that she appeared there and left behind a well that would cure people in perpetuity. To this day, the main function of the shrine is as a place of healing. The well down the hill has its own chapel where the water can be accessed by anyone who needs it.

The Virgin of Guadalupe seems to have appeared for the sake of appearing. Unlike the rain-maker Remedios or any of the European virgins who specialize in safe childbirth or the freeing of prisoners, Guadalupe is not known for any particular *type* of miracle. Like Ocotlán, her shrine has a holy well housed in its own chapel, but this well does not feature in the legend, nor are its waters renowned for their curative properties. Instead, Guadalupe's appearance is for the sake of establishing a permanent presence in Mexico. The focus of her shrine is the *tilma* image itself, the sign that Mary remains forever in the heart of Mexico.

While the statue of the Virgin of Ocotlán is likewise a sign of Mary's favour and presence, the healing waters of the well are emphasized, starting with the words of the Virgin Mary herself, as the reason for the shrine's existence.

The Virgin of Ocotlán, according to her legend, asked to have her image housed in an already existing shrine to St. Lawrence. As I suggested in chapter three, this may have been in order to re-establish a feminine presence in a location once sacred to a goddess, now supplanted by a male saint. The Virgin of Guadalupe, on the other hand, comes to request a new temple. This, in my opinion, gives meaning to the often forgotten fact that there was never a holy site on Tepeyac until then. The Virgin has come to request a temple that is new, on a site previously unhallowed by any deity, to house a unique image. She thus brings about a new creation, as Virgilio Elizondo would say.

Mexico is a country troubled by unemployment, foreign exploitation, government corruption, poverty and racism. Mexicans, when they arrive in the United States, are faced with prejudice, language issues and a constant effort to retain their own identity in an English-only environment very unlike Mexico. In the face of

all this, a Mexican can look to Tepeyac and Ocotlán; to two miraculous images left as signs by the Virgin herself. The Virgin Mary makes appearances all over the world; in Mexico she has established a physical presence not once but twice. A Mexican can always think of the dignity that this bestows, because truly, it has not been done so for any other nation.

## Bibliography

### Our Lady of Ocotlán

- Caroje, Manuel. *Apparition of the Most Holy Virgin Mary to Juan Diego on the Hill of Ocotlán*. Sequence of paintings, oil on wood. S.l.: s.n., 1781.
- Cruz, Joan Carroll. *Miraculous Images of Our Lady*. Rockford, Ill.: TAN Books, 1993.
- Estrada Monroy, Agustín, to Fray Junípero Rivera Alonso, OFM. Memorandum. Unpublished. Shrine archival material. Tlaxcala, Mexico: s.n., 9 August 1997.
- Holloway, James David, Jr. "Our Lady of Ocotlan." Dallas, Tex: s.n., n.d. Article on website: <http://www.starharbor.com/santiago/ocotlan.html>.
- Horta Ortega, José Luis. "Favores atribuidos a Ntra. Señora en su advocación de Ocotlán." Testimonies signed and dated, August 1986. Unpublished. Shrine archival material. Tlaxcala, Mexico: s.n., 1986.
- Loayzaga, Miguel de. *Historia de la milagrosísima imagen de Nra. Sra. de Occotlan*. Mexico: Viuda de Joseph Hogal, 1750.
- Martínez Baracs, Rodrigo. *La secuencia tlaxcalteca: Orígenes del culto a Nuestra Señora de Ocotlán*. Mexico City: INAH, 2000.
- Nava Rodríguez, Luis. *Historia de Nuestra Señora de Ocotlán*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Tlaxcala: Editoria de Periodicos "La Prensa," 1972.
- . *Historia de Nuestra Señora de Ocotlán*. Rev. and abbr. ed. Tlaxcala: Editoria de Periodicos "La Prensa," 1983.
- "Novena A Nuestra Señora La Virgen de Ocotlán." Tlaxcala, Mexico, s.n., 1977.
- Nutini, Hugo G. "Syncretism and Acculturation: The Historical Development of the Cult of the Patron Saint in Tlaxcala, Mexico (1519-1670)." *Ethnology* 15 (1976): 301-21.
- Our Lady of Ocotlán*. Tlaxcala, Mexico: In the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Ocotlán Mexico, n.d. Sculpture work by an anonymous sculptor, (fl. 16<sup>th</sup> century?)
- Santamaria, Angel T. *Nuestra Señora de Ocotlán: Su Historia, Su Arte, Su Mensaje*. Tlaxcala, Mexico: Párraco de Ocotlán, 1990.
- Suarez de Peredo, Vicente del Niño Jesús. *La estrella más Hermosa, o Aparicion de la Santisísima Virgen de Ocotlán en la noble ciudad de Tlaxcala*. Puebla, Mexico: Reimpresión en la Impr. del Comercio, 1840.
- "XXIII Peregrinacion a Caballo de Amixtlan." Puebla, Mexico: s.n., 2003. Poster.

### Our Lady of Guadalupe

- Allen, John L. "Maybe He Isn't Real, But He's Almost a Saint." *National Catholic Register*. Online edition. 25 January 2002.

- Avila Sigler, Alfredo. *La Virgen de Guadalupe en la Historia de Mexico*. Serie *El Cuchitril* IV. Mexico City, Mexico: Librería de Manuel Porrúa, 1971.
- Brading, David. *Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe; Image and Tradition From Across Five Centuries*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Burkhart, Louise M. "The Cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico." In *South and Meso-American Native Spirituality: From the Cult of the Feathered Serpent to the Theology of Liberation*. Edited by Gary H. Gossen in collaboration with Miguel León-Portilla. World Spirituality 4, 198-227. New York, N.Y.: Crossroad, 1993
- . "'Here is Another Marvel': Marian Miracle Narratives in a Nahuatl Manuscript." In *Spiritual Encounters: Interactions Between Christianity and Native Religions in Colonial America*. Edited by Nicholas Griffiths and Fernando Cervantes, 91-115. Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1999.
- Callahan, Philip Serna. *The Tilma Under Infra-Red Radiation: An Infrared and Artistic Analysis of the Image of the Virgin Mary in the Basilica of Guadalupe*. CARA Studies in Popular Devotion, 2; Guadalupan Studies, 3. Washington, D.C.: CARA, 1981.
- Castillo, Ana, ed. *Goddess of the Americas = La diosa de las Américas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe*. New York, N.Y.: Riverhead Books, 1996.
- Elizondo, Virgil. *Guadalupe: Mother of the New Creation*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1997.
- Fernández, V.-Manuel. *La Virgen de Guadalupe y su arte prodigioso*. Mexico: Editorial Diana, 1992.
- Gomez-Peña, Guillermo, "The Two Guadalupes," In *Goddess of the Americas = La diosa de las Américas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe*. Edited by Ana Castillo, 178-83. New York, N.Y.: Riverhead Books, 1996.
- Gonzalez-Crussi, F. "Anatomy of a Virgin." In *Goddess of the Americas = La diosa de las Américas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe*. Edited by Ana Castillo, 1-14. New York, N.Y.: Riverhead Books, 1996.
- Hebblethwaite, Peter. "Beatification of Juan Diego Affirms Liberation Theology." *National Catholic Reporter*, 11 May 1990.
- Hellbom, Anna-Britta. "Las apariciones de la Virgen de Guadalupe en México y España." *Ethnos* 29 (1964): 58-71.
- Henderson, G. Gordon. "The Apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Image, the Origin of The Pilgrimage." *Marian Studies* 34 (1983): 35-47.
- Lafaye, Jacques. *Quetzalcoatl et Guadalupe: la formation de la conscience nationale au Mexique (1531-1813)*. Paris: Gallimard, 1974.
- León-Portilla, Miguel. *Tonantzin Guadalupe: Pensamiento náhuatl y mensaje cristiano en el "Nican Mopohua."* Mexico City, Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2000.
- Martínez, Rubén. "The Undocumented Virgin." In *Goddess of the Americas = La diosa de las Américas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe*. Edited by Ana Castillo, 98-112 New York, N.Y.: Riverhead Books, 1996.

- Medina Ascensio, Luis. *The Apparitions of Guadalupe as Historical Events*. CARA Studies in Popular Devotion 2; Guadalupe Studies [1]. Washington, D.C.: CARA, 1979.
- Nebel, Richard. *Santa María Tonantzin, Virgen de Guadalupe: continuidad y transformación religiosa en México*. Trans. by Carlos Warnholtz Bustillos, in collab. with Irma Ochoa de Nebel. 1<sup>st</sup> Spanish ed. Mexico City, Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1995.
- Noguez, Xavier. *Documentos guadalupanos*. Mexico City, Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993.
- O’Gorman, Edmundo. *Destierro de Sombras: Luz en el Origen de la Imagen y Culto de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Tepeyac*. Mexico City, Mexico: UNAM, 1991.
- “Our Lady of Guadalupe.” *Osservatore Romano*. Weekly edition. N. 4 – 23 January 2002.
- Poole, Stafford. “The Códice of 1548.” Unpublished article. S.l.: s.n., n.d., n.p.
- . *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol, 1531-1797*. Tucson, Ariz.: University of Arizona Press, 1995.
- Reina de las Américas, La: Works of Art from the Museum of the Basílica de Guadalupe*. Chicago, Ill.: Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, 1996.
- Rivera Carrera, Arzobispo Norberto. *Carta Pastoral Por la Canonización del Beato Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin, Laico*. México: Arquidiócesis Primada de México, 2002.
- Rodriguez, Jeannette. *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment Among Mexican-American Women*. Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1994.
- Romero Salinas, Joel. *Juan Diego, Enriquecido y Glorificado*. México: Ediciones Paulinas, 2002.
- Sánchez Flores, Ramón. *Juan Diego: Raíz de Nuestro Ser*. México: Publicaciones Paulinas, 2002.
- Santaballa, Sylvia. “Nican Motecpana: Nahuatl Miracles of the Virgin of Guadalupe.” *Latin American Indian Literatures Journal* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 34-54.
- Smith, James F. and Margaret Ramirez. “Challenge to Sainthood Evokes Charges of Racism.” *Los Angeles Times Online*, 12 December 1999.
- Sousa, Lisa, Stafford Poole, and James Lockhart, eds. and trans. *The Story of Guadalupe: Luis Laso de la Vega’s “Huei Tlamahuicoltica” of 1649*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Taylor, William. *Our Lady of Guadalupe and Friends: The Virgin Mary in Colonial Mexico City*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999.
- Zires, Margarita. “La « génération » du mythe de saint Juan Diego: réappropriation et transformation du mythe de la Vierge de la Guadeloupe.” Unpublished article. S.l.: n.d., n.p.



## Mariology

- Barnay, Sylvie. *Les apparitions de la Vierge*. Paris: Cerf, 1992.
- Boff, Leonardo. *The Maternal Face of God*. London: Collins Religious Publications, 1979.
- Burkhart, Louise M. *Before Guadalupe: The Virgin Mary in Early Colonial Nahuatl Literature*. Institute for Mesoamerican Studies Monograph 13. Albany, N.Y.: University at Albany, 2001.
- Cáceres, Aldo Marcelo. "El Fenómeno de la Religiosidad Popular (aproximación y diálogo)." *Religión y Cultura*, 46 (2000): 433-38.
- Curcio-Nagy, Linda A. "Native Icon to City Protectress to Royal Patroness: Ritual, Political Symbolism, and the Virgin of Remedies." *The Americas* 52, no. 3, (January 1996): 367-91.
- Encyclopedia of Mexico*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (1997), s.v. "Virgin of Los Remedios." By Stafford Poole. Edited by Michael S. Werner. Chicago, Ill.: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997.
- Florencia, Francisco de, and Juan Antonio de Oviedo. *Zodiaco Mariano*. Introduction by Antonio Rubial García. Mexico City: CNCA, 1995.
- Gebara, Ivone and María Clara Bingemer. "Mary." In, *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*. Edited by Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino. Translated with the assistance of the Department of Books and Libraries of the Spanish Ministry of Culture, 482-96. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993. Note that this English edition has been abridged and adapted from the original Spanish edition which was published in two volumes as *Mysterium Liberationis: Conceptos Fundamentales de la Teología de la Liberación*. Madrid, Spain: Editorial Trotta, 1990.
- . *Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*. Translated by Phillip Berryman. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1987.
- Herrera, Aceves, José de Jesús. "Mariología Mexicana Manuscrita." In *450° Aniversario 1531-1981 Congreso Mariológico*, 95-139. Mexico: Basílica de Santa María de Guadalupe, 1983.
- . "La Virgen Santa María en el Documento de Puebla." In *450° Aniversario 1531-1981 Congreso Mariológico*, 169-78. Mexico: Basílica de Santa María de Guadalupe, 1983.
- Johnson, Elizabeth. "Mary and the Female Face of God." *Theological Studies* 50 (1989): 500-26.
- . *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*. New York, N.Y.: Crossroad, 1992.
- . *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints*. New York, N.Y.: Continuum, 2003.
- Radford Ruether, Rosemary. *Mary: The Feminine Face of the Church*. London: SCM, 1979.
- Rendino, Stephanie. "Mary as Model of the Church and the Tradition of the Black Virgins." Master's thesis, Université de Montréal, 2000.

- Salles-Reese, Veronica. *From Viracocha to the Virgin of Copacabana: Representation of the Sacred at Lake Titicaca*. Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1997.
- Schillebeeckx, Edward, and Catharina Halkes. *Mary: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*. New York, N.Y.: Crossroad, 1993.
- Spretnak, Charlene. *Missing Mary: The Queen of Heaven and her Re-emergence in the Modern Church*. New York, N.Y.: Pargrave Macmillan, 2004.
- Suarez, Pio. *Mariología desde latinoamerica*. Lima, Peru: Centro Mariano Monfortiano, 1988.
- Taylor, William. "Our Lady in the Kernel of Corn, 1774." *The Americas*, 59 (4 April 2003): 559-70.
- Vásquez Gutiérrez, Issa Paola. "Estudio Monográfico Del Santuario de Nuestra Señora de los Remedios en Cholula Puebla." Tesis Licenciatura, Universidad de las Américas, Puebla, 1998. Published online:  
[http://caterina.udlap.mx/u\\_dl\\_a/tales/documentos/lha/vazquez\\_g\\_ip/portada.html](http://caterina.udlap.mx/u_dl_a/tales/documentos/lha/vazquez_g_ip/portada.html)
- Yepes, Mariana. *María: Primera Evangelizadora de América Latina*. Mexico: Ediciones Paulinas, 1994.

### **Mexican History**

- Actos del Cabildo de Catedral de la Puebla de Los Angeles 1774-1899*.
- Braden, Charles. *Religious Aspects of the Conquest of Mexico*. Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 1930.
- Burkhart, Louise M. *The Slippery Earth*. Tucson, Ariz.: University of Arizona Press, 1989.
- Carrasco, David, and Scott Sessions. *Daily Life of the Aztecs, People of the Sun and Earth*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998.
- Castro Ramirez, José Eduardo. *Palafox: su pontificado en Puebla, 1640- Puebla, Mexico*: Secretaría de Cultura/Gobierno del Estado de Puebla/Arzobispado de Puebla, 2000.
- Cervantes, Fernando. "The Impact of Christianity in Spanish America." *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 14, no. 2 (1995): 201- 210.
- Clendinnen, Inga. "Ways to the Sacred: Reconstructing 'Religion' in 16<sup>th</sup> Century Mexico." *History and Anthropology* 5 (1990): 105-41.
- Cortes, Hernan. *Letters From Mexico*. Translated and edited by A. R. Pagden. New York, N.Y.: Grossman Publishers, 1971.
- Diaz del Castillo, Bernal. *The True History of the Conquest of Mexico*. Translated by Maurice Keating. New York, N.Y.: Robert M. McBride, 1927.
- Farriss, Nancy. *Maya Society Under Colonial Rule: The Collective Enterprise of Survival*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984. Quoted in Fernando Cervantes, "The Impact of Christianity in Latin America," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 14, no. 2 (1995): 201-10.
- Gibson, Charles. *Tlaxcala in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale, 1952.

- Graulich, Michel. *Myths of Ancient Mexico*. Translated by Bernard and Thelma Ortiz de Montellano. Norman Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997.
- Gruzinski, Serge. *The Conquest of Mexico*. Translated by Eileen Corrigan. Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1996.
- Krauze, Enrique. *Mexico: Biography of Power; A History of Modern Mexico 1810-1996*. Translated by Hank Heifetz. New York, N.Y.: Harper Collins, 1997.
- Léon-Portilla, Miguel. *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico*. Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1992.
- . *Toltecáyotl: Aspetos de la cultura Náhuatl*. Mexico City, Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1980.
- Lockhart, James, Frances Berdan, and Arthur J. O. Anderson. *The Nahuas After the Conquest*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992.
- . *Nahuas and Spaniards: Postconquest Central Mexican History And Philology*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991.
- . *Tlaxcalan Actas, The: A Compendium of the Records of the Cabildo of Tlaxcala (1545-1627)*. Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1986.
- Muñoz Camargo, Diego. *Historia de Tlaxcala*. Edited by Germán Vásquez. Crónicas de América 26. Madrid, Spain: Historia 16, 1986.
- Nicholson, Irene. *Mexican and Central American Mythology*. New York, N.Y.: Peter Bedrick Books, 1985.
- Palafox y Mendoza, Juan de. *Relacion de la visita eclesiastica de parte del obispado de la Puebla de Los Angeles*. Transcription, introduction and notes by Bernardo García Martínez. Puebla, México: Secretaria de Cultura, Estado de Puebla, 1997.
- Perez Fernandez, Isacio. *Fray Toribio Motolinía, OFM frente a Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, OP*. Salamanca, Spain: Editorial San Esteban, 1989.
- Ricard, Robert. *Conquête spirituelle de Mexique*. Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie, 1933.
- . *Spiritual Conquest of Mexico, The*. Translated by Lesley Bird Simpson. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1966.
- Sahagún, Bernardino de. *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*. Madrid, Spain: Alianza, 1988.
- Sallman, Jean-Michel, ed. *Visions indiennes, visions baroques: les métissages de l'inconscient*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992.
- Sanderlin, George. "Requerimiento." In *The Encyclopedia of Latin America*. Edited by Helen Delpar, 527. New York, N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1974.
- Vargas Lugo, Elisa. "El Bautizo de los Señores de Tlaxcala." *Archivo Español de Arte* 63, no. 252 (1990): 621-32.
- White, John Manchip. *Cortés and the Downfall of the Aztec Empire*. New York, N.Y.: Carroll & Graf, 1989.

### Other Sources

- Alberigo, Giuseppe. *Homo Religiosus: autour de Jean Delumeau*. Paris: Fayard, 1997.

- Bible. New Revised Standard Version. Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Bible Society, 1989.
- Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Washington, D.C.: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997.
- Certeau, Michel de. *L'écriture de l'histoire*. Paris: Gallimard, 1975.
- Christian, William A. *Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981.
- . *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981.
- Davidow, Adam. "Gadamer: The Possibility of Interpretation." From the website Espace Philosophie. <http://philo.8m.com/davidow1.html>
- Delumeau, Jean, ed. *L'historien et la foi*. Paris: Fayard, 1996.
- Delumeau, Jean and Sabine Melchior-Bonnet. *Des religions et des hommes*. Paris: Desclée, 1997.
- Elizondo, Virgil. *The Future Is Mestizo*. Bloomington, Ind.: Meyer-Stone, 1988.
- Evangelización en el presente y en el futuro de América Latina, La: Documento de Puebla* (Puebla de los Angeles, Mexico: s.n., 1979), paragraph 301. <http://www.multimedios.org/docs/d000363/>
- Flannery, Austin, ed. *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents; Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*. Northport, N.Y.: Costello; Dublin, Ireland: Dominican Publications, 1996.
- Gadamer, Hans Georg. *Truth and Method*. New York, N.Y.: Crossroad Publishing, 1975.
- Guerrero, Andrés. *A Chicano Theology*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1987.
- Isasi-Díaz, Ada María. *En La Lucha: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1993.
- . *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1996.
- Isasi-Díaz, Ada María and Yolanda Tarango. *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1992.
- Laurentin, René. *Lourdes: histoire authentique des apparitions, vol 1: Structure des témoignages/état de la question*. Paris: P. Lethielleux; Lourdes, France: Œuvre de la Grotte; Rome, Italy: Academia mariana, 1961
- López Bucio, Baltasar. "La pastoral en los santuarios marianos." In *450° Aniversario 1531-1981 Congreso Mariológico*, 263-67. Mexico: Basílica de Santa María de Guadalupe, 1983.
- Montes de Oca, José. *Ocotlán, la villa del prodigio*. Mexico: Talleres de la editorial Lux, 1947.
- New Catholic Encyclopedea*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (2003).
- New Catholic Encyclopedia*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (2003), s.v. "Shrines." By H. M. Gillett.
- Pastoral de Santuarios en Mexico, La*. Mexico: Comision Episcopal de Evangelizacion y Catequesis: Departamento de Pastoral de Santuarios, 1988.
- Riché, Pierre. "L'historien du Moyên Age et la foi chrétienne." In *L'historien et la foi*, edited by Jean Delumeau. France: Fayard, 1996.
- Radford Ruether, Rosemary. *Sexism and God-Talk*. Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1983.

- Vanderwood, Paul. "Religion: Official, Popular, and Otherwise." *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, 16, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 411-441.
- Wood, Stephanie. "Adopted Saints: Christian Images in Nahua Testaments of Late Colonial Toluca." *The Americas* 47, no 3 (January 1991): 259-93.


Appendix

**Saint Brigid Parish**

**NATIONAL  
NIGHT OF PRAYER  
FOR LIFE**

**Thursday, December 8<sup>th</sup>  
7:00PM to 10:00PM**

**NATIONAL HOUR OF UNITY IS 12 AM TO 1 AM (EST)**



When **OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE** appeared to the recently-canonized **St. Juan Diego** in Mexico for the first time on December 9, 1531, it marked the beginning of tens of thousands of conversions of Aztecs to the Catholic Church, ending barbaric human sacrifice in Mexico for all-time.

Now with some 45 million abortions performed in America since 1973, will you not join us in reparation for these horrible atrocities by kneeling in atonement before the throne of God? Beg the Blessed Mother for her powerful intercession, combining our celebration of the Feast of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception with the day Our Lady of Guadalupe first appeared to St. Juan Diego. Our Lady changed hearts then! Our Lady could do it now!

Join with us in a **UNITY OF PRAYER** across the country in our cathedrals, churches and chapels, highlighting Eucharistic Adoration and 20 decades of the Rosary, from New York to California, Alaska and Hawaii.

Figure 11 Newspaper announcement for the "National Night of Prayer."

This is a newspaper announcement for the "National Night of Prayer for Life," which shows a line drawing of Guadalupe with a foetal Jesus, identified by the

letters IHS, superimposed over her womb. As the original is damaged, and the reproduction is not very clear, I will reproduce the text here. It reads:

When our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to the recently-canonized St. Juan Diego in Mexico for the first time on December 9, 1531, it marked the beginning of tens of thousands of conversions of Aztecs to the Catholic Church, ending barbaric human sacrifice in Mexico for all time.

Now, with some 45 million abortions performed in American since 1973, will you not join us in reparation for these horrible atrocities by kneeling in atonement before the throne of God? Beg the Blessed Mother for her powerful intercession, combining our celebration of the Feast of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception with the day Our Lady of Guadalupe first appeared to St. Juan Diego. Our Lady changed hearts then! Our Lady could do it now!

Join with us in a UNITY OF PRAYER across the country in our cathedrals, churches and chapels, highlighting Eucharistic Adoration and 20 decades of the Rosary, from New York to California, Alaska and Hawaii.

Please note that the clipping is dated, and as such full bibliographic data are not available. It was clipped from the *Southern Cross*, diocesan newspaper of the Diocese of San Diego, in November of 2004.

## Curriculum Vitæ

Stephanie D. Rendino was born in 1965 in Brooklyn, New York, and was raised and educated in northern Virginia. Primary and secondary schooling was through the Prince William County Public School System. A Bachelor of Arts in International Relations was awarded in 1987 after completion of studies at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. The senior paper was on comparative methods of conflict resolution.

After additional advanced study, including advanced non-degree-granting courses at McGill University in Montréal, Canada, work at the graduate level in theology was undertaken at the Université de Montréal (Canada), culminating in a *Licence en théologie (L.Th.)* in the spring of 2000. This diploma was granted for work based on the examination and study of Black Virgins and their place in theology and history, resulting in the thesis *Mary as Model of the Church and the Tradition of the Black Virgins*.

Professional undertakings in the theology field have included research for the Canonical Doctorate in Puebla, Mexico from April to June 2003, as well as the teaching of the *Introduction to the Catechism of the Catholic Church* course at the San Diego Diocesan Center, San Diego, California.

As a candidate for the *Doctorat en théologie (Ph.D.)* at the Université de Montréal, research was undertaken to complete a dissertation on the historical, religious and cultural aspects of religious icons in Mexico, how this has shaped the country as a whole and how it has affected the lives of the multicultural mix of people



who live in that country. A grant from the *Faculté de théologie et de sciences des religions* (Université de Montréal) in 2004 assisted these endeavours.

Specific fields of interest and potential future research include Latino Catholicism; popular religion, especially as it involves Mary and other Catholic saints; and feminist theologies. There is a particular interest in saints not recognized by the Church, why these saints are venerated by the people, and Church reactions to these unauthorized cults.

Professional goals include research, the publication of scholarly works, and teaching at the level of higher education. There are plans to present both the *Black Virgin* thesis and *Mary of Guadalupe* dissertation to academic presses, and also to write popular versions of both for publication through non-academic religious presses.

Currently, Ms. Rendino resides in San Diego and is a Specialist (pay grade E-4) in the US Army Reserve. She continues to research in the field of theology, with specific projects ongoing on the study of popular religion and its pre-Hispanic roots.